

New Critical Reasoning

What Wittgenstein Offered

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1. PROMO

Ludwig Wittgenstein changed our intellectual lives. To understand how, we need to understand what he did to the subject of critical reasoning.

Wittgenstein didn't leave us "philosophy"; he left a pathway for a more perspicuous intellect. This was caused by a psychological condition that made him meticulous and hypersensitive. He could abnormally perceive three natural phenomena: (a) the social traits implicated in word use; (b) the task-functions signified in communication; and (c) the pictures that flash before the mind's eye. With this unique acuity, he then discovered something revolutionary: language was merely a reflection of how the intellect behaved in an act of speech. Meaning was usage—or rather, the intellect, used.

And this discovery changes everything. It revolutionizes how we must argue with one another and what we believe is "true." Instead of focusing primarily upon premises or facts, we must point people to how their intellect behaves—called "therapy." And this has radical implications for analysis, conceptual investigation; value judgments, political ideology, ethics and even religion.

This book is both an explanation of, and a blueprint for, the new critical thinking. Written for both a lay and special audience, it shows what Wittgenstein invented and the difference it makes for all of us.

2. MARKET

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

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

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

Length: 70,000 words:

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

Status: 100% Complete.

Peer Approval: *Faculty from multiple and relevant disciplines, having no affiliation with the author, have vetted this manuscript. It offers a reputable scholarly breakthrough in Wittgenstein studies that has wide application to many fields.*

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 all fields. This book has content that not only concerns philosophers, linguists and politics scholars, but also any group that makes assertions (scientists, lawyers, graduate students, academics, etc.).

4. HOW IS IT UNIQUE

Wittgenstein Studies:

1. **Autism?** The book's biographical thesis is a breakthrough. It explains why Wittgenstein's functioning was so strangely pronounced in some areas of thinking yet challenged in others. This makes his work more accessible (explainable). No longer is he the genius who must be perpetually misunderstood. And nor is he someone we can understand by using a standard framework for judging "arguments." Both of these pitfalls are transcended.
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 recurring investigative concerns are at the heart of Wittgenstein's thinking: (a) the traits implicated with word use; (b) the task signified in communication; and (c) the picture that emerges before the mind's eye. No work on Wittgenstein has found a reduction like this.
4. **Method & Therapy:** Wittgenstein's method and "therapy" is summarized and explained unlike any other work in the field.

Critical Thinking:

1. **Assertion:** The book provides new methods for judging an assertion. The new approach involves perceiving what the intellect is doing in the act of speech. This requires introspection, subtlety, experience and sensitivity. Advanced critical reasoning therefore requires a *reflective* intellect.
2. **Problem Sets:** Problem sets help readers understand content as it is presented.
3. **Framing:** The book builds on the research of neuroscientists by investigating the role of framework in argument. It uncovers new ways to understand and confront "frames."
4. **Definitions:** The book displaces appeals to "definition." When people disagree about ordinary words, they don't hold different definitions; they simply offer a different vernacular (use). This is caused by what their intellect is doing to the social cluster—something participants usually do not see.

Linguistics:

1. **Objectivity & Subjectivity:** The book presents a new model for the role that mental states and “intention” play in language meaning. The model is a substantial upgrade over the way that many people, including lawyers, ordinarily conceive of this.
2. **Semantics & Pragmatics:** The book’s thesis about language meaning impacts Paul Grice’s distinction between “semantics” and “pragmatics.” Grice’s view becomes much less useful.
3. **OLP:** The book’s thesis has dire implications for a school of thought called Ordinary Language Philosophy. OLP may no longer be needed.
4. **Category Words & Polysemy:** The book offers a new conceptual structure for “family resemblance” terms. And this is useful not only for border cases (a beanbag as a “chair”), but also for polysemy (a “chair” as an executive).
5. **Word Sense:** The book offers a compelling view of language as a structured variable and shows how fluctuating traits have a conceptual structure or pattern.

Politics & Culture:

1. **Value Judgments:** The book offers a perspective that reorients the field of political science. Value judgments are not a matter of “personal preference”; they are a cognitive phenomenon no different from any other use of an aptitude. As such, there are better and worse efforts, like in any act of intelligence. The book sets forth neutral, “non-moral” criteria for showing the merit of competing value judgments.
2. **Political Ideology:** The book has a striking discovery about “political ideology.” Rather than being something good for “democracy,” it is, in truth, akin to a social pathology. It involves the collective act of trying to manipulate what framework (aspect) dominates a social context. The book provides a new and unique perspective for how to confront this problem.
3. **Ethics:** The book shows that frameworks are not subjective or personal. They require training and a good eye for the matter in question. Ethics is the nothing more than framework-appreciation. This builds upon my work in *The Flexible Constitution*. Connoisseur judgment is given detailed treatment.
4. **Religion:** The book’s approach to religious belief is novel. Beliefs are not based upon “faith”; they are based upon the behaviors of relationship. And the best loyalties run to felt aspects derived from the experience of life. This doesn’t mean that the God question is contrived. Quite to the contrary, it means that what separates a good and bad belief about God is how remarkable the intuited aspect is about our form of life. And this applies equally to those who declare themselves to be atheist. The book also provides a new way to classify religious belief.

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 research 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

Ludwig Wittgenstein changed my intellectual life. He transformed the very way that I think about, and behave toward, assertion. To understand why, one needs to understand what Wittgenstein did to critical reasoning. And so that is why I wrote this book.

My premise is that Wittgenstein didn't leave us "philosophy"; he left a pathway for a more perspicuous intellect. This came about because of his unique psychology, which caused him to be hypersensitive to the way qualities are perceived in a social context. Wittgenstein's entire contribution as a philosopher, in fact, amounted to nothing other than the use of a punctuated qualitative acumen.

What is novel may not be what I take to be Wittgenstein's "gift," but rather how I show it. My claim is that Wittgenstein could abnormally perceive three *natural* phenomena: (a) the social traits implicated in word use; (b) the task-functions signified in communication; (c) and the pictures that flash before the mind's eye. With this acuity, he produced a revolutionary discovery: language was simply the function of how the intellect behaved in the act of speech. Meaning was usage—or rather, the intellect, used.

But what exactly are these three phenomena that I speak of? Are they steps for parsing arguments and claims? Are they simply an intellectual skill? Can our perception of them become hypersensitive if we have a certain kind of "psychological condition"? The answer to all three questions is "yes." Hearing traits, obtaining a task-function and seeing a mental picture are all cognitive abilities of some kind that are simply paramount to how well we understand the meaning of something. And if done acutely, how we see connections in idea elements will indeed change.

And so the thesis in this manuscript is bold. I claim that Wittgenstein's different way of thinking reduced itself to three cognitive aptitudes, which, taken together and done perspicuously, constituted a revolution in critical reasoning. This seems to me to be something that is both true and unsaid in any literature.

But I must caution my reader about the way the book proceeds. One would think that such a thesis would prove itself exegetically, focusing upon each of Wittgenstein's works. But this is not what I do. Very little is devoted to documenting how this or that work boils down to the three recurring concerns. I do this on purpose: such a book would have been a bore. And I don't think, at the end of the day, readers of Wittgenstein would have disputed the exegetical demonstration—they rather would have wanted to know why it even mattered.

And so, it is the *significance* of these new tools and not an exegetical proof that is most important. It is for this reason that I did something more risky. I decided to isolate the three concerns and teach them as separate phenomena, which, when wielded in concert really well, revolutionize critical reasoning.

Let's do it this way—what does it mean to acutely perceive the social traits of word usage? Can you do that? If a person parses task-functions extremely well, what does the behavior more resemble—a computer or a cultural snob? And what does it mean to have a picture resonantly flash before the mind's eye? If this experience is abnormally pronounced (aggressive) in your psychology, how does that affect your behavior toward an assertion? These questions, I think, are much more important than a work showing that this or that publication bearing Wittgenstein's name had three recurring investigative concerns.

But also, there is yet another benefit to the method of my book's madness. I claim that, if someone can and *does* develop a hypersensitivity for the three phenomena, the maneuvers they make in critical reasoning will end up "revealing" Wittgenstein. That is to say, anyone who becomes hypersensitive in the requisite way will end up saying things that seem awfully Wittgensteinian to me. Thus, anyone who would

have disputed an exegetical project is now left only to argue that they do not see Wittgenstein in the end result of being requisitely trained—which I imagine will be quite hard to do.

One wants to say: the thesis shows itself.

And think about what happens if I am right. If what I say is true, it means that the very way that most of us go about reasoning is fundamentally impoverished in certain ways. And so, although there will be some controversy in how the book proceeds, I ask for your patience. My warrant is that the experience is likely to be worthwhile. Quite simply, Wittgenstein's way of thinking offers the hope of completely altering the plane of intellectual regard. It offers to show that how we think conceptually and reason with one another must fundamentally change. And I think the *chance* of that is worth the patience.

I will explain all of these views in the next fifteen (15) chapters, separated into three parts. I begin with a biographical picture that answers the question of why Wittgenstein is special (Part I). I then explain the three core phenomena in Part II. And finally, in Part III, I apply all of this to a set of subjects that are fundamentally important for good discourse of any kind in any academic field.

