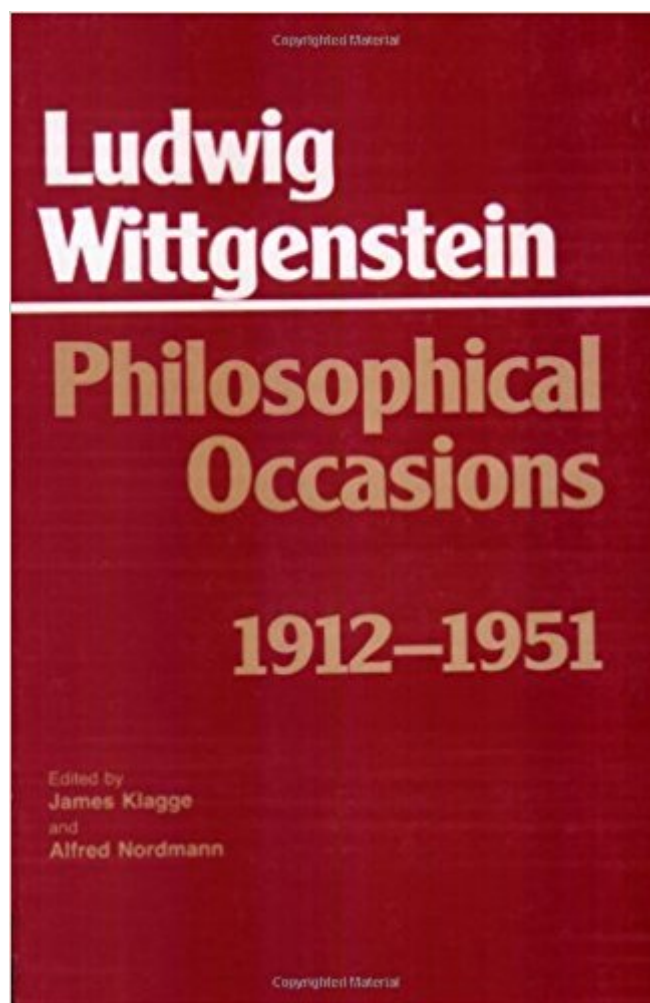


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Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951 (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

An essential resource for students of Wittgenstein, this collection contains faithful, in some cases expanded and corrected, versions of many important pieces never before available in a single volume, including Notes for the 'Philosophical Lecture', published here for the first time. Fifteen selections, with bi-lingual versions of those originally written in German, span the development of Wittgenstein's thought, his range of interests, and his methods of philosophical investigation. Short introductions, an index, and an updated version of Georg Henrik von Wright's The Wittgenstein Papers situate the selections within the broader context of the Wittgenstein corpus and the history of its publication.

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Customer Reviews

This is an important collections of texts by Wittgenstein. For those interested in Wittgenstein and ethics, the lecture on ethics printed here may be significant. This book also contains Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough, which is important when one wants to understand Wittgenstein's views on religion and culture. However, the most important thing here is probably some remarks printed under the heading "Philosophy", where Wittgenstein spells out his views on philosophy. If one wants to get a clear grasp on the later Wittgenstein's view on philosophy, this piece is very important. The reader will recognize passages from Philosophical Investigations, but here Wittgenstein's philosophical therapy is stated even more clearly than in the Investigations.

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Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was an Austrian-British philosopher whose books such as *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations* are among the acknowledged "classics" of 20th century philosophy. Born into a wealthy family, he gave all of his inheritance away, served in the Austrian Army during World War I, taught schoolchildren in remote Austrian villages, but ultimately taught at Cambridge for many years. The *Tractatus* was the only book he published during his lifetime, but his papers have been posthumously edited, and notes of lectures taken by his students have been transcribed, and have resulted in many published books, such as *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, & Remarks*, *The Blue and Brown Books*, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, *Remarks on Colour*, *Zettel*, etc. He wrote in a book review, "In no branch of learning can an author disregard the results of honest research with so much impunity as he can in Philosophy and Logic... Aristotle, whose name is so much taken in vain by logicians, would turn in his grave if he knew that so many Logicians knew no more about Logic today than he did 2,000 years ago." (Pg. 2-3) He argues in "A Lecture on Ethics," "Let me consider first... our first experience of wondering at the world... we all know what in ordinary life would be called a miracle... Now suppose such an event happened. Take the case that one of you suddenly grew a lion's head and began to roar. Certainly that would be as extraordinary a thing as I can imagine. Now whenever we should have recovered from our surprise, what I would suggest would be to fetch a doctor and have the case scientifically investigated and if it were not for hurting him I should have him vivisected. And where would the miracle have got to? For it is clear that when we look at it in this way everything miraculous has disappeared... This shows that it is absurd to say 'Science has proved that there are no miracles.' The truth is that the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle. For imagine whatever fact you may, is it not in itself miraculous in the absolute sense of

that term. For we see now that we had been using the word 'miracle' in a relative and an absolute sense. And I will now describe the experience of wondering at the existence of the world by saying: it is the experience of seeing the world as a miracle." (Pg. 43) He asserts, "Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything." (Pg. 177) He observes, "I may feel inclined to say that no one really understands what I mean by red, but that I DO know what I mean by it. And so I might consider a language I talk only to myself. Robinson Crusoe may have held soliloquies. And then he talks to himself alone. But he talks the language he had talked with people before. But imagine him INVENTING a PRIVATE language. Imagine that he gives a name to a sensation of his... His language is a language only in so far as it might be used among other human beings. It would be absurd to speak of translating his 'language' into English---or into any other language." (Pg. 320-321) He admits in a letter to a former student of his, "If I could, as many other people can, prepare my lectures in writing and then read them in front of the class the presence of new people would not disturb me. But as I'm unable to do this and have to think things out while I'm talking I am very easily disturbed." (Pg. 459-460) The various writings collected in this book are certainly often interesting, but it should be noted that they are much less philosophically "profound" than one encounters even in the various collections of Wittgenstein's private notes (e.g., Zettel). Still, the book will definitely have value for anyone seriously studying Wittgenstein, his life, and the development of his thought.

This is a book really for philosophy professors and graduate students. It's not for the general reader. It's also not for anyone who hasn't read Wittgenstein's major works. It's really almost an overdose of analytic philosophy that makes one wonder what any of this has to do with wisdom.

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