



Philosophical Investigations

Ludwig Wittgenstein , P.M.S. Hacker (Editor) , Joachim Schulte (Editor) , G.E.M. Anscombe (Translator)

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Incorporating significant editorial changes from earlier editions, the fourth edition of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is the definitive en face German-English version of the most important work of 20th-century philosophy. The extensively revised English translation incorporates many hundreds of changes to Anscombe's original translation. Footnoted remarks in the earlier editions have now been relocated in the text. What was previously referred to as 'Part 2' is now republished as *Philosophy of Psychology - A Fragment*, and all the remarks in it are numbered for ease of reference. New detailed editorial endnotes explain decisions of translators and identify references and allusions in Wittgenstein's original text. Now features new essays on the history of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and the problems of translating Wittgenstein's text

Philosophische Untersuchungen is, with the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, one of two major works by 20th-century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. In it, he discusses numerous problems & puzzles in fields of semantics, logic, philosophy of mathematics & the philosophy of mind. He asserts that conceptual confusions surrounding language use are at the root of most philosophical problems, contradicting & discarding much the argument of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The book is often considered one of the most important works of the 20th century, continuing to influence contemporary philosophers studying mind & language.

The book wasn't ready for publication when Wittgenstein died in 1951. G.E.M. Anscombe translated the ms & it was published in 1953. It's now in a 3rd edition incorporating Anscombe's final revisions & is repaginated. There are two popular editions of *Philosophical Investigations*:

Prentice Hall, 1999 (ISBN 0024288101)

Blackwell Publishers, 2001 (ISBN 0631231277)--bilingual.

The text is divided into two parts, consisting of what Wittgenstein calls, in the preface, *Bemerkungen*, translated by Anscombe as "remarks". In the 1st part, these remarks are rarely more than a paragraph long & are numbered sequentially. In the 2nd part, the remarks are longer & numbered using Roman numerals. In the index, remarks from the 1st part are referenced by their number rather than page; however, references from the 2nd part are cited by page number. The comparatively unusual nature of the 2nd part is due to the fact that it comprises notes Wittgenstein intended to reincorporate into the 1st. Due to his death, it was published as a 2nd part.

Philosophical Investigations is unique in its approach to philosophy. A typical philosophical text presents a philosophical problem, summarizes & critiques various alternative approaches to solving it, presents its own approach, then argues in favor of that approach. This book treats philosophy as an activity, rather along the lines of Sokrates' maieutic method; he has the reader work thru various problems, participating actively in the investigation. Rather than presenting a philosophical problem & its solution, he engages in a dialog, where he provides a thought experiment (a hypothetical example or situation), describes how one might be inclined to think about it, then shows why that inclination suffers from conceptual confusion.

Philosophical Investigations Details

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From Reader Review Philosophical Investigations for online ebook

Bob Nichols says

I've read some excellent reviews of what Wittgenstein intended with book. The role that the social context plays in our language – the use and interpretation of words and propositions can be understood as a social game that is conducted according to certain rules - is good stuff, but it's not an area of inquiry that interests me.

I was struck by Wittgenstein's equation of language analysis with his repeated (and seemingly categorical) references to "doing philosophy." With that term and this book, it seems as though Wittgenstein has appropriated the subject matter of philosophy and restricted it to an overly narrow focus – one that lends itself to tangible data with precisely understood terminology, all nicely aligned with scientific inquiry. This then means that the affective life and essential human concerns are cast outside the philosophical realm, and termed (non-pejoratively) "nonsense."

Right off, I don't see how his approach inherently conflicts with what others might regard as the soul and heart of philosophical investigation: what values matter, what are their grounds, what ought we to do, etc. Interior data can be brought forth and expressed in the exterior world and subjected to precise uses. For example, "pain" is private, but at some general, common-sense level, we know that this describes a negative interior reality. Through stipulation, we can further describe "pain" as an object much as some exterior object might be described, though admittedly verification is a challenge. Here, Wittgenstein's rich appreciation for language can be used as a tool to deal with hidden meanings, to sort through the problem of conflation, and to guide us through the traps of using words, concepts and propositions in misleading ways. But if Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy is incompatible with our affective life, then it could be argued that he is doing something like, say, linguistics and not philosophy. Or, alternatively, it could be said that Wittgenstein's approach is one form of philosophy, but not philosophy per se. Then philosophy could focus on looking at the "ought" as well as the "is" world," and attempt to build bridges between the two (i.e., to construct a philosophy grounded in, or not inconsistent with, science).

Evripidis Gousiaris says

Αναμφ?βολα η Φιλοσοφ?α ε?ναι λ?γο-πολ? και θ?μα γο?στου. Με κ?ποιους φιλοσ?φους θα συμφωνε?ς και με ?λλους ?χι. Αντικειμενικ? ?μως, δ?σκολα θα διαφων?σεις με τον Wittgenstein.

Πιο προσιτ? και χωρ?ς την μαθηματικ? γλ?σσα του "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus", το "Φιλοσοφικ?ς ?ρευνες" με απλ? παραδε?γματα αποδεικν?ει π?σο ρευστ? -επομ?νως και ακατ?λληλη- ε?ναι η Γλ?σσα σαν εργαλε?ο για Φιλοσοφ?α.

John Doe says

This book is about the concept of grammar. Can a single word be a meaningful, grammatical statement? I have a toddler, and so I know that it can. 'Milky' means the same thing as 'bring me the milky' in our language game. So, how can this be? What about grammar? Well, Wittgenstein argues that there must be a

grammar for the imperative 'milky' to be understood. Where is this grammar?

There are rules and training that indicate what must be done when Seneca says "milky." For example, I go to the refrigerator, get the milk. Pour it in a cup and put a lid on it. Then I give it to him and he drinks it. There is grammar because I know what to do.

The real charm of Wittgenstein is that he can explain ordinary things as though we have never heard of them. And he always finds something we missed in our own reasoning when we were toddlers. Also, he has interesting things to say about color concepts, mathematics, and the idea of a private language.

I would recommend this book to philosophy students and people with kids. It sure is fun to read!

Erik Graff says

This book was assembled posthumously, Wittgenstein having published very little in his lifetime. Although usually coupled with the Tractatus, it is actually more representative of his thought and method.

The virtue of Wittgenstein may be that with him there is no hint of metaphysical conceit or self-deception, but rather a consistent treatment of reality as, in fact, various "language games" ("language" being understood broadly to include everything from the semiotic to the symbolic, the denotative to the connotative, and "games" being understood to be intersubjective practices). Interestingly, however, behind this reserve runs a strong mystical sense comparable to Kant's attraction/aversion to the Ideas of Reason. While he was, on the one hand, a thoroughgoing critic of sloppy thinking and expression he was also, on the other, prone to the religio-aesthetic flights of the late Heidegger. The study of his biography and jottings presents the image of a man at once piercingly clear and personally enigmatic, at once a dispeller of illusions and a victim of multiple neuroses. While apparently coming across to his redoubtable colleagues, including Bertrand Russell, as a genius, his actual writings are all rather easy-going, suggesting, to me at least, that we're all--or none--of us geniuses.

