

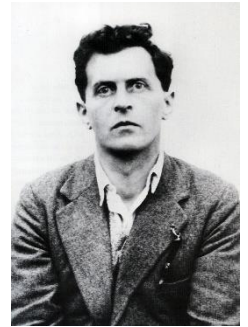
Later Wittgenstein Conception of Philosophy

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

(Wittgenstein, *Preface, Philosophical Investigations*, p. xe)

'God grant the philosopher insight into what lies in front of everyone's eyes.'

(Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p.72e)



Philosophical Investigations central themes

- Language and psychology. (MG 9)
- **The 'theme of reorientation'**. (MG 71)

Style and Form

- Dialectical structure – essential part of method. (MG p.29) - Unclear who is W in the "conversation". (e.g. *PI* 209)
- W's interlocutor - Expression of temptation to misunderstand and resistance to "therapy".
- The 'therapeutic voice' (MG p.22): 'The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness.' (*PI* 255)
- No clear final conclusions - for W: it is method and style that is characteristic, not any doctrine – not offering 'any kind of theory'. (*PI* 109)

Beyond theorisation

- Augustine says in the Confessions "quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quadratic scup; si quaerenti explicare velum, nescio." ["What then is time? If nobody asks me, I know well enough what it is; but if I am asked what it is and trying to explain, I am baffled."] (*PI* 89) - traditional metaphysical import of philosophy: answers to the "big questions".
- Not here! '(One of the greatest impediments for philosophy is the expectation of new, deep/unheard of/elucidations.)' (*PI* p.230) 'we feel as if we had to *penetrate* phenomena' (*PI* 90) – the "metaphysical need". Why?
- 'Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of Metaphysics and leads philosophers into complete darkness.' (*BB*, p.18)
- 'Compare the solution of philosophical problems with the fairy tale gift that seems magical in the enchanted castle and if it is looked at in daylight is nothing but an ordinary bit of iron...'. (*CV* pp. 13/14e)
- Contra reductionism: 'I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything. Philosophy really is "purely descriptive."' (*BB*, p18) 'We must do away with all *explanation* and description alone must take its place'. (*PI* 109) Philosophy 'leaves everything as it is'. (*PI* 124)
- Method: that which 'simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain'. (*PI* 126)

- Targets: 'the phantasms, myths, superstitions and chimeras' of theoretism. (MG p.21) 'For what is hidden... is of no interest to us.' (PI 126) 'we may not advance any kind of theory.' (PI 109)

Resistance

- *Preface* pessimism over reception: - 'very much against the grain of some of you.' (WLFM p.103) - 'the difficulty of a change of attitude'. (P, p.162) "It is not a stupid prejudice." (PI 340)
- Moore: "One difficulty was that his method required a 'sort of thinking' to which we are not accustomed and to which we have not been trained - a sort of thinking very different from what is required in the sciences." (WL p.44)
- 'Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stood.' (PI 118)

Why the focus on language?

- W's humanism? 'It is sometimes said that animals do not talk because they lack the mental capacity. And this means: "they do not think, and that is why they do not talk." But — they simply do not talk. Or to put it better: they do not use language — if we except the most primitive forms of language. — Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.' (PI 25)
- 'We are struggling with language.
We are engaged in a struggle with language.' (CV p.13e)
- Language mis-use forms philosophical misunderstandings. 'a misunderstanding of the logic of our language'. (PI 93) 'What gives point to philosophy is this very fact that propositions and other utterances can be misunderstood. If there was no possibility of misunderstanding there would be no philosophy.' (HA 64)
- 'Language contains the same traps for everyone; the immense network of well-kept/passible/false paths. And thus we see one person after another walking the same paths and we know already where he will make a turn, where he will keep on going straight ahead without noticing the turn etc., etc. So what I should do is erect signposts at all the junctions where there are wrong turnings, to help people past the danger points.' (CV 25e)
- The roots of philosophical problems: 'as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language.' (PI 111)
- Philosophical problems emerge in withdrawal from practical engagement in human life. 'when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.' (PI 132)

How does language mislead?

