

Temelini, Michael. *Wittgenstein and the Study of Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2015. ix + 274 pp. Cloth, \$60.00; ebook, \$60.00 –

Wittgenstein's philosophy has exercised great influence over the study of politics since the publication of *Philosophical Investigations*. One central claim made by many Wittgenstein scholars is that while his work offers no clear guidance on politics, it can be supplemented by political traditions as varied as conservatism, Marxism, feminism, and liberalism to develop new political theories. Temelini's *Wittgenstein and the Study of Politics* rejects this interpretation of Wittgenstein to argue that within the later Wittgenstein's work there is a clear politics of comparative dialogue.

In order to support his argument Temelini surveys two of the dominant readings of Wittgenstein's method. The first reading emphasizes therapeutic skepticism. These commentators see Wittgenstein as treating his philosophy as a kind of therapy against metaphysics via the promotion of different types of skepticism in the readers. The second reading emphasizes the primacy of training an individual into a shared form of life. These commentators argue that social convention and customary habits provide methodological insight into the study of politics.

In contrast to these two traditions of interpreting Wittgenstein Temelini argues that a crucial and neglected aspect of Wittgenstein's method is perspicuous representation. Temelini draws our attention to §122 of *Philosophical Investigations* where Wittgenstein argues that confusion over the meaning of words originates from lack of perspicuity about the variety of ways in which a word can be used. To resolve these types of confusions Wittgenstein proposes that one survey the variety of different language-games and contexts in which a word is used so that one can see connections between a word's grammar across different language-games. This type of survey, according to Temelini's interpretation, is best carried out through conversation. Hence he terms this interpretation of Wittgenstein's methodology the dialogical comparison method.

The second part of the book uses the method of perspicuous representation to put three scholars and their political theories in conversation with each other. The three theoretical approaches are Charles Taylor's realist explanatory approach to the study of politics, Quentin Skinner's contextualist interpretive approach to the history of political thought, and James Tully's defense of reasonable disagreement and dissent through an agonistic dialogical approach to the practice of politics. Taylor's work intervenes in epistemological debates in the social and human sciences to argue that understanding in these disciplines is not established through accurate representation of the object of knowledge but through ongoing negotiations and dialogues with the objects of study. Crucial to Taylor's critique of positivist social science epistemology is his concept of the background, which consists of the unarticulated background assumptions that make any social practice possible and meaningful for others.

In a similar manner, Skinner draws upon Wittgenstein to justify two crucial features of his method. First he draws upon the context in which a text was written in order to better understand the intentions of the authors writing the text. Second Skinner is able to explain social and political change by studying the ways in which political thinkers manipulate existing vocabularies in order to struggle over the political norms and conventions of their time. Temelini's

insight is that Skinner and Wittgenstein both argue that the implicit rules of overlapping language-games and forms of life operate as a kind of foundation, but the foundation as whole continues to persist despite its constant modification by the participants of the language-game.

Finally James Tully's work reimagines constitutionalism as an ongoing dialogue amongst all those impacted by the political order. One of Tully's main claims in his later work is that modern constitutionalism and democratic theory has a monological tendency that seeks out closed solutions and universal principles to apply to the political order. Tully's work reconceptualizes constitutions as ongoing dialogues where disagreement and dissent by participants is necessary to sustain and modify the political order over time. Tully's comparative dialogical method enables participants to compare lived experiences and forms of life with an emphasis on listening to the other side and finding family resemblances between diverse communities.

Temelini's work will be of great value to political philosophers interested in how Wittgenstein's later philosophy has shaped contemporary theory. The book provides a comprehensive survey of the varieties of political thought inspired by Wittgenstein and offers a strong defense of a realist reading of Wittgenstein against various interpreters who have read Wittgenstein as either a political conservative or a normative skeptic. By surveying the philosophies of Taylor, Tully, and Skinner, Temelini is able to bring to the foreground this realist reading of Wittgenstein and explicate its significance for contemporary philosophy. It will be of great interest to both political philosophers and scholars of Wittgenstein.

Jonathan Havercroft
Associate Professor
Politics and International Relations
University of Southampton
j.havercroft@soton.ac.uk