Hesham Khaled says

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<http://ida2at.com/how-did-ludwig-witt...>

Before reading

After reading

says. "White - red". Wang nods. The foreman points to Wang. "Red slab!" he says. Wang looks at the pile of slabs in the corner. He had noticed that those on one side of the pile were red. He goes and fetches a load of red slabs.

He comes back and unloads them. "Cement?" he asks. "Cement," agrees the foreman. He's already decided he owes Wang's cousin a beer. This unknown Chinese dude is worth his weight in gold! Wang's back with the cement. "Slab," says the foreman. "Red slab?" asks Wang. "White slab," corrects the foreman.

Wang goes off to get the white slabs. He's even more pleased than the foreman. He can already see how to structure the next chapter of his dissertation on linguistic philosophy.

Jimmy says

Here are some lines:

19. . . . And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.

40. Let us first discuss *this* point of the argument: that a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it. . . .

47. But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed?--What are the simple constituent parts of a chair?--The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms?--"Simple" means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense 'composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'.

Again: Does my visual image of this tree, of this chair, consist of parts? And what are its simple component parts? Multi-colouredness is one kind of complexity; another is, for example, that of a broken outline composed of straight bits. And a curve can be said to be composed of an ascending and a descending segment.

. . .

49. . . . But whether it 'is a word or a proposition' depends on the situation in which it is uttered or written. . . . This is what Frege meant too, when he said that a word had meaning only as part of a sentence.

54. . . . One learns the game by watching how others play. . . . But how does the observer distinguish in this case between players' mistakes and correct play? . . .

72. *Seeing what is common.* . . . I shew him samples of different shades of blue and say: "The colour that is common to all these is what I call 'blue'".

75. What does it mean to know what a game is? What does it mean, to know it and not be able to say it? Is this knowledge somehow equivalent to an unformulated definition? . . .

76. . . . The kinship is just as undeniable as the difference.

84. I said that the application of a word is not everywhere bounded by rules. But what does a game look like that is everywhere bounded by rules? whose rules never let a doubt creep in, but stop up all the cracks where

it might? . . .

98. On the one hand it is clear that every sentence in our language 'is in order as it is'. That is to say, we are not *striving after* an ideal, as if our ordinary vague sentences had not yet got a quite unexceptionable sense, and a perfect language awaited construction by us.--On the other hand it seems clear that where there is sense there must be perfect order.--So there must be perfect order even in the vaguest sentence.

114. . . . One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.

120. . . . You say: the point isn't the word, but its meaning, and you think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though also different from the word. Here the word, there the meaning. The money, and the cow that you can buy with it. . . .

123. A philosophical problem has the form: "I don't know my way about".

124. Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. . . .

126. Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.--Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us. . . .

127. The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.

134. . . . To say that this proposition agrees or (does not agree) with reality would be obvious nonsense. . . .

154. . . . Try not to think of understanding as a 'mental process' at all.--For *that* is the expression which confused you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say, "Now I know how to go on," when, that is, the formula *has* occurred to me?--

In the sense in which there are processes (including mental processes) which are characteristic of understanding, understanding is not a mental process.

155. Thus what I wanted to say was: when he suddenly knew how to go on, when he understood the principle, then possibly he had a special experience--and if he is asked: "What was it? What took place when you suddenly grasped the principle?" perhaps he will describe it much as we described it above--but for us it is *the circumstances* under which he had such an experience that justify him in saying in such a case that he understands, that he knows how to go on.

177. I should like to say: "I experience the because". . . .

179. . . . Think how we learn to use the expressions "Now I know how to go on," "Now I can go on" and others; . . .

203. Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.

216. "A thing is identical with itself."--There is no finer example of a useless proposition, which yet is connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted. . . .

243. . . . But could we also imagine a language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences--his feelings, moods, and the rest--for his private use?--Well, can't we do so in our ordinary language?--But that is not what I mean. The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language.

256. Now, what about the language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand? *How* do I use words to stand for my sensations?--As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? In that case my language is not a 'private' one. Someone else might understand it as well as I.--But suppose I didn't have my natural expression of sensation, but only had the sensation? And now I simply *associate* names with sensations and use these names in descriptions.--

269. Let us remember that there are certain criteria in a man's behaviour for the fact that he does not understand a word, that it means nothing to him; that he can do nothing with it. And criteria for his 'thinking he understands', attaching some meaning to the word, but not the right one. And, lastly, criteria for his understanding the word right. In the second case one might speak of a subjective understanding. And sounds which no one else understands but which I '*appear to understand*' might be called a "private language".

331. Imagine people who could only think aloud. (As there are people who can only read aloud.)

390. Could one imagine a stone's having consciousness? And if anyone can do so--why should that not merely prove that such imagemongery is of no interest to us?

464. My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense.

499. To say "This combination of words makes no sense" excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language. But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reason. If I surround an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary; or it may shew where the property of one man ends and that of another begins; and so on. So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for.

500. When a sentence is called senseless, it is not as it were its sense that is senseless. But a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation.

511. What does "discovering that an expression doesn't make sense" mean?--and what does it mean to say: "If I mean something by it, surely it must make sense"?--If I mean something by it?--If I mean *what* by it?!--One wants to say: a significant sentence is one which one can not merely say, but also think.

512. It looks as if we could say: "Word-language allows of senseless combinations of words, but the language of imagining does not allow us to imagine anything senseless." . . .

518. Socrates to Theaetetus: "And if someone thinks mustn't he think *something*?--Th.: "Yes, he must."--Soc.: "And if he thinks something, mustn't it be something real?"--Th.: "Apparently."

And mustn't someone who is painting be painting something--and someone who is painting something be painting something real!--Well, tell me what the object of painting is: the picture of a man (e.g.), or the man that the picture portrays?

520. "If a proposition too is conceived as a picture of a possible state of affairs and is said to shew the possibility of the state of affairs, still the most that the proposition can do is what a painting or relief or film

does: and so it can at any rate not give an account of what is *not* the case. So does it depend wholly on our grammar what will be called (logically) possible and what not,--i.e. what that grammar permits?"--But surely that is arbitrary!--Is it arbitrary?--It is not every sentence-like formation that we know how to do something with, not every technique has an application in our life; and when we are tempted in philosophy to count some quite useless thing as a proposition, that is often because we have not considered its application sufficiently.

524. Don't take it as a matter of course, but as a remarkable fact, that pictures and fictitious narratives give us pleasure, occupy our minds.

("Don't take it as a matter of course" means: find it surprising, as you do some things which disturb you. Then the puzzling aspect of the latter will disappear, by your accepting this fact as you do the other.)

((The transition from patent nonsense to something which is disguised nonsense.))

