CRITICAL NOTICE

A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes
by Rupert Read
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Ever since the publication of *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells in 1895, the notion of

time-travel has become a recognised feature of the popular imagination, presenting itself in innumerable

tales of intrepid time-travellers using their vehicles to cover ever greater distances either into the past

or into the future, and as a result enjoying the kinds of experiences that might have been available to

those who lived, say, in Ancient Rome, or who will in centuries to come inhabit a solar system in which

regular commercial space-flights amongst all of its planets will have become a commonplace.

On the face of it, imaginative participation in these tales of fiction does not appear to involve

any kind of formal contradiction, although there are obvious paradoxes that arise, for example, when

considering the portrayal of a time-traveller who succeeds in instigating the prevention of his own

birth. Leaving cases of this paradoxical kind aside, however, it might appear that the only relevant

question is the empirical one whether scientific advance may make travel through time as generally

conceived in these stories, a real possibility. Here it must seem that the philosopher has to proceed

with a great deal of caution: he ought to avoid, for example, the kinds of basic common-sense yet

fatuous objections to an Einsteinian notion of *curved space* as the effect of gravitational forces, on the

grounds that it offends against our thoughts about Euclidian geometry.

Nevertheless, it can sometimes appear that we ought to be perplexed by the very idea

of time-travel, given that it is very evidently modelled on our idea of travelling through space. The

picture involved here would appear to be that of a four-dimensional space-time continuum stretching

infinitely in all dimensions, and which allows for the possibility that individuals at any one point

within this continuum can travel towards any other. It is just possible that Wittgenstein's comments

regarding another powerful picture may also be relevant here:

What is to be done with the picture, how it is to be used, is

still obscure. Quite clearly, however, it must be explored if

we want to understand the sense of what we are saying.

But the picture seems to spare us this work: it already

points to a particular use. This is how it takes us in.

(*Philosophical Investigations*, Part II, vii, 184e, 2nd edition 1958).

In the second chapter of his book, '"Time Travel": the Very Idea', this is effectively the position adopted by Rupert Read, who argues that far from presenting us with a possibility that scientific advance may one day enable us to realise, the very idea of travelling through time as envisaged in popular fictional narratives, is completely incoherent: we have no genuine idea here of what we are talking about, because the idea of travelling backwards and forwards in time is totally without sense. If we do believe that it does have sense, then that is solely because we are modelling it on our perfectly intelligible ideas about travelling through space, and so enjoying the many different kinds of experiences consequent upon journeying across the globe and perhaps even beyond it. 'Travelling back in time' to Elizabethan England or to Ancient Rome can amount on this view to nothing more than the ability to *imagine* what it might have been like to enjoy the kinds of experiences available to those who actually lived during these periods of history:

Time-travel-talk, I am suggesting, is a consequence of being

gripped/captured by spatial pictures of time. Of plunging headlong

into a spatialized view of time, without realizing that one has

allowed one's metaphors to run away with one (For : What makes

sense, of space, just doesn't always make sense, of time. Space

travel involves going from place to place. Time travel involves

going from time to time - but the meaning of the term 'going'

in this case is radically unclear !) (Read, *Ibid*., 52).

So presented, the inevitable paradoxes about preventing one's own birth, for example, by travelling backwards in time, obviously play some role in leading us to question the very idea of time-travel, but they do not in themselves constitute the main objection to this popular notion.

The real problem lies with the surreptitious use of a model that apparently enables us to envisage 'possibilities' that really have no sense, because they are derived from our everyday notion of travelling from place to place. None of this, of course, says anything at all about claims made by some individuals to have 'experienced' events that took place in earlier epochs, or about having 'visions' that allow direct access to events in previous times. These have to be approached in their own terms, as do claims about the possibility of transferring matter instantaneously from one region of space-time to another, or about using so-called 'worm-holes' in space-time to reduce the time taken to travel over vast distances of space. Read provides an extensive discussion of his main issue, with long and detailed footnotes. There can be little doubt that he effectively proves his case.

