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Taking Wittgenstein at His Word: A Textual Study.
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Many of Wittgenstein's readers have not taken him at his word. While acknowledging his methodological pronouncements that philosophy is purely therapeutic and produces no theses or theories, they have gone on to interpret him as advancing controversial philosophical doctrines such as a behaviorist theory of understanding or a strict finitist theory of mathematics. Wittgenstein is thus viewed as either violating his own methodological strictures, or at least not taking them very seriously. Fogelin's aim is to see what sort of interpretation of Wittgenstein emerges if these methodological pronouncements are taken seriously, 'at face value' (167). So understood, Wittgenstein is seen to advance no philosophical theories or theses; philosophy is for him an activity, not a theory, and it neither explains or nor justifies—but merely describes—our use of language in such a way that philosophical problems disappear. Philosophical theories are senseless responses to illusory problems produced by the confusions resulting from misunderstandings of language. Philosophy, properly done, consists of a set of reminders which allow us to get a clear view of the workings of our language so that we are no longer confused and no longer tempted to construct philosophical theories.

The book is divided into two parts, the first covering Wittgenstein's treatment of rule following and private language, the second focusing on topics in the philosophy of mathematics. These topics are focal points of the later Wittgenstein's philosophizing and provide Fogelin with material to which he can apply his controlling interpretive concept he calls *defactoism*. The term comprises several Wittgensteinian themes: (a) it is through *training* we acquire a mastery of the techniques needed to participate in activities involving meaning, rule-following, and other intentional practices; (b) it is our shared natural responses that make training possible; (c) the point of training is produce mastery of the use of a rule, not to produce a mental intermediary between the rule and the correct use of the rule; (d) rule-following is a custom or practice embedded in a social context; (e) the solution to the perplexities we feel is not hidden but rather lies right before our eyes; (f) any investigation of a practice involving intentional concepts will reach a point where we must see that there is nothing hidden beneath that ground before us which explains or justifies our practice. While a bald list such as this hardly does justice to the concept, it should help locate what Fogelin means by defactoism.

The first chapter deals with rule-following and begins with the example of the pupil being taught arithmetic (*Philosophical Investigations* [hereafter 'PI'] 185). When asked to produce the series of even numbers starting with 2 she does what is expected until she gets to 1000 where she continues the series by writing 1004, 1008, 1012, and so

on. When corrected she insists she's going on in the same way as before. And of course there is an interpretation, consistent with her training, according to which she *is* continuing the series correctly. When you try to convey to the errant pupil the intended interpretation, you'll give her more examples and explanations expressed in language that she'll have to interpret, and thus the problem repeats itself. So if following a rule essentially involves an interpretation and a mental state telling you how to follow the rule, then we get the paradox of PI 201: there is no such thing as rule-following because no matter what anyone does there will be an interpretation according to which the rule is being followed correctly. On Fogelin's defactoist reading, Wittgenstein's central move is to dissolve the paradox by reminding us that there is a way of following a rule which is *not* an interpretation (PI 201). Wittgenstein reminds us that following a rule is practice, the result of training which depends on our shared natural responses. With these reminders in place, we are supposed to see there is no philosophical problem of rule-following.