- 'A man will be imprisoned in a room with a door that is unlocked and opens inwards; as long as it does not occur to him to pull rather than push it.' (CV p.42)
- Language misleads through false analogies - surface similarities. (MG13) 'a false analogy leads to continual strife and unrest'. (BT 410) "A pain *in* my head" - "A beetle *in* my box".
- 'A simile that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance, and this disquiets us.' (PI 112) E.g. "*I understood and the lights went on*". 'A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.' (PI 115)

- 'A philosophical problem has the form: "I don't know my way about".' (PI 123) The philosopher: 'screaming as it were in his powerlessness, for as long as he has not yet discovered the root of his confusion'. (BT 420-1)

Showing not explaining

- 'Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it.
For it cannot give it any foundation either.
It leaves everything as it is.' (PI 124)
- 'The problems are solved, not by reporting new experience, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.' (PI 109) 'For philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday.' (PI 38)

Grammatical investigations

Philosophers who say: "after death a timeless state supervenes", or "at death a timeless state supervenes" & do not notice that they have used in a temporal sense the words "after" & "at" & "supervenes" & that temporality is embedded in their grammar. (*Culture and Value*, p.26e).

'The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.) ...we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is striking and most powerful.' (PI 129)

- Solution: The 'fog' (PI 5): dispersed by seeing how concepts function, through study of particular and concrete cases in use. De-puzzlement: 'not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known'. (PI 109)
- W's investigation? 'a grammatical one'. (PI 90) 'If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a *grammatical* fiction.' (PI 307)
- 'A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words.—Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connexions'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*. The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (PI 122)
- What does W mean by 'grammar'? Not language as system of signs but 'to our use of words, to the structure of our practice of using language.' (MG p.14) Language as 'spatial and temporal phenomenon' (PI 108) – language-in-use. Detailed workings of areas of language. By which process 'we remind ourselves... of the *kind of statement* that we make about phenomena'. (PI 90)
- 'Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language.—Some of them can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another; this may be called an "analysis" of our forms of expression, for the process is sometimes like one of taking a thing apart.' (PI 90)
- Showing differences: 'we want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one of many possible orders; not *the* order'. (PI 132)
- '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.’ (PI 98) ‘not to correct the proposition, but to understand it’. (HA 62)

- We see ‘nothing out of the ordinary is involved.’ (PI 94)

Techniques of analysis

‘we now demonstrate a method, by examples.... Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem.

There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.’ (PI 133)

- Attention to particulars
- Imagining scenarios of use.
- How would we teach it to a child?
- How we would verify how it applies in a particular case?
- Role of disagreement and certainty
- Usable if certain facts of nature were different?
- What would we say in peculiar cases? (MG14)

Goal

- ‘It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.

For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear. The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.’ (PI 133)

- ‘**What is your aim in philosophy?—To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.**’ (PI 309).

Abbreviations and Bibliography

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BT	Wittgenstein. W., <i>The Big Typescript: TS 213, German English Scholars' Edition</i> , 2005, C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian E. Aue (trans.), Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell
CV	Wittgenstein. W., <i>Culture and Value</i> , 1980, G. H. von Wright (ed.), P. Winch (trans.), Oxford: Blackwell
HA	Hartnack, J., <i>Wittgenstein and Modern Philosophy</i> , 1962, Methuen.
MG	McGinn, M., <i>Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations</i> , 1997, Routledge. Monk, Ray, 1990, <i>Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius</i> , New York: Macmillan.
PI	Wittgenstein. W., <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , 1953, G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees (eds.), G.E.M. Anscombe (trans.), Oxford: Blackwell.
TLP	Wittgenstein. W., <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.</i> , 1922, C. K. Ogden (trans.), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
WL	Wittgenstein. W., <i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932–1935</i> , 1979, A. Ambrose (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell.