

New Critical Reasoning

What Wittgenstein Offered

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1. PROMO

Wittgenstein didn't leave us "philosophy"; he left a pathway for a more perspicuous intellect. This came about because he possessed abnormal cognitive traits that were hyper-sensitive to context.

With these tools, he discovered that language was predicated upon three *natural* phenomena: (a) the task being signified, (b) the social traits being implicated; (c) and the picture that emerged before the mind's eye. This discovery was revolutionary. It meant that language wasn't a function of a mental state or an "intention"; it was a function of how the intellect behaved in the speech act. Meaning was usage—or rather, the intellect, used.

This completely alters how we must think conceptually. And it changes how we must perceive arguments that use not only general words (like game and chair) but also scientific terms. It requires us to point people to what their intellect is doing in a speech act—called "therapy"—rather than focusing upon the premises in an argument. Not since Aristotle has the subject of critical reasoning been so revolutionized.

And it also radically changes how value judgments, religious beliefs and ethics are perceived to work. Each involves fitting a picture into a social context, a task that requires connoisseur judgment.

It is a mistake to think that the field of philosophy owns Wittgenstein. Anyone interested in better qualitative acuity needs to both understand and *teach* the new critical thinking.

2. MARKET

The book is written for a multidisciplinary audience. It fits four specific publics:

- Academics interested in language, philosophy, cognition & value judgment. This would include political science, linguistics, philosophy, humanities, and psychology.
- Critical reasoning courses (supplemental text).
- Wittgenstein studies and philosophy.
- Graduate studies (qualitative methods).

Title: New Critical Reasoning: *What Wittgenstein Offered*.

Length: 70,000 words:

- 16 chapters.
- 8 tables.
- 57 greyscale illustrations.
—*conceptual in nature, nested into the text.*

Status: 100% Complete.

Comparable Books:

- Daniel Kahneman, *Fast and Slow Thinking* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).
- Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (William Morrow & Company, 2007).
- Alfred J. Ayer, *Language, Truth & Logic* (Dover Publications, 1952).

Competitors:

- Stella Cottrell, *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument (Palgrave Study Skills)*, 2nd ed., (Palgrave Macmillan 2011).
- John Verdi, *Fat Wednesday, Wittgenstein on Aspects* (Paul Dry Books, 2010).

3. WHY NEEDED

This book offers two large benefits. The first is that it makes Ludwig Wittgenstein accessible not only to a multidisciplinary audience, but to general readership. No longer is he something esoteric belonging to an island of scholars. Secondly, when a change occurs in the paradigm for critical thinking, it affects many fields. This book has content that directly concerns philosophers, politics scholars and linguists—and any field that uses language to makes assertions (i.e., scientists, lawyers, graduate students, academics, etc.).

4. HOW IS IT UNIQUE

Wittgenstein:

1. **Autism?** This book confronts what made Wittgenstein's functioning so strangely pronounced in some areas of thinking yet challenged in others. This makes him accessible (explainable) rather than being an incomprehensible genius who must perpetually be misunderstood. And it also avoids the other pitfall of trying to understand him using a standard framework for judging "arguments." Neither of these works.
2. **Unifying Theory:** This book unifies the disparate ways that Wittgenstein is seen. It silences disputes between behaviorists, cognitivists, pragmatists, naturalists, mystics, continentals, new and old Wittgensteinians—and even, lately, American v. European scholars.
3. **Three Natural Phenomena:** The most significant accomplishment may be the discovery of three core phenomena in Wittgenstein's thought: (a) the task signified by a speech act; (b) the traits implicated by the social context; and (c) the picture that emerges before the mind's eye. These are not philosophies; they are *natural phenomena* that occur during thinking and therefore affect critical reasoning.

Critical Thinking:

1. **Assertion:** The book provides new rules for judging assertion. Things we say are judged based on how the intellect is behaving in the speech act. This requires the skills of introspection, subtlety, experience and sensitivity. Advanced critical reasoning requires a *reflective* intellect. Not since Aristotle has this subject been so reformed.
2. **Problem Sets:** Problem sets are offered to help students and academics acquire better qualitative acuity.
3. **Framing & Metaphor:** Building on the research of neuroscientists, the role of "picturing" in argument is explored and made useful for critical reasoning.
4. **Definitions:** When people disagree about terms, they don't have different definitions; they simply offer a different vernacular (use). In such cases, they often disagree over how to behave toward a social cluster. They either have a different "eye" for the matter or have different work needs.