528. It would be possible to imagine people who had something not quite unlike a language: a play of sounds, without vocabulary or grammar. ('Speaking with tongues.')

529. "But what would the meaning of the sounds be in such a case?"--What is it in music? Though I don't at all wish to say that this language of a play of sounds would have to be compared with music.

533. . . . how can one explain the expression, transmit one's comprehension? Ask yourself: How does one *lead* anyone to comprehension of a poem or of a theme? The answer to this tells us how meaning is explained here.

558. What does it mean to say that the "is" in "The rose is red" has a different meaning from the "is" in "twice two is four"? . . .

559. One would like to speak of the function of a word in *this* sentence. As if the sentence were a mechanism in which the word had a particular function. . . .

562. But how can I decide what is an essential, and what an inessential, accidental, feature of the notation? Is there some reality lying behind the notation, which shapes its grammar?

569. Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments. . . .

570. Concepts lead us to make investigations; are the expression of our interests, and direct our interests.

589. . . . (Luther: "Faith is under the left nipple.")

601. When I talk about this table,--am I *remembering* that this object is called a "table"?

604. It is easy to have a false picture of the processes called "recognizing"; as if recognizing always consisted in comparing two impressions with one another. It is as if I carried a picture of an object with me and used it to perform an identification of an object as the one represented by the picture. Our memory seems to us to be the agent of such a comparison, by preserving a picture of what has been seen before, or by allowing us to look into the past (as if down a spy-glass).

650. We say a dog is afraid his master will beat him; but not, he is afraid his master will beat him to-morrow. Why not?

Part II

Page 174: One can imagine an animal angry, frightened, unhappy, happy, startled. But hopeful? And why not?

Page 175: The words "the rose is red" are meaningless if the word "is" has the meaning "is identical with".-- Does this mean: if you say this sentence and mean the "is" as the sign of identity, the sense disintegrates?

Page 194: I shall call the following figure, derived from Jastrow, the duck-rabbit. It can be seen as a rabbit's head or as a duck's.

Page 223: If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.

Page 225: . . . To say "The height of Mont Blanc depends on how one climbs it" would be queer. And one wants to compare 'ever more accurate measurement of length' with the nearer and nearer approach to an object. . . .

Hesham Khaled says

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Roy Lotz says

If you read first Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, and then follow it with his *Philosophical Investigations*, you will treat yourself to perhaps the most fascinating intellectual development in the history of philosophy. Wittgenstein has the distinct merit of producing, not one, but two enormously influential systems of philosophy—systems, moreover, that are at loggerheads with one another.

In fact, I wouldn't recommend attempting to tackle this work without first reading the *Tractatus*, as the *Investigations* is essentially one long refutation and critique of his earlier, more conventional, views. But because I wish to give a short summary of some of Wittgenstein's later views here, I will first give a little précis of the earlier work.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein argues that language has one primary function: to state facts. Language is a logical picture of the world. A given proposition mirrors a given state of affairs. This leads Wittgenstein to regard a great many types of utterances as strictly nonsense. For example, since ethics is not any given state of affairs, language couldn't possibly picture it; therefore, all propositions in the form of "action X is morally good" are nonsense.

Wittgenstein honestly believed that this solved all the problems of philosophy. Long-standing problems about causation, truth, the mind, goodness, beauty, etc., were all attempts to use language to picture something which it could not—because beauty, truth, etc., are not states of affairs. Philosophers only need stop the attempt to transcend the limits of language, and the problems would disappear. In his words: "The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem."

After publishing this work and taking leave of professional philosophy (as he thought it had been dealt with) Wittgenstein began to have some doubts. Certain everyday uses of language seemed hard to account for if you regarded language as purely a truth-stating tool. These doubts eventually culminated in a return to Cambridge, and to philosophy. His posthumously published *Investigations* represents the fullest expression of his later views.

So what are these views? Well, first let us compare the styles of the two works. The writing in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* is extraordinary. Wittgenstein is one of the very finest writers of philosophy, in a league with Nietzsche and Plato. He uses almost no technical terms, and very simple sentence-structures; yet his phrases can stick in the mind for months, years, after first reading them. Just the other day, I was having a conversation with my German tutor about learning a foreign language. To something I said, she responded, “*Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.*” (“The limits of my language are the limits of my world”—a quote from the *Tractatus*.)

Although the writing in both works is equally compelling, the structures are quite different. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein’s argument is unified, complete; he even numbers his sentences as primary, secondary, and tertiary in terms of their importance to the argument. In that work, we can clearly see the influence of Bertrand Russell’s logicism: language is reduced to logical propositions, and the argument is organized along logical grounds.

The reader of the *Investigations* will encounter something quite different. Wittgenstein writes in similarly terse aphorisms; he even retains a numbering-system for his points—each individual point getting its own numbered paragraph. The numbering of these paragraphs, however, is cumulative, and does not express anything about their significance to his larger design. It is almost as if Wittgenstein wrote down his thoughts on numbered flash cards, and simply constructed the book by moving the flash cards around. Unlike the *Tractatus*, which resolves itself into a unified whole, the *Investigations* is fragmentary.

I begin with style because the contrast in writing is a clue to the differences in thought between the earlier and later works. Unlike the *Tractatus*, the *Investigations* is rather a collection of observations and ideas. The spirit of Wittgenstein’s later enterprise is anti-systematic, rather than systematic. Wittgenstein aims not at erecting a whole edifice of thought, but at destroying other edifices. Thus, the text jumps from topic to topic, without any explicit connections or transitions, now attacking one common philosophical idea, now another. The experience can often be exasperating, since Wittgenstein is being intentionally oblique rather than direct. In the words of John Searle, reading the *Investigations* is “like getting a kit for a model airplane without any explanation for how to put it together.”

Let me attempt to put some of these pieces together—at least the pieces that were especially useful to me.

Wittgenstein replaces his old picture metaphor with a new tool metaphor. Instead of a word being meaningful because it pictures a fact, the meaning of a word is—at least most of the time—synonymous with the social use of that word. For example, the word “pizza” does not mean pizza because it names the food; rather, it means pizza because you can use the word to order the food at a restaurant. So instead of the reference to a type of object being primary, the social use is primary.

This example reveals a general quality of Wittgenstein’s later thought: the replacement of the objective/subjective dichotomy with the notion of public, social behavior.

Philosophers have traditionally posited theories of meaning that are either internal or external. For example, pizza can mean the particular food either because the word points to the food, or because the word points to our idea, or sensation, of the food. Either language is reporting objective states of affairs, or subjective internal experiences.

Wittgenstein destroys the external argument with a very simple observation. Take the word “game.” If the external theory of meaning is correct, the word game must mean what it does because it points to something essential about games. But what is the essential quality that makes games games? Is there any? Some games are not social (think of solitaire), some games are not trivial (think of the Olympic Games), some games are not consequence-free (think of compulsive gambling), and some games *are* social, trivial, and consequence-free. Is a game something that you play? But you also play records and trombones. So what is the essential, single quality of “game” that our word refers to?