There are two chapters in this book dedicated to Saul Kripke's notorious account of what has come to be referred to as the 'meaning-scepticism' associated with Wittgenstein's treatment of following a rule. In Chapter 4, 'Kripke's Rule-Following Paradox - and Kripke's Conjuring Trick', Read is quick to point out, in line with almost every other commentator, that Kripke fails to mention the second paragraph of *Investigations* § 201 (*Ibid*. 77 & 100, Endnote 1). This provides the response to the paradox with which this section begins, *viz*, that 'no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with a rule'. Wittgenstein effectively deflates the paradox in this paragraph, not by providing a Humean 'sceptical solution' to it in terms of 'community agreement', but by drawing our attention to the ordinary practices in which our normal understanding of a rule is manifested in what we call 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it'. This is, consequently, not an 'answer' to the paradox, but a way of showing that if we study our practices in which we *follow a rule*, then we will come to appreciate how meaning-scepticism achieves its hold on us. It does so by allowing us to become victims of a *misunderstanding* caused by our thinking of one *interpretation* of a rule after another, *as if* 'each one contented us at least for a moment before we saw yet another standing behind it'; and this is to study the notion of *rule-following* outwith the ordinary contexts in which it happens to be manifested. As Read presents his case against those readers who believe that a genuine philosophical problem is presented by Kripke in his account of § 201:

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Many of those who wish to resist Kripke's interpretations, arguments

or conclusions have failed to place the problem with these far enough

back........Almost all of Kripke's readers have allowed that the problem

which Kripke tries to delineate can at least in some sense be delineated.

It is that presupposition which I challenge (*Ibid.* 78).

Read pursues his challenge by effectively resisting the temptation to accept Kripke's treatment of 'plus' and 'quus' at face value, given that we 'are not allowed to eliminate that alternative possibility through pointing to what we are doing, since everything that we can demonstratively identify counts just as much for the alternative possibility, since "quus" can parallel - overlap with, be identical to - addition in every case one can adduce' (*Ibid.*, 85). But, of course, 'pointing to what we are doing' here just *is* a matter of drawing our attention away from the (philosophical) temptation to *interpret* the rule in terms of the function 'quus', and towards those circumstances in which we ordinarily talk about 'obeying the rule' involved in adding (rather than 'quadding') 68 and 75, or instead perhaps unintentionally 'going against it'.

In his next Chapter 5, 'The Unstatability of Kripkean Skepticisms', Read elaborates on his earlier conclusions by claiming that 'there cannot be any such thing as even entertaining those Kripkean skepticisms' (*Ibid.* 111). This is on the grounds that their very expression relies on words which are not 'put into doubt, including words which are syntactically or analytically *identical* with the words supposedly doubted'. Once again, Read has provided a detailed account of why he regards the entire Kripkean sceptical dialectic to be one that is not even coherently expressible: 'that *this* is a hand and that *that* is an addition sum are, normally, completely unproblematically *presumed'* (*Ibid.*). Read's treatment is accompanied by very extensive footnotes elaborating on the position he adopts in the main text.

Like the *Ship of Theseus*, an ancient puzzle that opposes the criterion of 'sum of constituent parts' to 'spatio-temporal continuity' in deciding what we are to count as 'the same ship', the equally famous *Paradox of the 'Heap'* (Greek '*Sorites*'), another ancient puzzle, turns on the issue of whether a

heap of sand, say, of so many millions of grains in size would remain the *same* heap no matter how many of these grains were gradually removed from it: the paradox results from accepting that there is no fixed point at which it would lose its claim to be a *heap*, should this continuing removal of one grain of sand after another without end make no difference to its status. In his Sixth Chapter, 'Heaps of Trouble: "Logically Alien Thought" and the Dissolution of "Sorites" Paradoxes', Rupert Read begins by castigating philosophers for having failed to take into account the importance of *context* in making decisions about what is to constitute a heap, given that in particular contexts we are prepared to enter into agreement over issues of this kind, *e.g.*, 'whether or not an arrangement of sand constituted a heap might be an issue germane to a legal case that concerned (say) what a builder had been asked to do in order to unblock a driveway' (*Ibid*. 117). Similarly:

> A heterosexual woman viewing a 'Personals' ad that claimed its
> author not to be bald would be rightly entitled to feel aggrieved,
> if the points made in the preceding paragraph were implicitly not
> respected by the author of the ad (*Ibid*.)

