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WITTGENSTEIN'S *PHILOSOPHICAL* *INVESTIGATIONS*

In this new introduction to a classic philosophical text, David Stern examines Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. He gives particular attention to both the arguments of the *Investigations* and the way in which the work is written, and especially to the role of dialogue in the book. While he concentrates on helping the reader to arrive at his or her own interpretation of the primary text, he also provides guidance to the unusually wide range of existing interpretations, and to the reasons why the *Investigations* have inspired such a diversity of readings. Following closely the text of the *Investigations* and meant to be read alongside it, this survey is accessible to readers with no previous background in philosophy. It is well suited to university-level courses on Wittgenstein, but can also be read with profit by students in other disciplines.

DAVID G. STERN is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Iowa. He is the author of *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (1995), editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (1996) and co-editor, with Béla Szabados, of *Wittgenstein Reads Weininger: A Reassessment* (2004).

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DAVID G. STERN

University of Iowa



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Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Cheryl

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page ix
<i>Note on the text</i>	xi
Introduction	I
Chapter 1 <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> §§1–693: an elementary exposition	10
1.1 The ‘method of §2’	10
1.2 The central arguments of the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>	15
1.3 Seeing the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> as a dialogue	21
Chapter 2 From the <i>Tractatus</i> to the <i>Investigations</i> : two prefaces	29
2.1 Seeing the <i>Investigations</i> ‘in the right light’	29
2.2 Pyrrhonism in the <i>Tractatus</i>	40
2.3 Pyrrhonism in the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>	46
Chapter 3 The opening of the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> : the motto	56
3.1 Beginning at the beginning	56
3.2 The motto as a guide to the text: genetic readings, immanent readings, and beyond	59
Chapter 4 The critique of referential theories of meaning and the paradox of ostension: §§1–64	72
4.1 Augustine on language learning: §1	72
4.2 Language-games: §§1–25	87
4.3 The paradox of ostensive definition: §§26–38	90
4.4 Subliming names: §§39–64	99

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
Chapter 5	The critique of rule-based theories of meaning and the paradox of explanation: §§65–133	108
5.1	The general form of the proposition and the paradox of explanation: §§65–88	108
5.2	Subliming logic: §§89–133	121
5.3	Metaphysical and everyday use and the paradox of intentionality: §§89–133 and §§428–36	132
Chapter 6	The critique of rule-based theories of meaning and the paradoxes of rule-following: §§134–242	139
6.1	The paradoxes of rule-following	139
6.2	Subliming rules	152
Chapter 7	The critique of a private language and the paradox of private ostension: §§243–68	171
7.1	On the very idea of a private language: §§243–55	171
7.2	The paradox of private ostension: §§256–68	175
	Conclusion	186
	<i>Recommended further reading</i>	187
	<i>References</i>	194
	<i>Index</i>	204

Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

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Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

'The Central Arguments of the *Philosophical Investigations*: An Elementary Exposition'. Forthcoming in the *Journal of Foreign Philosophy* 17 (1) (2004). Forthcoming (in French) in the proceedings of the international symposium on 'Wittgenstein Aujourd'hui', Nice, France. An edited version of this paper was presented at the seminar on 'Reading Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* Fifty Years Later', Bertinoro, Italy, October 2003. Source for 1.1–1.3.

'The Methods of the *Tractatus*: Beyond Positivism and Metaphysics?' In *Logical Empiricism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, a volume in the Pittsburgh-Konstanz Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science series, edited by Paolo Parrini, Wes Salmon, and Merrilee Salmon, 125–56. Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press, 2003. Source for the part of chapter 2 on the interpretation of the *Tractatus*.

'How to Read the *Philosophical Investigations*.' Forthcoming (in French) in a special issue of *Philosophie*, accompanying translations of the first reviews of the *Philosophical Investigations*, 2004. Source for 2.1, 4.3, and 5.2.

'Nestroy, Augustine, and the Opening of the *Philosophical Investigations*.' In *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy: A Reassessment after 50 Years*, pp. 429–49. Proceedings of the 24th International Wittgenstein Symposium, edited by Rudolf Haller and Klaus Puhl. Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 2002. Source for 3.1, 3.2, and 4.1.

'Sociology of Science, Rule Following and Forms of Life.' In *History of Philosophy of Science: New Trends and Perspectives*, pp. 347–67, edited by Michael Heidelberger and Friedrich Stadler. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002. A source for the discussion of Winch and Kripke in chapter 6.