Wittgenstein says there isn’t any. Rather, the word “game” takes on different meanings in different social contexts, or modes of discourse. Wittgenstein calls these different modes of discourse “language games.” Some examples of language games are that of mimicking, of joking, of mourning, of philosophizing, of religious discourse. Every language game has its own rules; therefore, any proposed all-encompassing theory of language (like Wittgenstein’s own *Tractatus*) will fail, because it attempts to reduce the irreducible. You cannot reduce chess, soccer, solitaire, black-jack, and tag to one set of rules; the same is true (says Wittgenstein) of language.

Another popular theory of meaning is the internal theory. This theory holds that propositions mean things by referring to thoughts or sensations. When I refer to pain, I am referring to an internal object; when I refer to a bunny, I am referring to a set of visual sensations that I have learned to call ‘bunny’.

Wittgenstein makes short work of this argument too. Let’s start with the argument about sensations. Wittgenstein points out that our ‘sensations’ of an object—say, a bunny—are not something that we experience, as it were, purely. Rather, our interpretations alter the sensations themselves. To illustrate this, Wittgenstein uses perhaps the funniest example in all of philosophy, the duck-rabbit:

As you can see, whether you interpret this conglomeration of shapes, lines, and spaces as a rabbit or a duck depends on your interpretation; and, if you had never seen a duck or a rabbit in your life, the picture would look rather strange. Ernst Gombrich summed up this point quite nicely in his *Story of Art*: “If we look out of the window we can see the view in a thousand different ways. Which of them is our sense impression?”

The point of all this is that trying to make propositions about sense-impressions is like trying to hit a moving target—since you only see something a certain way because of certain beliefs or experiences you already hold.

The argument about inner feelings is equally weak. For example, when we learned the word pain, did someone somehow point to the feeling and name it? Clearly, that’s impossible. What *actually* happens is that we (or someone else) exhibited normal behavioral manifestations of pain—crying, moaning, tearing, clutching the afflicted area. The word pain then is used (at least originally) to refer to pain-behavior, and we later use the word ‘pain’ as a replacement for our infantile pain-behavior—instead of moaning and clutching our arm, we tell someone we have a pain, and that it’s in our arm. This shows that the internal referent of the word ‘pain’ is not fundamental to its meaning, but is derivative of its more fundamental, public use.

This may seem trivial, but this line of argument is a powerful attack on the entire Cartesian tradition. Let me give you an example.

René Descartes famously sat in his room, and then tried to doubt the whole world. He then got down to his own ego, and tried to build the world back up from there. This line of thought places the individual at the center of the epistemological question, and makes all other phenomena derivative of the fundamental, subjective experience of certainty.

But let us, as Wittgenstein advises, examine the normal use of the word “to know.” You say, “I know Tom,” or “I know American history.” If someone asked you, “What makes you say you know Tom and American history?” you might say something like “I can pick Tom’s face out of a crowd,” or “I could pass a history test.” Already, you are giving social criteria for what it means to know. In fact, the word “to know” presupposes the ability to verify something with something that is not yourself. You would never verify something you remember by pointing to another thing you remember—that would be absurd, since your memory is the thing being tested. Instead, you indicate an independent criterion for determining whether or not you know something. (The social test of knowledge is also explicit in science, since experiments must be repeatable and communicable; if a scientist said “I know this but I can’t prove it once more,” that would not be science.)

So because knowing anything apparently requires some kind of social confirmation, the Cartesian project of founding knowledge on subjective experience is doomed from the start. Knowing anything requires at least two people—since you couldn’t know if you were right or wrong without some kind of social confirmation.

Wittgenstein brings this home with his discussion of private language. Let’s say you had a feeling that nobody has told you how to name. As a result, you suspect that this feeling is unique to yourself, and so you create your own name for it. Every time you have the feeling, you apply this made-up name to it. But how do you know if you’re using the name correctly? How do you know that every time you use your private name you are referring to the same feeling? You can’t check it against your memory, since your memory is the very thing being doubted. You can’t ask somebody else, because nobody else knows this name or has this sensation. Therefore, merely *thinking* you’re using the name consistently and actually *using* the name consistently would be indistinguishable experiences. You could never really know.

Although Wittgenstein’s views changed dramatically from the early to the late phase of his career, you can see some intriguing similarities. One main current of Wittgenstein’s thought is that all philosophical problems result from the misuse of language. Compare this statement from the *Tractatus*, “All philosophy is ‘Critique of language’,” with this, from the *Investigations*: “Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.” In both works, Wittgenstein is convinced that philosophical problems only arise because of the misuses of language; that philosophers either attempt to say the unsayable, or confuse the rules of one language-game with another—producing nonsense.

I cannot say I’ve thought-through Wittgenstein’s points fully enough to say whether I agree or disagree with them. But, whether wrong or right, Wittgenstein already has the ultimate merit of any philosopher—provoking thought about fundamental questions. And even if he was wrong about everything, his books would be worth reading for the writing alone. Reading Wittgenstein can be very much like taking straight shots of vodka—it burns on the way down, it addles your brain, it is forceful and overwhelming; but after all the pain and toil, the end-result is pleasant elation.

Jon Stout says

This book is too complex to summarize, but here is a nutshell: If you want to know the meaning of a word, consider how the word is used. Words are used in a variety of “language games,” interactions among people, which display “family resemblances.” That is, there is no single model which shows the essence of how words are used, but rather there are many overlapping and differing language games, each of which is a different model.

Enough summarizing. Now to what I am interested in, what I called, once before, “Wittgenstein’s behaviorism,” which I didn’t like. After reading the *Philosophical Investigations*, I have come to the

conclusion that Wittgenstein is not nearly as behavioristic as I had thought. In fact, he is the most introspective behaviorist that I could imagine, but he still ends up being more of a behaviorist than I like.

What do I mean by “behaviorism”? Wittgenstein is a skeptic with regard to meaning, in the sense that he does not think that meaning is something we can look inside of ourselves (introspect) to discover. As I summarized above, Wittgenstein believes that meaning is revealed by the use of a word in social interactions, in other words through language games, the behavior of the people using the word.

Consider words for what we usually think of as mental phenomena: thinking, believing, remembering, knowing, and the like. How can you tell if someone “knows” that Paris is in France? If you ask him, he gives you the right answer. If he looks inside of his mind, must there be the “knowledge” that Paris is in France? Not necessarily. He might not even be thinking of that, and even if he were subvocalizing “Paris is in France,” is there a mental quality that distinguishes that as knowing? Thus Wittgenstein gives a formidable argument that knowing consists not in any mental phenomenon, but in the behavior of giving the right answer.

In making this argument, Wittgenstein has not avoided introspection as a technique. On the contrary he has used it extensively. Even when he asks us to imagine a certain language game, we are imagining a behavior, but we are using introspection to do it. Wittgenstein is a master of asking the rhetorical question which reveals how we use a particular word in social interactions, but each rhetorical question requires a looking into ourselves and our experiences.