These points relate to the fact that in practice, baldness is not simply a matter of numerical progression, but relates also to the 'geographical' position of hairs lost, although in this case Read neglects to mention that this would be quite beside the point should the woman happen to have a preference for bald men. As against Read, however, it can hardly be *as if* philosophers have throughout history been *unaware* that decisions over issues of this kind can be made for legal or for other quite ordinary reasons, accepting that *as* philosophers they have always intended to offer these puzzles in their most stark 'logical' form by leaving context out of account. Consequently, the claim that 'most discussions of sorites paradoxes are dangerously *de-contextualized*' (*Ibid*. 120) is in danger of neglecting the point that this is integral to why philosophers have considered context to be irrelevant to the importance of these puzzles as they generally present them. Whether this can be regarded as a 'fault' on their part is then going to depend entirely on the relevance attached to the 'Wittgensteinian' perspective that Read adopts in judging them.

Later on in this Chapter, Read interestingly introduces Wittgenstein's famous woodsellers from the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, who strangely regard wood piled into heaps as having a smaller quantity, and therefore a lesser value than the same wood spread over the ground. Remarking that the relevance of this example to his discussion here has mostly been overlooked by philosophers, Read argues that it would be quite wrong to claim that these woodsellers 'demonstrate a true conceptual relativism, a possibly radically other "form of Life"' (*Ibid*.123), when we can treat them 'as caring about whether things are heaps or not' (*Ibid*. 127), in which case they can be regarded as contributing to a 'dissolution' of the paradox of the heap. Generally speaking, for Read 'It only looks like there really is the paradox of the heap so long as we - unawarely (and absurdly) - hover, by wanting the term "heap" *to be both context-bound and context-independent in its use'* (*Ibid*. 130). The discussion is detailed and accompanied by extensive footnotes, although in this case it is not just so obvious that Read's Wittgensteinian way with the paradox is as directly relevant to the issues discussed as it is elsewhere in his book.

'The Dissolution of the "Surprise Exam" Paradox - and its Implications for Rational Choice Theory', forms the subject of the last Chapter 7 in the first part of Read's book dedicated to paradoxes which are strictly for philosophers. In this case there cannot be announced at the start of term a surprise exam in the last class of term, for it would then cease to be a surprise; but it cannot then take place in the penultimate class either for the same reason, and so on until we come to realise that what we foresaw as a possibility has actually been ruled out. Read, however, wishes to argue that 'the actual/civil status of the surprise exam depends among other things upon the state of knowledge (both individually *and mutually*) of /the cognitive abilities of the "audience" and of the exam setter' (*Ibid*. 146), so that we can readily come to imagine cases in which an exam *would* be a surprise because 'the listing of contextual conditions that will be needed to pin down under what conditions a pre-announced surprise exam is "impossible" is indefinitely long'; and this, for Read, is a disastrous result for proponents of the surprise exam paradox.

What Read wishes to deduce from this is that if we insist on regarding these backward

induction paradoxes like that of the surprise exam in terms which make them seem 'compelling, nagging, even irresolvable', then we will neglect the extent to which human beings (the students in this example) can actually make things possible, things which on a '"rational" theoretical basis appear not to be' (*Ibid.* 152). The connection with Rational Choice Theory arises from Read's evident desire to see defective models of rationality overcome by the realisation, as he puts it, that altruism, reciprocal behaviour, and collective action need not, after all, be regarded as paradoxical purely because of these models' inadequacy. Read is moved to comment that in the second part of his book, the kind of 'ethical' or even 'political' moment that he claims to ultimitely emerge from his discussion of the surprise exam will become much more evident. Although we are almost bound to be rather sceptical about the wide sweep of Read's thinking and the ultimate conclusions at which he arrives in this chapter solely from studying just this paradox, many readers will admire him for daring to take the boat out into such stormy waters.

Part II of Read's volume entitled 'A Way with Lived Paradoxes' begins with Chapter 8, 'Swastikas and Cyborgs: The Significance of PI 420 for Reading *Philosophical Investigations* as a "War Book"'. But what is § 420 about ? It forms one of a sequence of passages running approximately from §§ 412 - 428 which mainly discuss the concept of *consciousness* in both its ordinary use and in its philosophical guise, and for that reason it is importantly related to the famous § 281 with its central claim that 'only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious'. The philosophical notion, disassociated from its connection with expressive behaviour, is certainly in question in § 416 with its reference to sentences like 'I am conscious' *really* having their uses after all, although we might, following Wittgenstein, have thought otherwise. It is also being mocked in § 419 with its highly amusing example of a tribe's surely having a *chief*, a chief who equally must surely have *consciousness*.

