

Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* Lecture 14

1. Wittgenstein's own solution to the problem of intentionality appears very briefly at *PI* 429 and also at *PI* 458. The answer is that the order and its execution (or e.g. the wish and its fulfilment) make contact *within* language. There is no magical fit between language and reality: it is just that if somebody orders that such-and-such, then only what we are prepared to *describe* as 'such-and-such' is going to count as its execution.
2. Wittgenstein is therefore in agreement with his own earlier self that the relation between a description or desire and its 'intentional object' is *internal*: a desire for an apple could not have existed without being a desire for an *apple*. By contrast Russell's theory makes the relation external: the object of a desire is whatever happens to cause its cessation.
3. At *PI* 466-90 Wittgenstein briefly discusses inductive reasoning and probability. The *Tractatus* had taken a Humean line on a number of problems (e.g. causation and the self) and this was certainly the case with induction. 'The procedure of induction consists in accepting as true the *simplest* law that can be reconciled with our experience. This procedure, however, has no logical justification but only a psychological one... It is an hypothesis that the sun will rise tomorrow; and this means that we do not *know* whether it will rise' (*TLP* 6.363-6.36311).
4. His new treatment is also strikingly Humean, at least in part. 'Nothing could induce me to put my hand in the flame—though after all it is only *in the past* that I have burnt myself' (*PI* 472). Compare Hume: 'Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as breathe and feel' (*Treatise* I.iv.1). Many inductively based judgments are instinctive so it is entirely irrelevant that they fall short of knowledge: irrelevant, that is, to whether we hold them or not. Our past experiences are *causes* of our expectations for future ones; and this is not the same thing as saying that they are its grounds (at least that seems to be the gist of *PI* 475).
5. But whilst he endorses Hume's line that these beliefs are instinctive Wittgenstein seems to want to deny that they fall short of being rational. At *PI* 478 he raises the question what *reasons* there are for thinking that his finger will feel resistance when it touches the table. And he answers that a hundred such reasons present themselves. But how in the face of Hume's arguments can these reasons be any good?
6. The reply seems to come at *PI* 481a: somebody who denies that these are grounds doesn't mean the same thing as we do by 'empirical grounds for a proposition'—'If *these* are not grounds then what are grounds?' and then at *PI* 483-4: 'A good ground is one that looks *like this*. Justification by experience comes to an end. If it did not it would not be justification.' But that isn't much good. We can reply that Humean scepticism does not depart from the ordinary concept of reasons or grounds but remains faithful to its most basic tenet: that if you have the same grounds for two incompatible propositions then you should rationally have the same confidence in both of them. But we do have the same evidence for the proposition that the next emerald I examine will be

green, and also the proposition that it will be grue, and the proposition that it will be grellow,... So on what grounds can we for give non-zero credence to *any* of them?

7. To say (as Wittgenstein does: *PI* 481a) that we should not be able to understand a person who suspends his belief in this way is completely beside the point. Hume agrees—indeed emphasizes—that he like the rest of humanity would never for a moment waver in his confidence that the next emerald is green. His point all along was not to tell us to drop this belief but to ask what psychological mechanism produces it. And his answer is ‘not reason’. *This* point cannot be answered just by redefining the term ‘grounds’ so that our standard inductive bases will qualify.
8. At *PI* 598a Wittgenstein sums up a line of thought that has run through the whole work like a scarlet thread. ‘When we do philosophy, we should like to hypostatize feelings where there are none. They serve to explain our thoughts to us.’ Amongst other things Wittgenstein’s treatment of the will at *PI* 611-28 is an application of this point. It is a diagnosis and a treatment of the idea that there is a feeling of willing; also (from *PI* 620 onwards) a diagnosis and treatment of the contrary idea that the will is something *behind* the experiences. These two theses correspond to the two halves of the discussion of willing in the *Tractatus*. There is the ‘phenomenal’ will that is an experience and entirely independent of the ego (*TLP* 6.423b); and then there is the noumenal will, whose exercise is nothing to do with empirical happenstance but whose exercise is the sole determinant of value (*TLP* 6.373, 6.423b, 6.43).
9. One reason for thinking that there *is* an experience of willing derives from the Hobbesian idea that although I can will and act of mine, I cannot will my own willing. So willing is not something that I do but something that happens to me: I therefore stand to it in the passive relation that characterizes my epistemic position vis-à-vis experience. So on this reading the second sentence of *PI* 611 is a reason for the first. Wittgenstein agrees that in *some* sense of ‘will’ I cannot be said to will my will (though in another sense I can!—*PI* 613)—but that doesn’t mean that it is something that just happens to me. For it is not a *distinct* event at all—i.e. it is not distinct from the bodily movement that it is supposed to cause (*PI* 614).
10. If willing were e.g. a matter of kinaesthetic sensation then presumably it would be possible to have the sensation of willing without the motion that it normally produces. That is the case that Wittgenstein describes at *PI* 624. In fact things are otherwise: the feeling can only be described as a feeling of voluntary motion in your arms: it is not as though it has some independent and narrower content from which you *infer* that you are moving your arms. It is rather the voluntary motion itself that has become the criterion for the feeling (cf. the manometer argument at *PI* 270). ‘But how can you have a direct feeling of something external?’ Well, it can be quite natural to characterize a feeling as of something outside your body (*PI* 626): and it is in that sense that you can have a feeling that intrinsically carries dynamic information.

11. 'It comes when it comes': that might seem right if you do the little experiment described at *PI* 617. But if we compare it with the case where the finger is being held, it seems as though the willing is there in both cases, only in the first case it does not know where to catch hold without a tactile image of the required finger (cf. *NB* 87). This threatens to tip us over into saying that the will is not a phenomenon but something behind all the phenomena. Wittgenstein's treatment of that is brief and appears at *PI* 621: if you take away all that is empirical from the arm raising it is not just that there is nothing unempirical left over: nothing is left over *at all*. (See also in this connection *PG* 97).