Some of Wittgenstein's readers (perhaps, e.g. Kripke in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language,* Harvard University Press, 1982) believe that he has a purely 'communitarian' solution to the paradox of interpretation: conformity with the community's use of the rule provides the standard of correctness. Following a rule correctly is, then, just a matter of satisfying communal standards of correctness. This behavioristic-sociological reading of Wittgenstein seems inadequate both as an interpretation and as a response to the paradox. As Fogelin notes, it ignores the passages where Wittgenstein emphasizes our natural responses which make training possible. The purely communitarian account is philosophically problematic since it seems to be nothing more than an attempt to reduce the normative concept of rule-following to descriptive facts concerning conformity to the rule-following behavior of a community. But why think normativity can be reduced to bare facts about how people behave? As Fogelin notes (30-31), such a reduction fails capture the *normative* aspect of rule-following which distinguishes between simply being *caused* to act in a regular and predictable way and *following* a rule. Conformity to community practice may be one of the criteria for ascertaining whether someone correctly grasps a rule, but it's a mistake, according to Wittgenstein's 'rich notion of rule-following' (31), to think that correct rule following consists simply in doing what the rest of the community does. If normativity cannot be reduced to descriptive facts about how the community behaves, it follows that we cannot explain rule-following from a position outside our normative practices involving intentional concepts (42). Because any adequate description of our rule-following practices will be given in intentional and normative terms, Wittgenstein's defactoist account of rule-following can seem philosophically unsatisfying since it seems to presuppose the very cluster of concepts it's supposed to illuminate, and hence it will appear that it fails to give an adequate account of the phenomenon that provoked the philosophical investigation.

In his earlier treatment of the remarks on private language (*Wittgenstein,*

Routledge, 1976, 1987), Fogelin located the central move of the private language argument in PI 202: if language is essentially a rule governed activity, and it's impossible to follow a rule privately because following a rule is a custom or practice, then a private language is impossible. Fogelin now finds this way of reading Wittgenstein out of focus since it attributes to him the defense of a substantive philosophical thesis. According to his defactoist approach to these remarks, a private language is not really imaginable: 'the notion of a private language lacks coherent content' (57). When the private diarist of PI 258 attempts to give herself a private ostensive definition of S, it's an empty ceremony because the required background conditions and practical consequences aren't there; it's like your right hand trying to give your left hand money (PI 268).

The three chapters of Part 2 apply defactoism to Wittgenstein's remarks on confusions produced when philosophers and logicians investigate the foundations of mathematics. Chapter 3 is concerned with the fact that it seems natural to understand mathematical statements as descriptive assertions expressing necessary truths. And this seems to force a choice between Platonism and an even less appealing formalism/conventionalism. But we aren't forced to choose if the applications of mathematics are kept in the foreground, and we cease thinking of the role of all words as referential and the role of all sentences as descriptive and assertoric. The next chapter deals with set theory and Cantorian infinities. On Fogelin's view, Wittgenstein sees the central mistake being made when mathematicians blithely move from using the operation of making a one-to-one correspondence between two finite sets of objects (e.g., plates and napkins on a table) to establish they're the same size to using the operation to establish when infinite sets have the same size. This extended application of the operation is then used in a 'puffed up' proof of the existence of an infinite hierarchy of ever larger infinite sets—Cantor's paradise. The last chapter is concerned with Wittgenstein's notorious remarks about logical inconsistency.

Fogelin does an excellent job of making Wittgenstein's controversial views about mathematics plausible. This is especially true of his defense of the view that logical inconsistency need not make a game or logical system unusable. As Fogelin acknowledges (128), most mathematicians dismiss Wittgenstein's reflections on transfinite cardinals with 'amused condescension'. However, if a presentation of Wittgenstein's views as lucid and persuasive as Fogelin's can't get them to leave Cantor's paradise, it's doubtful anything can. It really is extraordinarily difficult to overturn the mind-set that leads to the mathematicians' condescension, and those who already reside happily in Cantor's paradise—they might insist it was *discovered* by Cantor—just don't see anything problematic in the transition from using the one-to-one operation in finite cases to using it in infinite cases.

This is a superb book by someone who has spent decades thinking hard about Wittgenstein's philosophy. Fogelin's therapeutic and defactoist reading of Wittgenstein's intentions is almost certainly correct. It is, perhaps, questionable whether Fogelin has

entirely succeeded in presenting a purely therapeutic Wittgenstein, as this book contains many passages that look less like reminders and more like arguments for and against philosophical theses. But of course a therapist will sometimes have to engage the patient's delusions in order to treat them.

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