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Ludwig Wittgenstein is one of the most significant philosophers of the 20th century, yet he wrote nothing on political philosophy. His few remarks on political and moral philosophy were outright hostile to the enterprise of normative theorizing. Despite this, Wittgenstein’s influence on contemporary political philosophy has been far reaching. This is begins Wittgenstein’s work had a crucial influence on the linguistic turn in philosophy, and philosophy’s linguistic turn shaped much political thought in the later half of the 20th century. Richard Rorty popularized the term the “linguistic term” in his 1967 edited volume by the same name. Rorty was referring to the increased interest in the connections between the nature of language and philosophical problems in the first half of the 20th century. The classical view of the relationship between language and objects in the material world, believed that words functioned like labels that are applied to pre-existing objects. As analytic philosophers such as Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein devoted greater attention to the structure of human language, they became increasingly interested in how the nature of language shapes the logic of propositions and how propositions relate to facts. The later Wittgenstein’s philosophy took the more radical step of arguing that the meaning of words is established through their use in ordinary linguistic practices. While there are sharp divisions between analytic, post-analytic, ordinary language, and post-structural philosophers about how exactly language shapes human understanding, what unites them together under the label of philosophers of the linguistic turn is their shared commitment to the exploration of the philosophical implications of the structure of human language.

Wittgenstein’s contribution to the linguistic turn is two-fold. In his early work, represented primarily by his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgensteine develops a picture theory of language. According to Wittgenstein, language represents reality by presenting propositions that accurately depict facts about the world. Wittgenstein’s picture theory of language is a version of the correspondence theory of truth, which holds that what makes a proposition true is how it relates to the world. In Wittgenstein’s instance what makes a statement true is how accurately it presents the facts of the world in the form of a verbal picture.

Wittgenstein’s later work represented primarily by his post-humously published *Philosophical Investigations* is a significant revision of his earlier philosophy. In this work he explicitly rejects the picture theory of language, arguing instead that the meaning of language is determined by its use in a number of overlapping language games. Whereas the early Wittgenstein argued that problems in philosophy resulted from confusion over the logical structure of language, the later Wittgenstein argued that philosophical problems grow out of the ultimately futile attempt to find a correct picture of what our linguistic concepts represent.
Despite the significant differences between Wittgenstein’s early and late work, what unites his philosophical oeuvre is a concern with the relationship between language and the world and an understanding of philosophy as a therapeutic practice.

**Biographical Sketch**

1889 – 1951. Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in Vienna in 1889. The Wittgensteins were one of the wealthiest families of late 19th century Austria-Hungary. His father Karl was Jewish and his mother Leopoldine was Catholic. All the Wittgenstein children were baptized as Catholics. According to biographer Ray Monk, the home life for the Wittgenstein children was extremely difficult. Ludwig was the youngest of nine children. Karl forbade the children from attending school, preferring to have them tutored at home. It was his goal for his four sons to take over the Wittgenstein business empire. As a result of this home environment several of the Wittgenstein family members suffered from mental illness. Three of Wittgenstein’s siblings committed suicide, and Ludwig apparently battled depression throughout his life.

After the suicides of Ludwig’s older brothers Hans and Rudi the Karl permitted Ludwig and his brother Paul to attend a Gymnasium—the Realschule in Linz. Wittgenstein attended from the age of 14 to 17. Wittgenstein was an average student while at the Realschule in Linz. According to Monk, while Wittgenstein was at the Realschule he became interested in the philosophies of Arthur Schopenhauer and Otto Weininger. Wittgenstein studied engineering at Technische Hochschule in Charlottenburg, Berlin and received his degree in 1908. He then went to Victoria University in Manchester to pursue a doctorate in aeronautical engineering. While studying for his doctorate in engineering, Wittgenstein became interested in the philosophical principles of mathematics and he read Bertrand Russell’s *The Principles of Mathematics* and Gottlob Frege’s *The Foundations of Arithmetic*. In the summer of 1911, Wittgenstein visited Frege at the University of Vienna, and showed Frege some philosophy that Wittgenstein had been working on. According to Wittgenstein “Frege wiped the floor with me,” but he also encouraged Wittgenstein to go to Cambridge and study philosophy with Bertrand Russell.

In October of 1911 Wittgenstein arrived unannounced – and uninvited – at Russell’s rooms at Trinity College. Wittgenstein began to attend Russell’s lectures, and by Russell’s account Wittgenstein soon dominated the conversation in the classroom. At first, Russell was exasperated by Wittgenstein’s behaviour, but within 6 weeks Russell had decided that Wittgenstein was a genius. Wittgenstein continued to study under Russell at Cambridge until he decided to move to Norway to work on his philosophy. While in Norway he wrote *Notes on Logic*. In 1914 he asked G. E. Moore to submit the text to Cambridge as credit for completing a bachelor’s degree. The University refused and Wittgenstein responded by breaking off all communication with Moore.

When World War I began the following year, Wittgenstein enrolled in the Austro-Hungarian army. Wittgenstein saw live combat throughout the war, and actively sought out the most dangerous assignments. While in the trenches
Wittgenstein kept a notebook where he wrote down his philosophical reflections. He also read Augustine and Tolstoy during this time and converted to Christianity. Russell observed that Wittgenstein’s personality had been fundamentally changed by the war. And the Wittgenstein was now a more mystical and ascetic person. In August of 1918 Wittgenstein took a leave from the army and completed the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. He submitted the text to the publishers Johada Seigel. After his leave, Wittgenstein was sent by the Austo-Hungarian army to the Italian front and he was captured in November of 1918. He was a prisoner of war for 9 months. After the war Wittgenstein decided to enroll in teacher college and become an elementary school teacher. Wittgenstein taught at various elementary schools from 1922 to 1926. During this time the publishing house Keegan-Paul published the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

At the urging of several members of the Cambridge faculty, Wittgenstein finally returned to the University on a fellowship in 1929. Initially he could not teach, but he was rewarded his doctorate after successfully defending *Tractatus* to G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein was awarded a fellowship at Trinity College. During the 1930s and 1940s Wittgenstein taught at Cambridge. The topics of his courses focused on problems of ordinary language, psychology and mathematics. His notes from the classes formed the basis for his *Philosophical Investigations*. While he initially submitted the text of *Philosophical Investigations* for publication in 1945, he withdrew the manuscript that the last minute. Most of part I of the *Philosophical Investigations* was complete by this time, part II was added posthumously by his editor, Elizabeth Anscombe. Wittgenstein resigned his post and Cambridge in 1947 in order to spend more time focusing on his writing. In 1950 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and he died in 1951. *Philosophical Investigations* was published in 1953.

**Wittgenstein’s early philosophy**

The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was originally published in 1921 in German and translated into English the following year. It drew upon Wittgenstein’s notes from 1914 – 1916 while he live in solitude in Norway and his correspondence during this time with Russell and Moore. The book is Wittgenstein’s reaction to and extension of the philosophy of Frege and Russell. It is only 75 pages long and consists of a series of seven numbered propositions with subsets for each proposition that elaborate upon the main propositions. Because of the similarity in form between Wittgenstein’s work and Benedict Spinoza’s geometrical method, Moore suggested the title as an allusion to Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologic-Politicus*.

The central problem that Wittgenstein grapples with in the *Tractatus* is the relationship between language and the world. Wittgenstein develops a picture theory of language – that language constructs a representation of the world. As such, Wittgenstein sees the world as a collection of facts. His theory is a reaction to early philosophical understandings of the world as a collection of objects. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says that there is an underlying logical structure to language. This structure limits what it is possible to say about the world. Facts are representations of what exist in the world. These facts can be logically arranged into thoughts. This
logical arrangement of thoughts is what Wittgenstein terms a picture. Only those statements that are logical representations of facts about the world have meaning. Those things that cannot be logically expressed through language are beyond the limits of what it is possible think about. As such, Wittgenstein's picture theory of language was an attempt to draw a clear limit about what could be thought about the world. The seven main propositions by which Wittgenstein made this argument are as follows:

1. 1. The world is all that is the case.
2. 2. What is the case – a fact – is the existence of a state of affairs.
3. 3. A logical picture of facts is a thought.
4. 4. A thought is a proposition with sense.
5. 5. A proposition is a truth function with elementary propositions.
6. 6. The general form of a truth function is: This is the general form of a truth function.
7. 7. What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.