Linguistics:

1. **Intention & Subjectivity**: This book overthrows the amorphous role of mental states in language, but without endorsing behaviorism. An intermediary position is found: language is a function of the intellectual tasks being conveyed and the picture that emerges before the mind's eye. Both of these phenomena are real and natural, and do not involve "folk psychology" or brute behaviorism. And they are more articulate concepts.
2. **Semantics & Pragmatics**: This book obliterates the false distinction between semantics & pragmatics to which many philosophers in the wake of Grice have been seduced.
3. **OLP**: The school of thought called "ordinary language philosophy" is no longer needed. This book both refutes and transcends this outmoded philosophy.
4. **Category Words & Polysemy**: Although social clusters—or what is called "family resemblance" terms—have "fuzzy borders," they nonetheless can have a viable cognitive structure. And this can be used to create new understanding about polysemy.
5. **Word Sense**: Word sense is conceptualized as a structured fluctuation in traits. A model for patterns in fluctuation is proposed.

Politics & Culture:

1. **Value Judgments**: The book offers a conclusion that completely transforms the field of political science: value judgments are not a matter of "personal preference." They are simply an intellectual task. They try to force a cognitive picture onto a social context. This squares with research by cognitive scientist George Lakoff. The difference, though, is that people can be pointed to this behavior therapeutically so that it is seen (and put in check).
2. **Ethics**: Picture-fitting is not subjective. It requires training and a good eye for the matter in question. Ethics is the nothing more than picture-appreciation. This builds upon my work in *The Flexible Constitution*. Connoisseur judgment is given detailed treatment.
3. **Religion**: Beliefs are not based upon "faith"; they are based upon sentiment. Loyalties run to a mental picture only. This doesn't mean that the God question is contrived. Quite to the contrary, it is just like duck-rabbit—purposely set up to look one way or the other. And if people can't see "the other," it's merely because of the way they are looking.

5. THE AUTHOR

Sean Wilson is the author of *The Flexible Constitution*. He is a college professor, with tenure, in the U.S. His primary areas of concern are Ludwig Wittgenstein and legal theory. He holds a Ph.D. and a J.D. and is currently an associate professor at Wright State University.

Introduction

Synopsis

Wittgenstein didn't leave us "philosophy"; he left a pathway for a more perspicuous intellect. This came about because he possessed abnormal cognitive traits that were hyper-sensitive to context.

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This completely alters how we must think conceptually. And it changes how we must perceive arguments that use not only general words (like game and chair) but also scientific terms. It requires us to point people to what their intellect is doing in a speech act—called "therapy"—rather than focusing upon the premises in an argument. Not since Aristotle has the subject of critical reasoning been so revolutionized.

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I will explain this view in the next fifteen (15) chapters, which are separated into three parts. The specific contents are as follows.

Part I: Wittgenstein

In Chapter 1, *Was Wittgenstein a Charlatan?*, I explore the philosopher's curious and paradoxical contemporary status. Two perspectives are presented. One that sees him as an overrated philosophical personality, and the other that sees him as a genius whose secrets are hidden but kept alive by devotees. Both of these pictures, I shall argue, are problematic.

In Chapter 2, *What Made Wittgenstein Special*, I present the thesis that Wittgenstein had a unique psychological status that gave him specific strengths and weaknesses. I isolate the particular strengths so that a better account emerges about his unique philosophical acumen. Two traits are paramount: abnormal pictorial reasoning, which caused reverberating (felt) aspects; and a meticulous sensitivity for the details of quality.

In Chapter 3, *Why Does It Matter?*, I argue that Wittgenstein's entire contribution to philosophy basically boils down to the repeated use, over and over again, of his abnormal sensitivities. I argue that understanding him requires that *we* develop better sensitivities for context. We need, in short, a stronger qualitative acumen. This sets up the rest of the manuscript, which shows how to develop better perspicuity for the subjects upon which Wittgenstein directed his skills, and upon which critical reasoning is centered.

Part II: New Foundations

In Chapter 4, *Picturing*, I present the first of the three core phenomena inherent in Wittgenstein's philosophy. I explain how mental pictures emerge in the background of the mind's eye during thinking. Cognitive scientists have recently started calling this "framing" and "metaphor." I not only show how picturing works, but how it can both direct and confuse us.