Wittgenstein is not ultimately hostile to our looking into ourselves, in fact I think he would regard it as a fruitful part of life. But his basic point is that only when our introspected observations can be validated by being part of our interactions with other people (our language games), only then can the words have consistent and usable meanings.

My quibble with this is that introspection sometimes yields more results than Wittgenstein is prepared to recognize. As just one example, Wittgenstein asks, how do we judge time? He says that we might sit for a while, and say “About five minutes have passed.” and we may be right. He says that there is no introspectable experience of time passing or of measuring time. But I am not sure if that is right.

Paul Churchland talks about a pulsing of neuronic signals from the center of the brain to the perimeter and back again. This means that our sensory processing echoes and reverberates with these pulses and gives us a sense of time passing. If we attend to the experience of this, we may be able to discriminate what makes us sensitive to the passage of time, and we may be able to do this in a way which can be validated by other people. If we are able to make these discriminations through introspection before the science is available to explain it, is it still meaningless? That is my rhetorical question.

Rob says

o my crap, what a tortured soul Ludwig Wittgenstein was. this guy stared into the impenetrable pitch blackness that was the tangled midnight jungle of his own inner existence, sharpened his machete, and plunged in, hacking and flailing and lunging wildly. he wrestles chiefly with the concepts of language, meaning, understanding, and states of consciousness.

part I consists of 693 short numbered sections (about 4 to a page). this was sent to the publisher but pulled back at the last second five years before LW died. after he died, his further writings were scraped together

and comprise part II, loosely divided into 13 short sections plus 1 long one. there is no steady development, but sometimes long chains of remarks on one topic, sometimes sudden changes of topic. he often puts statements or questions in quotation marks, as though thrown at him by someone playing devil's advocate. it is all extremely personal, written very much in the first person.

the first half of this book is soooooo much better than the second half. i looked in my notebook and found that i jotted 111 notes from the first 120 pages, and only 34 from the last 110 pages. by the end, i was quite happy for it to be over. so maybe it doesn't deserve 5 stars. but some of it is quite amazing. he concludes the introduction:

"It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another -- but of course, it is not likely.

I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.

I should have liked to produce a good book. This has not come about, but the time is past in which I could improve it."

just for that, he gets 5 stars from me.

Trevor says

This is the first work by Wittgenstein I've ever read. I've been terrified of him for years, truth be told. I've read a biography by W.W. Bartley III (wouldn't you love to be 'the third'? I would stick the three I's on the end of my name too, if I was, but unfortunately I'm only Trevor the Second...). The main memory I have of that book is of Wittgenstein waiting to be captured in WWI and him humming the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh. That has always been one of my all-time favourite pieces of music and if I was ever in a machine-gun nest about to be captured (or potentially killed) by the enemy, I could think of no better piece of music to be humming.

The fear has come from the fact Wittgenstein is known as being off-the-scale brilliant. And so I just assumed he would also be too hard to read, with him picking out distinctions I wouldn't be able to see even after he had held them to the light and turned them about.

This book is, in fact, quite beautifully written. The ideas are complex at times, but he does all he can to make them clear.

That said, I also know I've only skimmed the surface of this one.

This is a book about meaning – it is a book about how language 'means' and therefore the extent to which language allows communication between people. I'm going to jump to my understanding of Wittgenstein's answer (although, answer isn't the right word) and that is that language is always socially situated and so you need to understand the situation to make sense of the language.

A philosophical project prior to this was the idea of trying to create a language that could be unambiguous and purely logical – one that could start from a series of axioms and then go on to recreate the world with each of its statements being verifiably true. This is the sort of idea mentioned in 1984 – that for as long as I can know $2+2=4$ then, and so on...

But then, think of the word March. You can say, “The best time to come to Melbourne is March” or you can say, “The second movement of the Seventh is a slow march”. Clearly, the fact march is a homophone is hardly surprising to anyone – but Wittgenstein asks if even that is really true. Can you say the month in the same way as you say the verb? If you are meaning the month, can you say it as the verb? The point being that you might not be able to hear any difference between the two uses of the word at all, and yet still feel in your bones that it isn’t possible to say exactly the same sound while meaning the other.

This almost links to something he says comparing language to music – an idea I think about a lot. He says, “Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one might think.” I think one could spend a lifetime considering that idea – and the practical expression of that thought is called poetry, but it is also true of all language, poetry just rubs your nose in it.

He makes a similar point elsewhere when he says, “one might tell someone: if you want to pronounce the salutation ‘Hail!’ expressively, you had better not think of hailstones as you say it.”

All of which makes me think of the difference between ‘effect’ and ‘affect’, which I think brings us close to the idea of the socially situated nature of language. I think that, for me anyway, these two words are homophones in English unless I’m using ‘affect’ in the sense of affecting a pose, although the dictionary seems to imply that affect is pronounced in the same way regardless of the meaning. Still, as the dictionary also says ‘affect’ and ‘effect’ are frequently confused. Although, also clearly, they are never confused when we hear them – only when we write them. No one says, “did you hear that – he said ‘effect’ but he obviously meant ‘affect’” – so, why not? Or rather, and more to the point, why do we distinguish in spelling what we don’t seem to distinguish in spoken language? A large part of me believes that this distinction in spelling is about stressing social superiority – that is, it is one more of the endless rules designed to make clear that one has ‘learnt the rules’, that one can display their ‘learning’ and then, presumably, use this display to imply their ‘higher intelligence’. These are things that make no difference to meaning, but only to taste and as displays of social position.

When people get obsessed with the spellings of ‘there’, ‘their’ and ‘they’re’ this is purely about showing off one’s academic capital – and little else. The fact these three words are homophones proves no one ever confuses their meaning when they are spoken. No one ever says ‘oh, you said you want ‘their’ lunch – I thought you meant ‘they’re lunch’. The smugness you might feel when you see these mistakes in written form has nothing to do with meaning but rather everything to do with social taste and distinction.

I think this is the idea Wittgenstein is alluding to when he says language is really language games – not in the least that they are trivial, quite the opposite, the only games we can play in this whole meaning business are language games – language derives the most important part of its meaning from the ‘game’ we are playing at the time, from how it is socially situated.

When I studied philosophy there would always come a time when someone in the class would say, and in all seriousness, ‘you know, what I see as red might not be anything at all like what you see as red – we just don’t know.’ I wouldn’t be surprised to find out that my face has a special twitch that it performs when I hear someone say this. Wittgenstein spends a lot of time talking about pain in this book – how it makes no sense for someone to wonder if they, themselves, are in pain, for instance. But since pain is like the ‘red’ idea above, that is, no one else can really feel my pain and so no one can even know if I’m not ‘faking it’, how can we have ended up having a word for it? Surely the word ‘pain’ has to refer to something and that something has to be a kind of ‘common knowledge’, but since I can only feel my pain, how can I know it is ‘common’? That is, it is as if I have something in a box that you are forbidden to see – and you have something in your box that I am forbidden to see – how can we know if they are the same thing? Wittgenstein does not say it in this way, but I think ultimately these are practical questions, rather than ones that can be solved by logic. ‘How do you know that what you see as red, I don’t see as green?’ Well, the game that we call, driving our cars, pretty well answers that question.