The specific contents of each chapter are as follows.

Part I: *Wittgenstein*

Chapter 1, *Was Wittgenstein a Charlatan?*, explores 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 are problematic.

Chapter 2, *What Made Wittgenstein Special*, presents the thesis that Wittgenstein had a unique psychological status that gave him abnormal strengths and weaknesses. Two traits are of particular interest: abnormal pictorial reasoning, which caused reverberating (felt) aspects; and a meticulous sensitivity for the details of quality.

Chapter 3, *Why Does It Matter?*, argues that Wittgenstein's entire contribution to philosophy basically boils down to the repeated use, over and over again, of his abnormal sensitivities. And that *we* must develop more perspicuous thinking skills as well. This sets up the rest of the manuscript, which isolates and explains the three natural phenomena that Wittgenstein could abnormally perceive.

Part II: *New Foundations*

Part II begins in Chapter 4, *Word Sense*, which shows how traits implicated in word use can fluctuate. Ordinary words function not unlike a structured variable. The nature of this dynamic is explained and illustrations help the reader conceptualize it.

Chapter 5, *Meaning is Use*, builds upon the previous chapter. It introduces Wittgenstein's seminal discovery: the usage of words determines their meaning. The focus is upon the term "bachelor." A stepwise investigative procedure is used to show how the meaning of this term is a natural occurrence rather than a philosophy.

Chapter 6, *Task Functions*, explains how to isolate intellectual task(s) that are signified in communication. This is called finding the "grammar" of an utterance. And it introduces the governing principle in Wittgenstein's entire outlook—something he called "the connection."

Chapter 7, *Picturing*, explains how it is natural for mental pictures to emerge in the background of the mind's eye during thinking. Cognitive science is incorporated into the discussion. The chapter also discusses how task-functions and picturing relate to each other, as a system, in the human intellect.

Chapter 8, *Therapy*, is the conclusion to Part II. It explains how all of the aforesaid transforms the subject of critical thinking. Instead of focusing upon debate or argument, we must point people to issues arising in how they perceive traits, tasks or pictures. The chapter is both a clarification of Wittgenstein's "method" as well as a critique of its challenges.

Part III: *Post-Analytic Thought*

Part III is no longer concerned with explaining the three natural phenomena that Wittgenstein could abnormally perceive. Instead, it is concerned with showing how a perspicuous perception of the three changes our understanding of basic subjects that have dominated thinking throughout time. Specifically, we must change how we think about definitions, formality, objectivity, subjectivity, designation, conceptual investigation (how to do philosophy), value judgments, political ideology, ethics and religion.

Chapter 9, *Meaning & Intent*, covers the role that mental states play in language. It specifically looks at subjective and objective views of language meaning—criticizing both—and the role that intention plays. The chapter also discusses what “nonsense” is.

Chapter 10, *Definition & False Dispute*, explains how reasoning occurs with family resemblance terms. Particular attention is paid to the way the intellect behaves toward a social cluster. This chapter is meant to displace the idea that words have “definitions.” They don’t have definitions; they simply have the outcome of the way one chose to behave toward the cluster. Five behaviors are of concern: stereotyping, exemplifying, distinguishing, drawing sharp boundaries (imposing rules) and offering reference phrases.

Chapter 11, *Conceptual Investigation*, shows how Wittgenstein’s discoveries change abstract thinking. The chapter focuses upon false problems and confusions in the field of epistemology, and it has grave implications for the way philosophy has been performed for centuries.

Chapter 12, *Aspect & Framing*, introduces Wittgenstein’s concept of an “aspect sight.” It discusses what value judgments and “framing” really amount to, and what political ideology really is. And it explains three qualities that can make any framework superior to its rivals.

Chapter 13, *Connoisseurship & Ethics*, explains what artisanship is. It is an aspect that cannot be seen without teaching. The chapter shows how training and expertise can transform one’s ability to discern between rival frameworks. Finally, the chapter shows that ethics, properly understood, amounts to nothing more than a kind of connoisseurship—the truth of which rests upon the depth of one’s eye for the subject.

Chapter 14, *Religion*, examines the grammar of God propositions. They are contrasted with behaviors that involve trust, induction and feeling. And the role that picturing plays is explored. The central issue in the God question should be how well one’s aspect is for the experience of life. The chapter ends with a more nuanced typology for belief that is more helpful than the existing scheme of classification.

Appendix

Chapter 15, *Designation & Specimen*, was placed in the appendix. It explains how reasoning works with rigid designators, scientific jargon, labels and proper names. It also explores the internal and external structure of a social cluster (family resemblance). This chapter is important for philosophy of language.

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