By limiting what can be said about the world to logically true statements of fact, Wittgenstein draws a clear line between sense and nonsense. Sensical propositions provide accurate representations of the world. Statements that do not represent facts about the world – such as the structure of logic itself, tautologies and contradictions, and mathematics – are senseless. In order for a statement to have sense it must refer to something in the world. These senseless statements do not refer to things in the world. Instead they are the structure of language, and make the expression of propositions about the world possible. Because they do not picture anything, they do not have any sense. They operate as the limiting conditions of language; yet these senseless statements also make it possible to express statements that do have sense and determine which statements are nonsense.

Nonsensical statements are a third category of statements that are covered by Wittgenstein’s logic in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein considers those statements that do not refer to facts as nonsense because they do not represent anything in the world. These statements are nonsense because they do not have any meaning. The consequence of Wittgenstein’s distinction between sense and nonsense is that a large number of statements used in ordinary language are nonsensical under the early-Wittgenstein's schema. Only factual statements of affairs are meaningful statements. So in effect, the only statements that have sense in Wittgenstein’s system are statements in natural science. In addition to statements that are clearly non-sensical – such as Noam Chomsky’s example of “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously” – normative statements about ethics and politics and aesthetic judgments about works of art are also nonsense from Wittgenstein’s perspective. Part of the reason for this is how Wittgenstein conceives of philosophy in the *Tractatus*. According to Wittgenstein "Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations." (*Tractatus* 4.112). The purpose of philosophy is to clarify thoughts so that they can be expressed in a logical and sensical manner, and to identify and critique those statements that have no meaning as nonsense.
This does not meant that that such statements are pointless. Instead Wittgenstein introduces a distinction between the sayable and the showable. Things that are sayable are meaningful propositions. Symbolism, logical propositions, normative statements about ethics and politics, aesthetic judgments, and philosophical utterances about metaphysics are all examples of statements that can be shown through contingent propositions. Yet, from the early Wittgenstein’s perspective the purpose of philosophy is to work on clarifying the meaning of statements which are sayable.

From the perspective of political theory, the early Wittgenstein’s commitment to logical atomism means that little of his early thought is applicable to thinking about politics. It is for this reason that very few political theorists draw upon the early Wittgenstein's work. After all, Wittgenstein’s definition of philosophy in the Tractatus rules out the type of normative theorizing that is the central purpose of political theory.

Wittgenstein’s Autocritique

Beginning in 1931, in his lectures at Cambridge, Wittgenstein began to critique his earlier work. In follow up work on the Tractatus, Wittgenstein attempted to develop a verificationist theory of meaning -- i.e. he attempted to develop a theory that demonstrated that the meaning of a proposition is verified by corresponding to empirical reality. While his work at this time was influential upon the Vienna Circle of logical positivist philosophers, Wittgenstein quickly became dissatisfied with his attempts to develop a verificationist theory of meaning. As he worked on this problem he began to have problems with statements whose verification did not depend upon empirical validity, but upon its relation to other statements. And these problems caused him to doubt his entire approach to philosophy. He quickly came to argue that his earlier work on the Tractatus was dogmatic because it attempted to advance a number of theses. Yet as he wrote in a notebook in 1931, he came to believe that "If one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them." This insight appears to have prompted Wittgenstein to rethink both his method of philosophy and his understanding of what the practice of philosophy entails.