There is much more to this book than I can cover and much more than I've even understood – so much of it reminded me of Saussure, but also Chomsky (he even talks of deep and surface grammar). But this is a book of questions rather than a book of answers.

J-Man says

Čitati Vitgenštajna u okviru celokupne tradicije zapadne filozofije je kao da Odiseju po?nete da čitate od poslednjih nekoliko poglavlja, preskočivši sve što se pre toga zbilo. Dakle potrebno je imati vrlo dobro predznanje, pogotovo o nekim pitanjima koja su pokrenuta još u Platonovim dijalozima, pa onda i o raskolu između idealista i realista, uopšte o mnogo toga što dolazi pre. Tematika je obra?ena in medias res, nikakav se uvod ne pravi, niti se objašnjava istorijat ideja i problema koji se tretiraju, mnogi od njih su opisani teškim, tehničkim jezikom. To je i razumljivo jer sam Vitgenštajn nije ni nameravao da ovo delo objavi, jedina knjiga iza čijeg je štampanja on stajao bila je Traktatus.

Ukratko se može reći da je Vitgenštajn sve filozofske probleme smatrao pseudo-problemima, i u svojoj biti jezičkim besmislicama, a na to je i ukazao posebnom analizom. On je filozofiju u neku ruku sahranio i zatvorio je u okvire jezika kojim mi kao ljudska bića govorimo. Granice jezika kojim govorim su granice mog sveta. To je naravno veoma kontroverzna ideja i ostavila je velik trag u daljoj istoriji filozofije.

Kuriozitet - čovski je razvio teoriju o dubinskim padežima (koja je posle oborena) a kod Vitgenštajna u jednom pasusu nalazimo njegovo otvoreno podsmevanje bilo kakvoj ideji dubinske gramatike, naime naš svakodnevni, površinski jezik je više nego dovoljan da iskaže sve što se može reći, ili misliti. Tako?e, jedan od meni li?no najiritantnijih argumenata protiv ideje kauzalnosti - onaj Hjumov, po kojem činjenica da jednu pojavu na osnovu iskustva dovodimo u vezu sa drugom (npr. očekujemo izlazak Sunca na istoku) samo zato što se to dogodilo bezbroj puta ranije, ne mora nužno da znači da će se to dogoditi opet, Vitgenštajn odbacuje prosto pitajući: A kakav bolji argument od tog ti tražiš? I daje primer u kojem mi ne stavljamo ruku u vatru, bilo da smo se pre opekli ili ne. Dakle iskustvo je validan učitelj. Oduševio sam se.

Andrew says

As a philosopher, Wittgenstein isn't terribly systematic-- rather shocking for an "analytic" thinker. I would argue that he's an original, using analytic (thought experiments), continental (literary examples), pragmatic (everyday life as a litmus test), and Nietzschean (aphoristic style, attitude problem) elements. Hell, I'm almost loathe to call it philosophy at all. It's more like a gorgeous, dense, glittering puzzle box. I guarantee that when I read it again somewhere down the line, I'll get something entirely different out of it-- Wittgenstein seems less concerned with presenting a systematic argument than in prodding the reader's mind.

Alexander says

Exasperating, but worth it.

The syntax of the *Investigations* has a jaggedly Asperger's feel to it. Too often Wittgenstein sounds like a malfunctioning android jabbering its core protocols to itself, pacing in frantic circles, waving its arms in a vexed "Philosophy is the sickness and I'm the cure" manner. The loathsome blend of pedantry and vagueness throughout Part 1 -- hectoring in tone, nebulous in definition -- can be maddening. (As a

communicator, Wittgenstein often ranks with Kant or Heidegger, pitiless kraut magi of galling opacity. Your cognitive muscles will feel the burn.) Part 2 is rather less punishing, with enticing stimulants on nearly every page, while large swaths of Part 1 are a morale-stunting crawl through banks of fog. What's the deal?

Keep in mind that *PI* is a posthumous medley of notes and fragments that never benefitted from a final, rigorous copyedit. I've also been told that the recent 2009 translation by Peter Hacker and Joachim Schulte is less stodgy and peevish than the classic Anscombe version. An editor might be tempted to abridge Part 1 to a *Best Of...* showcase for non-academics, but the moments of profundity strewn throughout that portion (75% of the book) probably require the groundwork of the more wearying fragments to shore up Wittgenstein's vision.

So what's the payoff? Well, a panoptic voyage into speech and semantics that's both rousing, emancipatory, and at times, painfully obvious. The latter as we've washed ashore in a (post)philosophical age that takes so much of Wittgenstein for granted, but also because his expository style can read like an amnesiac head-trauma patient attempting to reconstruct language-use from scratch, poking and prodding at kindergarten-level grammar to explore how situational semantics weaves and bends through our intricately embodied, moment-to-moment actualities -- all tempered by an uneasy nostalgia for positivist puzzles boxed in the attic, radiant antiques that gave so much (faux) luster to our mental lives.

Wittgenstein wants us to detox, to scrape out the arterial plaque of "false problems." Fundamental confusions about language-use, he fears, have staggered us into an ersatz-world of epistemic mazes and circular obstacle-courses, a bad Philip K. Dick novel of cloying simulacra. *PI* aims to unjack us from this Matrix, wrench us back down into our bodies, a homecoming to and abashed rediscovery of the everyday. (Though Darwin is never mentioned in *PI*, Wittgenstein's corrosive presence in the philosophical canon is comparable to evolutionary models preempting theological sleight-of-hand. Post-theist armchair philosophy, in Wittgenstein's eyes, is still beholden to the system-erecting wankfest of priestly theorizing. To reiterate a familiar story, we've displaced ancient Platonic illusions into the matrices of "rationalist" projects which refuse to accept that our universe is non-linguistic, and so can never be mirrored or simulated by our anthropic, earthbound syntax. Our lives are short and our knowledge is crimped and narrow. It's best we have the humility to concede our limits, pending some dubious, self-immolating "transhumanist" upgrade.) As with Kant, wisdom often means knowing what we *can't* do.