'The Practical Turn.' In *The Blackwell Guidebook to the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, pp. 185–206, edited by Stephen P. Turner and Paul Roth. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. A source for the discussion of Winch and Kripke in chapter 6.

Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Note on the text*

During his lifetime, Wittgenstein published only one philosophical book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, written while he was a soldier in the First World War and published shortly afterwards. After publishing a short conference contribution in 1929, which he had repudiated by the time he was due to read it, none of his subsequent work satisfied him enough that he was willing to give it to the printer. In his will, he left his unpublished papers, usually referred to as his *Nachlass*, consisting of approximately twelve thousand pages of manuscript and eight thousand pages of typescript, to G. E. M. Anscombe, Rush Rhees, and G. H. von Wright. Shortly after Wittgenstein's death, Anscombe and Rhees edited, and Anscombe translated, *Philosophical Investigations*, the book Wittgenstein had worked on from 1929 to 1949.

All references to the *Philosophical Investigations* are in parentheses in the body of the text. Material from the numbered sections in Part I is referred to by section number. For more fine-grained references, I follow these conventions: §1a refers to the first paragraph of section 1, §1b3 to the third sentence of the second paragraph. A reference to the remainder of the text provides two page numbers: the first is the one for all English and bilingual texts published prior to 2001; the second is to the revised third edition, published in 2001. For instance, 'PI II.xi, 194/166' is a reference to a passage within section xi of Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*, to be found on page 166 of the edition published in 2001, and on page 194 of any earlier

Parts of this note are based on my paper 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Philosophy' (Stern 1996a), which provides a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Wittgenstein's published and unpublished writings.

Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

edition. The author/date reference system is used for all other published sources. References to Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* typescripts (TS) and manuscripts (MS) use the numbering system in von Wright's catalogue of the Wittgenstein papers, except for TS 213, a lengthy rearrangement and reworking of material dating from the first half of the 1930s, where I use the name by which it is commonly known, the Big Typescript.¹ The *Nachlass* is available in a CD-ROM edition, produced by the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (Wittgenstein 2000), which permits the accompanying software to display the text in a number of formats. For instance, when studying a heavily revised typescript, one can move between a colour photograph of each page, a 'normalized' text which shows the text as finally revised, and a 'diplomatic' text which shows all revisions, deletions, and variant wordings. As this electronic edition is organized on the basis of the von Wright catalogue, it can be used to look up any reference to the source typescripts and manuscripts.

Translations from the *Philosophical Investigations* are based on Anscombe's revised translation, in the 2001 edition of the text; where I have modified them, this is indicated by an asterisk after the parenthetical reference. For most English-speaking readers, Anscombe's translation has a status comparable to the King James Bible's in its heyday. However, it is, in certain respects, a highly unreliable guide to Wittgenstein's German. First, the translation of a number of important terms obscures Wittgenstein's choice of words. For instance, 'define' is always used to translate *definieren*, to define, and sometimes for *erklären*, to explain. Thus §43a, often glossed as Wittgenstein's definition of meaning as use, does not say anything about *defining* meaning as use. Roughly speaking, it says that in many cases we can *explain* the meaning of a word by looking at how it is used. Second, there are many places where Anscombe does not follow Wittgenstein's grammar as closely as possible. Finally, much of Wittgenstein's style, his care in his choice of phrasing, and his conversational informality and intimacy is lost in Anscombe's English. (See 5.1 on use and explanation; Stern 1996b on the translation.)

¹ Von Wright's catalogue was first published in the *Philosophical Review* in 1969; an updated version can be found in Wittgenstein 1993, 480–510. The Big Typescript will be published, with an English translation, in November 2004 (Wittgenstein 2004).

Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Note on the text*

xiii

In reading Wittgenstein, it is essential to keep in mind that his characteristic unit of writing was not the essay or the book, but the 'remark' (*Bemerkung*). A remark is a unit of text that can be as short as a single sentence or as long as a sequence of paragraphs spanning several pages. The beginning and end of a remark in his own writing – and in most of the published texts – is usually indicated by an extra blank line between paragraphs. The numbering of the remarks in Part I of *Philosophical Investigations* is Wittgenstein's; however, in most of the other published texts, including Part II, the numbering is the editors'. Throughout his life, his writing took the form of a large number of these relatively small units which he repeatedly revised and rearranged. In the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein describes his writing as composed of 'remarks, short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another' (PI, vii/ix). During the 1930s Wittgenstein experimented with a number of ways of organizing the material into a single coherent piece of writing, in which 'the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks' (PI, vii/ix), none of which entirely satisfied him. Eventually, he realized that he would never succeed, that 'the best I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks' (PI, vii/ix).