In his lectures in the fall of 1931 he began to describe a new method. He no longer saw the purpose of philosophy as the logical clarification of propositions. Instead, he now argued in his lectures that philosophy was a type of therapy. And this therapy was intended to treat the human tendency to build elaborate theories in order to explain phenomena. Wittgenstein came to see the quest for a logically coherent and unifying theory of human language -- the very quest that had animated his work in the Tractatus as both futile and as a sign of cultural decline. According to Ray Monk, this change in Wittgenstein’s philosophy grew out of Wittgenstein’s distinction between saying and showing in the Tractatus. However, whereas in his early work Wittgenstein struggled to determine what meaningful things a philosopher could say about propositions, in his later work Wittgenstein began to argue that the philosopher really had nothing to say at all. Instead, the best a philosopher could hope to do is show others how their philosophical puzzles are a
result of his confusion with his language. He began to describe to his students a philosophical method of assembling trivialities in order to show others the connections between different phenomena. And in developing this new method, Wittgenstein changed his approach to philosophy from the attempt to develop a theory about the deep logical structure of human language, to an attempt to simply describe the connections and similarities between ordinary uses of language.

The Philosophical Investigations

Over the next fifteen years, Wittgenstein developed and refined this approach to philosophy in his lectures and seminars at Cambridge and in his notebooks. The reflections from this time are collected in his Philosophical Investigations, published posthumously in 1953. As he writes in the preface to the Investigations, he tried many times to write a single work without breaks that could link all of his different ideas about language and philosophy together. However, he ultimately settled upon a writing the book as a series of remarks, which Wittgenstein describes as "short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about he same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another." In part I of the Investigations there are 693 remarks, while Part II consists of a series of additional reflections added by his editors Rush Rhees and Elizabeth Anscombe. Whereas the propositional form of the Tractatus makes it easy to summarize (though perhaps not easy to understand), the structure of the Investigations make the text virtually impossible to summarize. The text begins with a quote from Augustine's Confessions that describes how Augustine acquired language as a child. Wittgenstein uses this description as a model for the picture theory of language that he developed in the Tractatus. Wittgenstein then sets out to show that this picture of language is not wrong, so much as limited in what it can tell us about the nature of human language. Through a series of examples of how we use language in everyday contexts, Wittgenstein proceeds to develop a number of new themes about the meaning of words, rule following, the family resemblances between the various uses of words, language games, the nature of mind, reflections on color, human sensations and psychology, the philosophy of numbers, and God. To further complicate matters, at various points in the text the is an ongoing conversation between two different voices -- one voice presumably represents the views of Wittgenstein, whereas the other voice is of a skeptical interlocutor who often presents a counter view of language that is similar to the theory developed in the Tractatus. For these reasons, the Philosophical Investigations is a books that evades summarization and poses numerous difficulties for interpreters. As such, rather than attempt a summary of the text, I will simply highlight a few of the themes from the Investigations that subsequent political philosophers have drawn upon.

Meaning as Use

One conviction that Wittgenstein maintained from the Tractatus through the Philosophical Investigations is that philosophy is an activity aimed at clarifying
propositions rather than a collection of propositions that the philosopher defends. The picture theory of language elucidated in the *Tractatus* was intended to serve as a model for how propositions could be clarified by confirming how they accurately represent the world. Yet, Wittgenstein began to see that the picture theory of language in its quest for generality actually made his philosophy less clear rather than more clear. The examples generated by his early work had a tendency to ignore the ways in which language did not simply represent facts, and mistakenly described as nonsense many different types of statements that actually had great meaning for those who uttered the statements. Wittgenstein decided that it was the picture theory of language with its view that the meaning of a proposition was determined by its reference to facts in the world that was responsible for this confusion. And as such, he sets out in the *Investigations* to develop a different understanding of meaning.