"426. A picture is conjured up which seems to fix the sense *unambiguously*. The actual use, compared with that suggested by the picture, seems like something muddled. Here again we get the same thing as in set theory: the form of expression we use seems to have been designed for a god, who knows what we cannot know; he sees the whole of each of those infinite series and he sees into human consciousness. For us, of course, these forms of expression are like pontificals which we may put on, but cannot do much with, since we lack the effective power that would give these vestments meaning and purpose. In the actual use of expressions we make detours, we go by side roads. We see the straight highway before us, but of course we cannot use it, because it is permanently closed." (pg. 108, Blackwell 2001)

To prime yourself, download the two-part *Partially Examined Life* podcast "Wittgenstein on Language":
Episode #55 (1:53:07)

<http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/...>

Episode #56 (1:53:01)

<http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/...>

The roundtable discussion throughout is very good. My only niggle pertains to one of the participants bungling the renowned Piero Sraffa anecdote, mistakenly attributing it to G.E. Moore. (The fact that the remaining scholars claim never to have heard of it is equally strange. It's at least as famous as the Karl Popper fireplace poker episode – Wittgenstein even thanks Sraffa in his Preface. Oh well.)

PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS (translated by G.E.M. Anscombe)
A+ for substantive vision and historical importance, C- for expository clarity.

Special bonus track:

Was Wittgenstein Right? by Paul Horwich (NYU), *The Stone*, *New York Times* Opinionator blog, 3/3/13.

Rowland Pasaribu says

After the publication of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein felt he had nothing more to contribute to philosophy. He spent the 1920s in a variety of jobs. He was a schoolteacher in a small Austrian village, a gardener, and an amateur architect. During this time, he still had some connection with the philosophical world, notably in his conversations with Frank Ramsey on the *Tractatus* that gradually led him to recognize that this work was flawed in a number of respects. In the late twenties, he also came into contact with the Vienna Circle of logical positivists who were greatly inspired by his work on the *Tractatus*.

Somewhat reluctantly, Wittgenstein accepted a teaching position at Cambridge in 1929 (the *Tractatus* was submitted as his doctoral dissertation), and spent most of the rest of his life there. He remained skeptical about philosophy, and persuaded many of his students to pursue more practical careers in medicine or elsewhere. Throughout the thirties and early forties, he worked out his more mature philosophy, but did not publish.

Wittgenstein wrote in a series of painstakingly edited notebooks. He would constantly revise, cut, and edit, going through more than a dozen drafts before he arrived in 1945 at what is now published as the first part of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The same process went into the formation of Part II of the work, though it never reached a state that Wittgenstein felt was ready for publication. Wittgenstein insisted that his work not be published until after his death; he succumbed to cancer in 1951, and the *Investigations* were published in 1953. Following their publication, a number of writings culled from Wittgenstein's notebooks or from lecture notes taken by his students at Cambridge were also made public. These include the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, *On Certainty*, three volumes on the philosophy of psychology, and *The Blue and Brown Books*, which collect a series of lectures he dictated in the early 1930's.

The *Philosophical Investigations* were completed and then published in a Europe that was just emerging from the shadow of the Second World War. A general sense of malaise pervaded Western Europe as it slowly set about rebuilding and coming to terms with the scale of destruction that had been wreaked. At the same time, the Soviet Union had cemented its hold on Eastern Europe, had developed the nuclear bomb, and was rapidly working toward launching rockets into space. People feared that Europe would be dominated by communism.

This malaise and reconstruction was reflected not only in politics, but also in the arts and letters. The holocaust and the devastation of the war had soundly demolished the 19th century myth of evolution and progress. In a world that made increasingly little sense to the people in it, narratives meant to explain and justify the course of history or the arts on a grand scale no longer seemed plausible.

There is no straightforward definition of postmodernism, but Wittgenstein's piecemeal approach of language-games, his critique of the notion of ultimate grounds of justification, and his mistrust of general statements about the world or the meanings of words may be seen as characteristic of postmodern thought.

In abandoning logic, Wittgenstein abandons one of the primary tools of analytic philosophy, thus breaking with the tradition established by Frege and Russell. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein's emphasis on the significance of language is inherited from these predecessors.

Wittgenstein is also deeply concerned with the growing field of psychology. William James, one of the pioneers of modern psychology, receives as much mention by name as any other thinker in the *Investigations*. Psychology was being established as a scientific field with its own experimental method, and any failures of psychological methodology were passed off as the growing pains of a science in its infancy. The *Investigations* deal at length with the fear that psychology is on the wrong track altogether because its fundamental ideas contain deep philosophical confusion.

Another strain we can detect in the *Investigations* is an interest in the ultimate grounds of justification. If one proposition can only be justified by a second, more certain proposition, how can we find propositions that are themselves absolutely certain and thus not needing justification? Logical positivism in particular sought to distinguish sharply between synthetic and analytic propositions, the former stating facts and the latter outlining the rules or linguistic framework in which synthetic propositions could be justified. Wittgenstein addresses logical positivism as much as anything else when he criticizes the idea that there must be an ultimate ground of justification.

The *Investigations* open with a quote from St. Augustine's *Confessions*, which describes the process of learning language in terms of learning the names of objects. It appears that there is nothing wrong with saying that words name things and that we teach people the meanings of words by pointing to the objects that they name. The trouble arises when we take this connection between word and thing as the fundamental relationship that fixes language to the world. This relationship can only be seen to exist once a great deal of the machinery of language, context, and usage are already in place. We would not say the words in a four-word language between builders, consisting of "block!" "pillar!" "slab!" and "beam!" are names of objects, because they can only be understood as such in contrast to names of colors, prepositions, adjectives, and the like. Meaning is not fixed by the relationship between words and things, but by how words are used.

The *Investigations* have a peculiar literary style that is difficult to characterize. Very little of Wittgenstein's writing even resembles standard philosophical argument. Instead, we get questions, hesitant hypotheses, doubts, temptations, and the like. Instead of giving us a monologue in which he lays out his position, Wittgenstein engages us in a dialogue with an interlocutor. The interlocutory voice, usually (but not always) found in quotation marks, is the driving force that propels the *Investigations* forward. The interlocutor voices the temptations that are liable to lead us into philosophical theorizing. In any given section of the text, the interlocutory voice raises objections to Wittgenstein's anti-metaphysical outlook, and Wittgenstein responds to these objections. By means of this dialogue, Wittgenstein does not bring us to any definite answers, but to an end to questioning.

One of the major themes in the early sections of the text (particularly sections 65–91) is that the meanings of words are not rigidly defined. Wittgenstein uses the example of "game," showing us that there is no catch-all definition that will include everything we call a game and exclude everything that we do not call a game. This conclusion can be, and is, extended to a wide range of terms that philosophers often try to include within a single definition: "language," "understanding," "meaning," "reading," "seeing," and so on. This position reflects Wittgenstein's remark at section 43 that the meaning of a word is determined by its use. Definition is not something prior to the use of a word that fixes its meaning and determines how it will be used. Rather, definition is a descriptive tool that reflects the various ways a word is used. This criticism of the notion of fixity of meaning sets the stage for Wittgenstein's work in the later sections of the book to show that there is no mental state or process that corresponds to such concepts as "meaning," "understanding," "believing," and so on. If there is not one fixed meaning or use for these words, then they cannot possibly refer to a single, fixed concept.