It is against this background that we can understand the significance of § 420, for having already convinced us that the notion has no genuine use when it occurs in philosophical contexts, Wittgenstein

concocts a counterexample in which we are invited to see human beings as automata, going about their business as if in a trance, wholly unaware and therefore unconscious, like the zombie, of what they are about. But this is a *picture* that in ordinary circumstances has no application, for as soon as we attempt to apply it to our 'ordinary intercourse with others', their expressive behaviour tells us that the suggestion is really quite 'meaningless', producing in us an 'uncanny feeling, or something of the sort'. The passage ends with the statement that seeing a living human being as an automaton is akin to seeing 'one figure as a limiting case or variant of another; the cross-pieces of a window as a swastika, for example'.

Rupert Read wants to present a quite different account of the true significance of § 420 and related passages, one which provides us with a lived paradox that results from regarding other human beings as if they were really after all only machines, mere 'animated' bodies as Read puts it, who are not truly human; whilst at the same time being fully aware of their *genuine* status as human beings who suffer as do we: 'I find this paradox vividly present in the terrible history of Nazism and like-minded movements of thought and action' (*Ibid*. 161), Nazi movements of thought that Read believes Wittgenstein to be implicitly contemplating in his discussion. From this Read concludes that Wittgenstein's *Investigations* 'is deeply open to what was without doubt the fundamental issue of its time (i.e of the time of Hitler et al) [sic.]: acknowledging, really acknowledging the humanity of all contemporaneous human beings, and not merely of a favored sub-set thereof' (*Ibid*. 162). This he combines with the thought that solipsism is an extreme version of racism, with the consequence that Nazism is akin to solipsism insofar as the 'patho-logic' of one is 'directly akin' to that of the other, 'taken to a logical extreme' (*Ibid*., Endnote 8, 179).

It would almost be pointless to assert that none of this is directly related to the text of the *Investigations*, since Read is inviting us to join him in reading the book from a perspective that employs a historical mode of 'seeing-as', one which provides 'the most charitable and most fertile' reading of the text on the principle that he is 'pushing out a boat as far as it can reasonably be pushed' (*Ibid*. Endnote 9, 179). Wittgenstein's 'perfectionism' is manifested, for Read, in an investigation that

goes to the *root* of the lived delusion that could result in the 'profound inhumanity that, from the mid-late 30's thru [sic.] to 1945.... he was living through', an inhumanity that manifested itself in a different way in the 1914 -1918 War. Wittgenstein found himself in a position to identify 'the close relation between two related issues.....the inhuman human failure to acknowledge others', a failure claimed to be manifested in the 'private language fantasy', and 'the concrete issue of Nazism' as its exemplar (*Ibid.* 166). From this point of view, Wittgenstein's much used example of *pain* can be seen as 'the nodal point for the human tendency to fail fully to acknowledge the humanity of others' (*Ibid*. 167).

This way of thinking perhaps finds its most extreme expression in Read's treatment of the reference to a swastika at the end of § 420, for this is said to differ from the usual 'duck-rabbit' kinds of examples insofar as you can only *see* the cross-piece of a window *as* a swastika if you are prepared to 'shut your eyes' to part of the window surround. The Nazis are said to have similarly shut their eyes to the full humanity of those whom they categorised, as Read puts it, as 'cyborgs', a classification consequent upon 'the attitudinal depersonalization that turns a person into an (as-if) machine (*Ibid*. 169):

> *Philosophical Investigations*, understood aright....is just the kind of book
> needed to dissolve the deepest seeds...........of war and genocide, the
> seeds born of and watered precisely.....(by a wallowing in abstraction
> and spectatorship at the cost of the engaging with empathy explicated
> and recommended by Wittgenstein) (*Ibid*. 177).

Read concludes with the thought that seeing a human being as worthy of nothing more than the status of an automaton 'is analogous to the habits of thought most centrally subject to critique in the anti-"private-language" considerations' (*Ibid.* 178). For this reason, he invites us to see Wittgenstein's *Investigations* 'as a meditation on Nazism and the like, our attractions to it, and how to expose them relentlessly to view'. If this is what we are to understand by 'putting the boat out' as

far as it can go, and even 'slightly farther than it can in fact be pushed out' (*Ibid*.178), then it is worth emphasising, as already illustrated, that Read's conclusions here go much further than any literal reading of the content of § 420 and surrounding passages *per se* could reasonably allow.

Chapter 9, 'From Moore's Paradox to Wittgenstein's Paradox ? : On Lived Paradox in Cases of (Moral and) Mental Ill-Health' [sic.], invites us to see Moore's paradox as expressed in the claim 'that it is raining but I do not believe that it is', as a piece of nonsense that expresses nothing at all. Of more significance in this chapter, however, is Read's belief that 'Wittgenstein developed a real-life moral-psychological "version" of Moore's Paradox that can help us to understand how psychopathology functions' (*Ibid*. 189). Read proceeds by reminding us of Wittgenstein's claim that '*nobody can truthfully say of himself that he is filth*' on the grounds that even to begin to recognise this fact about one's self is already to point towards *some kind of moral centre*, with the consequence that a claim to the effect that I am filth and I believe that I am, is something that no one could even rightly *entertain* (*Ibid*. 190). The 'unstatability and unconsiderability of "I'm filth"' Read decides to refer to as 'Wittgenstein's Paradox', and it is his considered opinion that there are other motivated forms of psychopathology that can produce remarks of this kind, thus making the subject of interest not only to philosophers but also to psychiatrists and psychologists (*Ibid*. 192). 'I'm insane', 'I'm mad' or 'I'm completely irrational' are, consequently, examples of the kinds of claims the utterance of which is simply not compatible with their validity. Read extends this point to 'collective' examples like 'We live in an insane society' or 'Our society is saturated with irrationality': '.....the very desire to say it, is enough to prove that there remains hope for us, for our society, for our world' (*Ibid*. 198):

> To be someone who helps make it true that we're not filth
>
> is to exercise and instantiate freedom responsibly, and with
>
> - or towards - others, not in some vain or pointless 'libertarian'
>
> gesture-politics (*Ibid.* 199).

Chapter 10, , 'Lived "Reductio Ad Absurdum" : A Paradoxical and Proper Method of Philosophy, and of Life', may be thought by many readers to take the boat out even further with its

attempt to establish a connection between the 'structure' of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, interpreted 'therapeutically' along the lines of Cora Diamond and James Conant, and the 'structure' of the third essay of Neitzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* (*Ibid.* 205):

> I believe that this parallelism can help us to understand the concept
>
> of an 'inhabited' and in a way *lived* 'reductio ad absurdum', a concept
>
> that philosophers find hard to grasp but that is crucial to the possibility
>
> of understanding the non-assertoric nature of Wittgensteinian (and
>
> Neitzschean) philosophy, which is in the end a philosophy of culture
>
> and of life (*Ibid.*)

Read therefore gives himself the difficult task of showing that Wittgenstein's 'arguments' and 'positions' in the *Tractatus* are really the central objects of his criticisms in that context, while attempting to reconcile Neitzsche's reference to his being 'the first perfect nihilist' with the belief that Neitzsche, as generally understood, 'is a ferocious foe of nihilism' (*Ibid*. 207). Read begins by claiming that part of the problem to be overcome here lies in the perpetuation of 'the divide between Anglo-American and Continental philosophy', which persistently fail to appreciate 'the virtues of each other's argumentative strategies' (*Ibid*. 208). There follows a section on how to understand the *Tractatus* therapeutically. This closes with the thought that Wittgenstein has equally been misunderstood in his later work, and that if he is understood correctly, this can enable philosophers to read Neitzsche in a proper light.

Read's Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus,* together with his Neitzsche, urge us to overcome the words by which their 'arguments' are expressed. Wittgenstein wants us to understand *him* and not his 'nonsensical' statements, just as Neitzsche wants us 'to recognise the self-delusion and the nothingness that we are, and our kinship with the very traditions that we might like to imagine we simply stand against and put an end to as if from the outside' (*Ibid*. 217). This interpretation rests on a great many assumptions about how both philosophers ought to be understood, and Read is happy to remark that, up until now, they have together been 'understood too little, all too little' (*Ibid*. 222). Even more

than in his Chapter about the relevance of *Investigations* § 420, this gives Read's entire treatment a speculative flavour that for many readers will serve only to point to the fact that, especially in the case of Wittgenstein, he is straying too far from the original texts, regardless of the extent to which they may or may not be in sympathy with his general philosophical, moral and political goals.

Chapter 11, 'Leaving Things As It Is (sic.): Philosophy and Life "After" Wittgenstein and Zen', begins by emphasising the importance of Wittgenstein's *therapeutic* conception of philosophy. Read criticises Beth Savickey here on the grounds that having declared himself a 'disciple' of Freud, this justifies the use of the therapeutic model, whereas Wittgenstein's failure to mention, say, 'Capability' Brown means that the gardening metaphor mentioned by Savickey that he also used cannot have anything like the same value as a key to understanding him. The comparison to gardening, however, would surely have been used for a quite different purpose. As it turns out, the notion of *therapy* that Read employs here has some quite specific consequences:

> Wittgenstein has 'deluded' you into giving up your metaphysical delusions. The therapy of the *Tractatus* is: not solving problems, but enabling you to overcome the sense that you had any problems you needed to solve. And the method used to undertake this tricky task ? Engaging that problem-solving energy in a self-defeating task........ ....The delusion of a theory that the *Tractatus* generates as it returns you to yourself.....is a delusion that you don't stand upon, and that you don't stay upon. Rather, you find yourself standing on the earth, and so perhaps at last (at least for a while) seeing the world aright (*Ibid*. 233).

Philosophy practiced according to what Wittgenstein later called 'our method', amounts for Read to 'something about the way that we/you are inclined to be deluded by certain kinds of strings of words' (*Ibid*), and this 'resolutely therapeutic' vision of what philosophy is, can be applied to Wittgenstein's work as a whole throughout his life (*Ibid*. 235). Taking as an example

the slogan 'Meaning is use', Read argues that this, contrary to common opinion, is something that we cannot say (*Ibid*.), because nothing that we attempt to do with this statement 'rids us of a systematic unclarity about what we are trying to do with these words', or 'will seem to have expressed what we took ourselves to be aiming to express'. The consequence is that 'there is no coherent understanding to be reached of what you wanted to say'. Instead, the statement that we may have thought *was* a statement, innocently means nothing at all and dissolves in front of us. Talk about 'use', 'forms of life' and 'language-games' allows us only to become aware that *'the sentence-forms we use come apart from what we have taken to be our aims'* (*Ibid*. 236). To truly follow Wittgenstein is therefore to 'overcome' the temptation to use slogans like 'Meaning is use' or 'forms of life'. Read regrets in passing that most of 'Wittgenstein's "followers".........hold on to his words, and in effect turn them into technical terms that they are attached to in exactly the sense I have just critizised' (*Ibid.* 237). A prime example of such a philosopher, according to Read, is Peter Hacker, who totally misunderstands the comparison to Zen that Read highlights as part of his presentation (*Ibid*. 239), a comparison pointing to the conclusion that the ultimate purpose of Wittgenstein's 'philosophy' is to return us, in a spirit of irony, to the *ordinary,* where this is identical to the pre-philosophical world we all inhabit:

> The fly that has learned to find the way out of the fly bottle
>
> is simply back to the ordinary world. That, I think, is very
>
> like true Buddhist enlightenment/liberation (which, like
>
> Wittgensteinian liberation, is always in process, never a
>
> once-and-for-all achievement). *One knows no thing that one*
>
> *didn't know before* (*Ibid*. 246).

The reference to Buddhism here echoes Read's question 'Why has the extreme closeness of Wittgenstein and Zen not been widely understood and practiced ?', a question that reflects his final comment that 'the vast sea of delusion in which we find ourselves swimming, in the 21st century, in philosophy and wherever similar delusions flourish' is going to require the joint forces of Wittgenstein and Zen as a means of overcoming them (*Ibid*. 248).

'Taking the boat out farther than it can go' is once again a suitable description of Read's approach in this Chapter too, where the combination of a 'resolutely therapeutic' interpretation of the *Investigations* together with an alliance of Wittgenstein's thinking to that of Zen has all the appearance of being imposed upon the texts with little attention paid to the significance of those individual passages mentioned that have been traditionally interpreted in specific ways. To claim, for example, that Wittgenstein is telling us that we *cannot* say 'Meaning is use' because there can be no such thing as philosophical theses (*Ibid*. 235), that in this context and for this reason this sentence says nothing at all, neglects the point that in § 43 what is being stated is not a thesis: it is instead a recommendation that we can gain a better appreciation of the work that the word 'meaning' is doing in many instances in which we approach *meaning* when doing *philosophy*, if we think of a word's meaning as its *use* in the language. So far, that is a very general statement indeed. However, it reflects an anthropocentric approach with implications that resound throughout the rest of the book, and which is realised in the treatment of rule-following and in that of private language. Indeed, Read's own criticism of Kripke has been shown to depend on undermining 'meaning-scepticism' from a perspective that is far from being obviously extremely therapeutic in the sense that he expounds here.

On the topic of Zen, there are aspects of the thinking of Wittgenstein that, for certain purposes, certainly bear comparison with Zen, but that is a far cry from attributing to Zen the great importance as a key to understanding his work that Read proposes. Once again, this echoes the relevance Read finds in Wittgenstein's work understood *as* commentary on the atrocities perpetrated by Nazism in Europe during the 1930's and 1940's. In both cases, what for certain purposes may form a useful comparison, or may throw light on certain limited aspects of Wittgenstein's thinking, is granted a significance by Read that is out of all proportion to its actual value in illuminating the texts.

Read is almost bound to be more successful when he abandons these wide generalisations and concentrates on a specific problem, like time travel or Kripke on Wittgenstein on following a rule. This point also applies to his shorter piece on Chomsky, where Read detects a contradiction, a 'paradox' in the very idea that by adopting an 'external' view of language, Chomsky can come to 'explain' its

acquisition by human beings. Read significantly relates Chomsky's project to what Wittgenstein says in *Investigations* §§ 91 - 92, which criticises the idea of something that lies *beneath* the surface as the *essence* of language:

> My paradox for Chomsky, then, is this: You want to be able to tell us the true nature of language. Scientifically. This requires you to take up an external point of view on language. But this is an absurd ambition. When you seek to tell us the real nature of language, you inevitably draw on it as a resource, rather than simply topicalizing it....The order that you claim to find in language is inevitably an order that you partly impose on it (*Ibid*. 72).

This can form part of a wider criticism of any project that would tend to presuppose, not merely that the human brain inevitably has some causal role to play in allowing for the acquisition of language, but that general 'syntactic structures' of some kind must be 'imprinted' on the brain, a crude idea echoing the assumptions that Read is putting under review here. If it seems attractive, therefore, to argue that something like the idea of Augustine's child who is conceptually articulate *prior* to learning to talk *must* be true, otherwise it is going to be hard to explain how human beings acquire language, then that idea is again part of the general kind of project that Read is subjecting to criticism. Within its relatively few pages, Chapter 3 on 'A Paradox for Chomsky: On Our Being Through and Through "Inside" Language' is an example of a convincing, albeit not unfamiliar, way of treating at least one aspect of the Chomskian project.

Read relates what he is doing in this Chapter to an earlier treatment in the first Chapter of the book. 'Pre-empting Russell's Paradox: Wittgenstein and Frege Against Logicism', discusses Russell's paradox concerning the class of all classes which are not members of themselves. Is it, or is it not a member of itself ?   If it is, then it is not, and vice-versa. Following a passage from Kripke in which he expresses his tendency to be pulled in two different directions, firstly by a belief that formal, empirical and intuitive techniques, must allow deep regularities in natural language to be discovered, and, in

opposition to this, by a Wittgensteinian belief that such 'deep structures' *etc.* are nothing but 'houses of air', Read remarks that the 'ineffability' of logical form is only a transitional idea, finally abandoned when one throws away the ladder (*Ibid*. 73). The propositions by which Russell's Paradox is arrived at are for Read 'nonsensical', because the reasoning which leads to the paradox is flawed. It follows that this paradox need not have been seen to be a problem for Frege after all, so that it becomes nothing but 'a non-functioning intervention in the philosophy of mathematics' (*Ibid*. 35). Of course, one only needs to deny that there can *be* a class of all classes that could or could not satisfy some property, and the problem will not even arise. Read, however, is concerned here with the philosophical implications of the paradox, and there can be little doubt that there will remain many philosophers who do not agree with him that it can be so easily resolved.

Read's book contains a worthwhile 'Preface and Acknowledgements' in which he refers to his '"tortured" language oftentimes in this book', a language with a 'use of endless qualifiers and conditionals and modals and so on', indicating perhaps the work's rather 'unfinished' state. According to Read, after Wittgenstein, the reason for this is that the work is a series of *exercises* in philosophical *practice*, complex and 'hedged' and tentative like that of a psychotherapist (*Ibid*. vii). Commenting on his extensive use of endnotes as providing (at least for him) the most fun or most important part of the whole thing, (*Ibid*. ix, Endnote 3), the reader is advised that these can be skipped as the text is to a large degree self-sufficient. The value of the endnotes, however, should not be overlooked, because they comprise upwards of 20% of the book's total number of pages, with each page of endnotes in small type containing roughly 50% more material than a standard page of text. Six of the twelve chapters of the book use material from previously published sources.

The substantial 'Introduction' provides a worthwhile overview of the direction followed by the book, and explains Read's distinction between academic paradoxes of mainly intellectual interest, and paradoxes that are actually lived and felt (*Ibid*. 4), although in typical Read fashion he will later on in his final concluding chapter provide reasons for saying that certain chapters could easily be moved from one section of the book to another, so rather putting in question the value of his original distinction. He

also uses this introductory chapter to outline his commitment to an interpretation of the work of Wittgenstein that is resolute - therapeutic in a sense outlined firstly in his jointly - edited book *The New Wittgenstein*, an interpretation that he finds echoed in Gordon Baker's 'great posthumous work' *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects.* Baker, however, has his own agenda, and it is open to question whether his understanding of 'therapy' comes as close to Read's reading as he actually makes out here. The remainder of the Introduction is devoted to providing an overview of each following chapter, and this will be of some help to readers who would like an indication of how the 'argument' of the book as a whole unfolds (*Ibid*. 5).

There is a short final Chapter 12, 'Conclusion: On Lived Paradoxes' where Read is quick to argue that the two sections of his book dividing the paradoxes of 'abstractive philosophy' from those of 'real life' involve a 'neat separation' that is actually undermined by a 'grey area' in which certain paradoxes from each section move, indicating that both categories '*necessarily* overlap' (*Ibid*. 257). There follows a description of how certain chapters can be grouped in pairs according both to their subject matter and to their general orientation.

Here it is perhaps worth pointing out that although Read has come in for criticism here on his (mis)use of § 420, for example, by drawing from it radical conclusions about the times in which he lived, Wittgenstein does of course have a good deal to say about those times in other outlets like *Culture and Value*, and in recollected conversations recounted by his acquaintances and friends, *etc*., although even here these are not quite so specific as to allow for the conclusions drawn by Read about Wittgenstein's relation to Nazism, Neitzsche and Zen. On this point it ought to be emphasised that Read (in private correspondence) regards the approach provided in *this* review to these three topics as one which involves an *over-reading* of his text insofar as his aim is *not* really to say that Nazism, Neitzsche and Zen are important for the *interpretation* of Wittgenstein: he instead sees rather significant *affinities* between Wittgenstein and Zen, for example, which enable him to extend his discussion beyond the realm of merely academic philosophy. This would presumably apply equally to Peter Hacker's mentioned reaction to the comparison to Zen.

On this point one simply has to respond by reasserting one's original reaction to these claims within the contexts in which Read presents them, and here it is difficult not to draw the conclusion that Read sees Wittgenstein's writing, even in the 'academic' context of the *Investigations*, as inviting the comparisions to subjects like Nazism and Zen that he wishes to present. After all, the use of certain passages like § 420 involving automata and the mention of the swaztika, as a means of *drawing our attention* to certain ways in which Nazism blatantly *disregards* the fundamental *humanity* of *all* peoples without exception, certainly appears to require *more* than a mere indication that Wittgenstein's writing can, for certain specific purposes divorced from his main intentions, be used here to point towards these more general conclusions concerning his outlook on his times.

If, on the other hand, we are prepared to put this question to one side, then it is perfectly clear that a great deal of thought has gone into this book - in some cases the topics covered have occupied Read's thinking for a period of over twenty years (*Ibid*. Preface). It certainly exhibits an enviable fertility of imagination both with its wide-ranging subject-matter and with its extensive treatments of associated questions in the detailed endnotes. Whatever criticisms may be made of some of its central claims concerning Wittgenstein, and whatever the role we ought to allocate to these claims within the contexts of his main academic writings, Read has provided us with a thought-provoking and highly stimulating addition to the literature.

As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in various organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. A paper on Wittgenstein appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH, another on Ebersole / Ayer in PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS January 2010, a later paper on Wittgenstein in ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY, March 2013, a further one on Ryle, PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, April 2014, and one on Wittgenstein on Shakespeare in PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE (forthcoming).