Instead of the meaning of a word being determined by its relation to some object outside of language, Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of a word is determined by how that word is used. In remark 43, he writes "For a large class of cases -- though not for all -- in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language." In the *Tractatus*, the objective of the philosopher was to clarify the logical structure of a sentence so as to see how the proposition reflected facts about the world. In making a shift from meaning being determined by its reference to a fact or object outside language, to a focus on how a word's meaning is determined by use, Wittgenstein reconciles what a philosopher should do. In his later work, Wittgenstein argues that philosophical problems are generated because we have lost sight of how words are used in everyday practices and contexts. We start looking for general principles and propositions to help resolve these problems, but in doing this we become blind to how words are actually used. Whereas the traditional inclination of philosophers has been to develop theories to help solve problems, Wittgenstein argues that this tendency for theory building is susceptible to the "craving for generality, and the contempt for the particular case." Instead what the philosopher should do is collect examples about how a word is used in everyday practices. These examples will not yield a comprehensive theory about the terms correct meaning. Instead, the philosopher will see the wide variety of ways in which the term is used, and she will be able to see the similarities and differences between these different uses. Wittgenstein believes that once one has collected enough examples of how a term is used, one will then see that debates about the meaning of a term will be shown to arise from confusions about the different contexts in which a term is used.

For example, a perennial question of political theorists is "What is justice?" And traditionally, political theorists from Plato to Rawls have tried to answer this question by developing theories about what justice is with the goal of offering a simple, general definition of justice that will apply in all times and all places. Wittgenstein would argue that debates in political theory about justice result from this craving for a general theory of justice. And that the quest for a single definition of justice will always disappoint, because what justice means will vary widely depending upon the context in which the term justice is used. A more fruitful approach to the question of justice from Wittgenstein’s perspective would be to
create a perspicuous representation of justice -- i.e. for the philosopher to collect a number of examples of the different ways in which justice is used to show us in which contexts it is appropriate to use a given term. *add punchline here.*

**Language Games and Forms of Life**

In remark 23 of the *PI*, Wittgenstein introduces the term language game "to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of a language game is part of an activity, or a form of life." The term reminds readers that the meanings of words are determined by how words are used in particular contexts, and each context has a set of implicit rules that determine how a word can be used correctly in that context. There are as many different language games as there are different human activities, and these games come into existence and are forgotten as humans change the types of activities that they engage in. Wittgenstein introduces this term, because he assumes that his readers have a clearer understanding of games than they do of language. And by drawing out the game-like features of language -- that its meaning varies from activity to activity, that the rules of the game determine the appropriate use of words, and that number of different types of language games is vast, subject to modification through action, and reflects the multiplicity of different ways in which humans use language.

Languages games are embedded in what Wittgenstein calls the "forms of life." By this he means the various customs, history, culture, practices, and habits in which a language is used form the background against which words have their meaning. Interpreters of Wittgenstein differ widely in how they understand Wittgenstein's "form of life." Culturally relativistic readings of Wittgenstein - such as Peter Winch - argue that the forms of life are culturally specific, and so the meanings of words and practices vary from culture to culture. Others, such as Stanley Cavell, emphasize a universalistic dimension in Wittgenstein's thought, by pointing out that the term emphasizes the practices of human beings as a whole. Regardless of how much emphasis is placed on a universalistic or particularistic reading of the term, Wittgenstein's point is that our language is always part of a larger set of activities, and that philosophical confusion about the meanings of words often arise when we abstract terms from the practices in which they are normally used and try to seek out general definitions and principles.

**Rule Following**

Wittgenstein's description of language games leads his interlocutor to ask about the nature of the rules of these language games. The interlocutor's position in the *Philosophical Investigations* is akin to that of a Platonist seeking out a set of principles above or beyond language that govern the functioning of language. Wittgenstein develops a number of examples of how we follow rules in everyday practices. his point is that while we some times follow explicit propositions when we act, there are other times when we follow rules unreflectively. This means that rules in language games are not simply a set of explicit propositions that individuals
follow. Instead, rules can also take the form of implicit principles that make up the background of assumptions about how individuals act. And it is only against this background of human practices that we can understand the rules of our various language games. Wittgenstein’s discussion of rule following, is meant to illuminate the process of human understanding. In a game such as chess, one demonstrates that one understands the rules of the game by playing the game properly. If someone tries to move the bishop horizontally, they are breaking the rules of the game, and in so doing they are also demonstrating that they do not understand the game of chess. Similarly, understanding a language means mastering the rules of that language. And the only way to demonstrate one’s mastery of the language is to use the various words and expressions in a way that conforms with the grammatical rules of that language.