The way of writing and thinking that Wittgenstein describes in his Preface led him to continually rewrite and rearrange his work, with the result that it can be extremely difficult to separate one piece of writing from another. Much of the groundwork for tracing the relations between Wittgenstein's drafts and revisions was carried out by von Wright and two of his colleagues at the University of Helsinki, Heikki Nyman and André Maury. After he published the catalogue of the Wittgenstein papers in 1969, von Wright continued his research into the process of revision that led to the production of the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*. The results of this research are summarized in his highly informative studies of the origins of those books, reprinted in his *Wittgenstein* (von Wright 1982). The meticulously edited 'Helsinki edition' of the principal sources of the *Philosophical Investigations* reconstructed several successive stages in the construction of the *Investigations*. It showed not just the result of Wittgenstein's revisions to the typescript or manuscript, but also

Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

Note on the text

where revisions were inserted, variant readings, deletions, and the like, and every significant difference between their text and the 'final' text, thus providing an invaluable overview of some of the principal stages in the composition of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The Helsinki edition formed the basis for Joachim Schulte's 'critical-genetic edition' of the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 2001), which identifies five distinct stages or 'versions' of the text of Part I. For our purposes, three of them, the Early, Intermediate, and Late Investigations are particularly significant. These were put together ca. 1936–9, 1942–4, and 1945–6, respectively. The Early Investigations is divided into two parts: the first, which was typed up in 1937, is closely related to §§1–188 of Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*, although it contains a number of remarks that were either substantially changed or dropped from later versions of the book. Part II of the early version of the *Investigations* is the basis for the published Part I of the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. The Intermediate Investigations consists of a slight revision and rearrangement of the material in the first part of the Early Investigations, followed by roughly half of the material in §§189–425 of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The Late Investigations, consisting of two heavily revised copies of the typescript that was used in printing Part I (the printer's copy of the typescript has been lost), was constructed ca. 1945, primarily by adding remarks from *Bemerkungen I* (TS 228), a typescript containing a large number of remarks selected from his previous work. The manuscript of what we now know as Part II was composed in 1946–8 and probably reached its final form in 1949; the printer's copy of the typescript used in publishing the book has also been lost. The critical-genetic edition of these versions of the *Philosophical Investigations* consists of the full text of each version, accompanied by an editorial apparatus which gives variant readings, and the closest typescript and manuscript sources of the remarks. This apparatus, together with a copy of the relevant parts of the *Nachlass*, makes it possible to explore some of the successive formulations and rearrangements of Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Investigations*, although it does not attempt to trace the full genealogy of each remark.

In an editorial note to the *Investigations*, Anscombe and Rhees said that if 'Wittgenstein had published his work himself, he would have suppressed a good deal of what is in the last thirty pages or so of Part I

Cambridge University Press

0521814421 - Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction

David G. Stern

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Note on the text*

xv

[§§525–693] and worked what is in Part II, with further material, into its place' (PI, vi/vii). Von Wright has suggested that Wittgenstein may have planned to use the remarks published as *Zettel* as a way of “bridging the gap” between the present Part I and Part II of the *Investigations*.² Wittgenstein's final Preface, dated January 1945, was, in any case, written before Part II was even drafted, and nothing he wrote provides any support for the view that he regarded what we know as ‘Part II’ as the second part of the *Investigations*. Unfortunately, the typescripts used to print the *Investigations* were lost shortly afterward, and there is no surviving typescript of Part II. There are, however, two surviving typescripts of the Preface and what we now know as Part I, both of which Wittgenstein had revised extensively. Although neither corresponds precisely to the published text, the book almost always follows one typescript or the other; the published text is apparently the result of collating the revisions from the two typescripts. However, there is no indication, either in Wittgenstein's hand or anyone else's, that the main text, which begins on the same page as the Preface ends, is to be printed as ‘Part I’. While the editors' inclusion of Part II is presumably based on Wittgenstein's verbal request, the fact remains that it is only the last of a number of arrangements that he had settled on for the time being. But because he never carried out the revisions that he envisaged, ‘Part II’ is a collection of material he might have used in revising Part I, not a sequel.

² Von Wright 1982, 136.