The Investigations are difficult to understand not only because they introduce a number of unfamiliar themes and methods, but also because these themes and methods are introduced in the service of a new conception of what philosophy ought to do. The Investigations consist to a large extent of an extended criticism of old ways of philosophical thinking. Philosophy has generally concerned itself with metaphysical theories and deep explanations that cut to the core of the concepts that govern human life and reality. Wittgenstein suggests that this kind of theorizing can only lead us astray: there are no concepts or explanations hiding beneath the surface of everyday phenomena. These metaphysical theories are built upon unwarranted assumptions or generalizations, often born out of the structure of our grammar. The purpose of Wittgensteinian philosophy is to lead us to recognize these temptations toward metaphysical thinking, and to learn to subdue them.

This is not to say that we are better off not doing philosophy at all, or that Wittgenstein represents an end to philosophy. Wittgenstein's "therapeutic" method of identifying temptations and then showing them to be mistaken does not simply bring us back to where we were before we started thinking philosophically. Some philosophers have identified Wittgenstein's method as a method of self-knowledge. It brings us to a deeper understanding of ourselves, our thoughts, and our temptations. The kinds of temptations Wittgenstein identifies do not only crop up when we sit down to study philosophy; they are a general characteristic of abstract thinking. As long as we wish to think abstractly, we are liable to commit the sorts of errors Wittgenstein identifies. His concept of philosophy is a honed method by which we can avoid this sort of error.

We commonly think of the role of justification as providing a definite ground for holding the beliefs, claims, etc., which we are justifying. Wittgenstein's discussion of rule following in sections 185–242 is the foremost among a number of discussions that show us that justification plays no such role. If we accept that every rule is open to various possible interpretations (for instance, " $\rightarrow$ " could mean "go left" or "go right"), then every rule will require a deeper level of justification—another rule—to fix which is the correct interpretation. But then, that further rule is also open to various interpretations. If any given rule is open to various possible interpretations, there is no ultimate ground of justification upon which the correct interpretation can be fixed.

Wittgenstein does not conclude that there is no ultimate justification or correct interpretation. Rather, he suggests that we are looking for the wrong thing when we look for ultimate grounds of correctness. The mistake we make is in accepting that every rule is open to various possible interpretations. The sign, " $\rightarrow$ " is not open to various interpretations: we never stop to wonder if it means "go left" or "go right." Interpretation and justification are not applicable to everything, nor do they serve to determine correctness. They are only called upon in genuine cases of ambiguity where we do not know how to go on without a justified interpretation.

The theme of privacy is most explicitly discussed in sections 250–300, but it runs throughout the rest of the Investigations. It is difficult to articulate clearly what Wittgenstein is doing here, largely because he is dealing with ideas that he shows are largely inarticulate. Roughly speaking, he sets about deconstructing the mystification we feel when faced with peculiarities of the inner life.

Wittgenstein devotes a great deal of the Investigations to the peculiarities of talking about our inner sensations. On one hand, it seems an obvious truism that I have a kind of access to my own sensations that other people do not. On the other hand, Wittgenstein shows us that any attempt to formulate this truism as a substantial metaphysical fact is doomed. Though I uncontrovertibly experience my pains in a way that no one else does, I cannot talk about them in terms of "knowledge," because claims about knowledge presuppose that there is something to be known, and hence something that might not be known. My relationship to my inner sensations is not one of knowing, because I could not but experience them. We misunderstand this fact when we claim that other people have limited or only "indirect" knowledge of my inner sensations. Other people's knowledge seems limited in comparison to my own knowledge, but if we accept that what I have is not knowledge, then these limits disappear.

Randal Samstag says

Wittgenstein: Apostle, soldier, school teacher, hermit, mathematician, architect, inheritor of the Chair of the Moral Sciences Club from Moore at Cambridge, cousin of F. von Hayek, scion of the wealthiest (Jewish according to the Nuremberg laws) industrialist family in Austria who renounced his fortune. W was one of the most intimidating characters in the English philosophy scene. Take a look at *Wittgenstein's Poker* to get just how impossible a character he was.

W has influenced every significant philosopher that followed him. Remarkable in so many ways, perhaps foremost for his turning away from the views (the picture theory) expressed in the only book published during his lifetime, the *Tractatus*, which made him the revered Wunderkind of Logical Positivism. The *Tractatus* may be seen as a bizarre updating of Berkeley. The *PI* takes this theory to the woodshed. Any person who wishes to call herself educated in this century should have read at least the first 50 pages of the *PI*, which explain W's rejection of the picture theory in favor a theory of language games as the way to understand meaning. Russell, who wrote the introduction to the *Tractatus* never got it. If we try, we can.

Scott says

To date the most overrated work of 20th century analytic thought (if one wishes to truly count the later Wittgenstein as an analytic). Written in a fragmentary styled not seen in the traditional philosophical corpus since Spinoza, Wittgenstein often leaves the reader guessing at what he could possibly be referencing. The work starts out quite strong as a critique of Russell and Moore, concerning their conceptions of language and its logic. But as the work progresses, many philosophers mistakenly take the hermeneutical gap between author and reader to be a sign of Wittgenstein's genius; instead of the proper and simpler idea that Wittgenstein himself is working with a fragmentary mind. Indeed, the fragmentary style allows many different thinkers to draw quite disparate conclusions from the same passages. I suspect the real reason everyone loves Wittgenstein is they love that he provides a means by which to buttress one's own theoretical predispositions.

Manny says

I couldn't possibly do *Philosophical Investigations* justice in a review. Even though I've read it several times, I don't understand more than a fraction of it. The unworthy thought does sometimes cross my mind that its author didn't understand it either, but you understand I'm just jealous because I'm not a Great Philosopher. I would so like to be one.

Assuming you aren't an aspiring Great Philosopher, my advice is not to take this book too seriously... it is very frustrating. Skim it quickly, then check out "Philosophical Tribulations" by Flash qFiasco and the Uncyclopedia article on Wittgenstein, which may help you appreciate the funny side of this unfinished masterpiece.

I had to try it myself. See my review of *Biggles of the Camel Squadron*.

I particularly recommend the following passage, from the end of Dr. qFiasco's article:

38. The wind cries Mary, but it can't call Bob. Why?

39. Come down off the peaks of obscure-rant-ism with your rucksack of little grammatical fictions and just whack balls around on the croquet pitch of mundanity. Sometimes a simile makes me puke.

40. If I say 'raise your arm,' you know perfectly well what to do and you raise your arm. Now suppose I say, 'Want to raise your arm. Only--don't really raise it, just want to.' Are you quite sure you know what to do in this case? Suppose I say, 'Want to raise your arm tomorrow.' Now suppose I said that last week, and say it again next week; is this the same want as before, or a different one? 'Of course all those queer wants go on in me, and now I want to say--' Oh, to hell with what you always want to say. Get on with it!

41. My philosophy can only be understood as bad poetry.

42. Philosophy is the disease for which it is supposed to be the cure, but isn't.

We have met the enemy and they are us. (The Jewishness of this remark.)