'A Picture Holds Us Captive'

In remark 115, Wittgenstein explicitly refutes the picture theory of language from the *Tractatus* when he writes: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside of it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." In this passage, Wittgenstein is suggesting that the very source of philosophical confusion comes from the philosopher’s attempt to step outside of language and try to represent reality through a clear picture. His later work is a continuous resistance against our tendency to try to understand concepts by developing abstract theories that can sit outside our language games. From Wittgenstein’s perspective, this will only lead to frustration because any abstract picture of a concept will necessarily blind us to other ways a word can be used and the multiple contexts and meanings that a word has. More generally, Wittgenstein’s argument that we are held captive by our pictures of concepts, points to a new form of political critique. Unlike ideological critique, which focuses on identifying concepts and beliefs that create false consciousness, Wittgenstein proposes that we can also be blinded to the various aspects of our language and our forms of life when we try to represent our world through general pictures and theories. This aspect of Wittgenstein’s critique is aimed at the attempts by those in the humanities and social sciences to develop models of knowledge that are similar to the abstract theories of the natural sciences. Wittgenstein argues that the way to escape this form of captivity is to assemble a set of reminders about how we use terms in our everyday practices. This case based method to philosophy will free us from the tendency to assume that words such as freedom and justice (perennial concerns in the field of political theory) must mean one thing in all times and all places. For Wittgenstein, this craving for generality is a constant temptation, and his philosophy is intended to act as a therapy that will free us from this craving.

Subsequent Uses of Wittgenstein in Political Philosophy
Wittgenstein was hostile to normative philosophy throughout his life. At many different points throughout his career he argues that there is no such thing as moral propositions. He was also quite hostile to political philosophy - for example, Nevertheless, Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy has inspired a number of different strands of contemporary political theory. In this concluding section I will briefly survey these various approaches. As will soon become evident, there are significant differences in how various political theorists have interpreted his work. Rather than try to resolve these disputes, I will simply point out the different ways that Wittgenstein has been interpreted so that readers of this entry can see the different ways in which they too can put his approach to political philosophy to work.

Early interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy tended to play up the role of conventions and rules in Wittgenstein's understanding of society and language. Some critics of Wittgenstein, such as Marcuse and Gellner, argued that by grounding his philosophy in conventions and practices Wittgenstein's philosophy had an implicit bias towards the status quo, and this bias carried over to the political realm as well. Other interpreters who are more sympathetic to conservatism, such as J. C. Nyiri have also pointed to the role of rules and and conventions in Wittgenstein as a means of expounding a conservative worldview. Peter Winch, although not a political conservative, drew upon a similar interpretation of Wittgenstein to argue that the customs and conventions of various forms of life should be justified through the analysis of consistent language games. And John Gunnell has drawn upon Winch's work to critique both political theorists and political scientists in general for seeking some foundation beyond our political practices with which to build general theories about politics.

Critics of these approaches argue that Gellner, Nyiri and Winch have overemphasized the role of conventions in Wittgenstein while neglecting the attention the Wittgenstein gives to the modifications of rules. In his reading of Wittgenstein, Stanley Cavell has explored the way in which Wittgenstein uses criteria in the philosophical investigations, and we has examined those moments in discourse where agreements in judgment breakdown to argue that the criteria and conventions of language games can also be sources of disagreement and modification. Conversely, deliberative democrats such as Jurgen Habermas has drawn upon Wittgenstein's analysis of the conventions of language games (along with the speech acts theory of J. L. Austin) to develop his theory of communicative action. However, the more agonistically inclined political theorists such as James Tully, Chantal Mouffe, and Aletta have argue the Habermas overemphasizes the role of agreements in judgements in Wittgenstein, and they in turn drawn on Wittgenstein to argue that in democratic disagreements all rules, including the rules of communicative action are subject to challenge and modification.