In Chapter 5, *Word Sense*, I present the second core phenomenon inherent in Wittgenstein's philosophy. To understand language, you must catch the "word traits" implicated by the social context. Because these traits routinely fluctuate with usage, language becomes not unlike a structured variable in its character. I introduce a helpful illustrative device to conceptualize this phenomenon. And I explore how the dynamic of fluctuation occurs.

In Chapter 6, *Meaning is Use*, I introduce a seminal discovery in Wittgenstein's thought. Building upon the last chapter, I show how the usage of words determines the traits in play in a social context. I do this using a step-wise investigative procedure that involves the term "bachelor." The point is to show two things: (a) how a step-wise case investigation can map a language game, and (b) that meaning is a natural occurrence rather than a philosophy.

In Chapter 7, *Language Tasks & Grammar*, I present the last of the three core phenomena inherent in Wittgenstein's philosophy. To understand language, you must find the intellectual task(s) that are being signified. When we isolate these tasks, what we are doing is finding the "grammar" of the utterance. I introduce a unique way to do this, and I also provide a short case study that involves reasoning with labels.

In Chapter 8, *The New Critical Reasoning*, I begin to put the three core phenomena into one theoretical system, as heretical as that may sound to Wittgensteinians. And I explain how this completely transforms the subject of critical thinking. Instead of being centered fundamentally upon debate or argument, we must now point people to confusions that occur in one or more of the three core phenomena. This is called "therapy," and I explain how it is performed.

Part III: Post-Analytic Thought

In Chapter 9, *Mental States & Behavior*, I explain how Wittgenstein's three core phenomena completely changes our understanding of the role of the mind in language and communication. I specifically repudiate the search for subjectivity and intention in the speech act. But I also distance this view from behaviorism. Wittgenstein showed us that the dispute between behaviorism and ratiocination with respect to language was always false. And lastly, I give a new account of what nonsense is.

In Chapter 10, *Definitions & Vernacular*, I explain how reasoning occurs with family resemblance terms. Particular attention is paid to the way the intellect behaves toward the social cluster. This chapter is meant to displace the idea of words having "definitions." They don't have definitions; they simply have the result of the way you chose to behave toward the cluster. There are five different intellectual behaviors that concern us: stereotyping, exemplifying, distinguishing, drawing sharp boundaries (issuing rules) and offering reference phrases. The chapter also explores when some of these behaviors might be more welcome than others.

In Chapter 11, *Philosophy & Conceptual Investigation*, I show how Wittgenstein's discoveries change abstract thinking. This chapter has grave implications for the way philosophy has been performed for centuries. Part of what is said here is that philosophy's history is confused because it did its labor while being unaware of the three core phenomena. I show this using some popular examples in epistemology that concern what knowledge is and when someone is said to "know." And I address the pitfalls of formalism and of being analytic for its own sake.

In Chapter 12, *Aspect & Insight*, I explain that a value judgment is nothing more than the desire to force a picture upon a social context. I discuss Wittgenstein's concept of an aspect sight. And I show how some pictures fit a social context better than others, which means that some frameworks and values are actually superior. I discuss three qualities that an aspect can have that would make it more appealing: congruence, fluency and profundity.

In Chapter 13, *Connoisseurship & Ethics*, I explain what connoisseurship is. It's an aspect that needs taught to be seen. And I show how training and expertise will transform one's judgment about competing aspects (frames). Finally, I show that ethics ultimately amounts to nothing more than a kind of connoisseurship. For all that ethics really is, strictly speaking, is the best way to arrange social behavior—the truth of which rests upon the depth of the connoisseurship.

In Chapter 14, *Religion*, I examine the grammar of God propositions. I contrast them with the behaviors that involve trust, induction and feeling. And I explain the role that pictures play in beliefs about God, as well as the role that aspects plays in miracles and in beliefs about an afterlife. And I end with a more nuanced typology of religious belief that overthrows the existing scheme for classification.

Appendix

The final chapter is placed in the appendix. I did this because it seemed to be a bit tangential in the mix. In Chapter 15, *Designation & Specimen*, I explain how reasoning works with rigid designators, scientific jargon and proper names. And I also explore the basic internal and external structure of social clusters. The unifying theme of the chapter concerns determinacy in language. The central conclusion is that there is no difference between these types of language games and any other: you still have to look for the intellectual tasks, the traits in context, and the picture in the background of the mind's eye. It's all the same method of inquiry.

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