

Take Home Exam 3: ***Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations***

Due *at the start of class* on Tuesday, April 29th.

From the five options listed below, you are to choose **TWO**, and for *each*, write a 2-3 page essay explaining Wittgenstein's views, along with your assessment and reaction to it. Although you can always discuss the issues from class with your classmates, you are expected to work *on your own* on the exam.

- 1) Describe the understanding of the essence of language that comes out of the passage from St. Augustine's *Confessions* with which Wittgenstein begins the book. How does Wittgenstein use the example of the builders, and other considerations, to portray this account as oversimplified? How does Wittgenstein criticize the notion of ostensive language learning and naming that is involved in this simplistic understanding? What conclusions do *you* draw about the nature of language? Explain your answer. (Focus especially on §§1-37.)
- 2) Wittgenstein discusses several viewpoints that are found within the traditional (Russellian) approach to philosophical *analysis*: (a) treating "this" and "that" as *names*, (b) the suggestion that genuine "names" must represent "simple" things; (c) that for such things, it is important and/or revealing that we cannot talk about their nonexistence or possible destruction; (d) that words/expressions must have (or through analysis, must be capable of having) a fixed definite meaning if they are to be significant at all. Describe Wittgenstein's overall attitude towards these viewpoints. Does his discussion lead you to look differently on the Russellian conception of language? Why or why not? (Focus on §§38-88.)
- 3) Describe Wittgenstein's attitude towards the *ideal language* approach to philosophizing, which holds that the true essence of language is something that lies hidden to us, and/or that one task of philosophy is to *reform* colloquial language. Contrast it with his own attitude that "philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can only describe it" (§124). Do you agree with Wittgenstein's attitude? Why or why not? (Focus on §§81, 89-142.)
- 4) Describe the importance of rule-following in Wittgenstein's conception of meaning and understanding language. Why does Wittgenstein think that what it is to follow a rule cannot be explained in virtue of "understanding a formula" or having a certain "mental process" accompany one's behavior? Give some examples. How does Wittgenstein himself respond to the "problem" of what it is to follow a rule? Do you agree? What do you believe is involved with following a rule? (Focus on §§54, 73-74, 82, 86, 143-242.)
- 5) Why does Wittgenstein express skepticism at the possibility of a completely private language, one in which a person "could write down... his [or her] immediate private sensations"—one which, in principle, "another person cannot understand" (§243)? How does Wittgenstein understand the relation between the possibility of saying or imagining that someone (or something!) has a certain mental or emotive state (e.g., being in pain) and his or her exhibiting characteristically human behavior and engaging in human forms of life? Do you agree or disagree with Wittgenstein on these points? Why? (Focus on §§243-317.)