Another way that Wittgenstein has influenced political philosophy is in terms of its methods. Most prominently, the intellectual historian Quentin Skinner drew upon Wittgenstein's argument that the meaning of a word is determined by its use, to argue that historians of political thought must locate texts in their proper historical context. According to Skinner, anachronistic readings of texts leads to the tendency to be held captive by our contemporary understandings of political
concepts such as freedom or equality. By relocating historical texts in their appropriate context, the interpreter is able to see the different ways in which these words were used in different eras. This in turn enables the historian of political thought to critique our limited contemporary understanding of these terms by pointing out the numerous other ways in which words such as liberty and equality can be used. A similar, thought less historically centered approach, was advocated by Hannah Pitkin in her work *Wittgenstein and Justice* and *The Concept of Representation*, Pitkin drew upon Wittgenstein’s procedure of perspicuous representation of words in order to analyze key terms in political science such as justice, liberty, and representation. Others, such as James Farr, Russell Hanson and Terrence Ball have taken inspiration from Pitkin, Skinner and Wittgenstein’s approaches to develop a genre of political theory that focuses primarily upon the analysis of political concepts.

Finally, several feminist political theorists, such as Linda Zerrilli, Naomi Scheman, Cressida Heyes, and Alice Crary have drawn upon Wittgenstein to make interventions in contemporary debates in feminist theory and as a way to make feminist critiques of the uses of language in political theory and politics more generally. In particular Heyes and Zerrilli have drawn upon Wittgenstein’s discussions of the essences of concepts in the *Investigations* to intervene in recent debates between essentialist and anti-essentialist feminists. Essentialist feminists argue that there are certain essential and universal characteristics that all women share. These characteristics should be the basis of feminist politics. Anti-essentialists dispute this claim of shared characteristics and argue that essentialists reproduce a normative conception of the feminine that fundamentally leaves many women (women of color, lesbians, poor women) Heyes and Zerrilli argue that the debate itself rests on a futile attempt to find one single meaning for the word women, and argue that instead feminist theorists should reflect upon the varieties of ways in which the term is used in ordinary practice. This return to the rough ground of feminist practice, should enable feminist scholars and activists. Other feminist Wittgensteinians, such as Scheman draw upon Wittgenstein’s discussions of epistemology and objectivity to critique the ways in which dominant discourses have racist, sexist, homophobic and imperialist concepts embedded in their grammar. By drawing partially upon Wittgenstein’s arguments about how we sublime our language in unnecessary ways, Scheman argues that the task of feminist philosophy should be to provide scholars and activists with a set of usable concepts for political action.

This is by no means a comprehensive discussion of the ways in which Wittgenstein has influenced political theory. While there are significant debates among those political theorists who are inspired by Wittgenstein about exactly what a Wittgensteinian approach to political philosophy should entail (or even if a Wittgensteinian approach to philosophy is even possible) – I would say that his influence upon political theory has been two-fold. First, many political theorists have taken inspiration from Wittgenstein to explore the ways in which the grammars of our various political language games enable and constrain our political practices. Second, many political theorists have drawn inspiration from
Wittgenstein’s autocritique, when Wittgenstein rejected his early attempts to conceive his philosophy in relation to the natural sciences and instead began to conceive of philosophy as a type of therapy. Many of the political theorists discussed in this section draw upon Wittgenstein to make a similar critique about the scientism that tends to hold the contemporary discipline of political science captive. So they draw upon Wittgenstein not simply to modify their methods for studying politics, but to also raise more fundamental questions about how the academic study of politics should relate to the everyday practices of politics.