

Therapeutic reading of *Investigations* and interaction with readers

– An attempt to apply Iser's reception theory –

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When interpreting Wittgenstein's later work *Philosophical Investigations* from the viewpoint of therapeutic reading, it is sometimes said that this book treats the disease of its readers. This raises the question: What does it mean, and how is it possible, that a book heals its readers? In my presentation, I will address this question through a close examination of the reading process, which I will analyze as an interaction between reader and text with a specific strategic structure. In order to provide an analysis with a strong theoretical foundation, I will apply the reception theory of Wolfgang Iser. By doing so, I follow the example of Volbers who adopted the same approach in his examination of Diamond's and Conant's interpretation of *Tractatus*. (Volbers, Jörg (2011) "Realismus und literarische Form bei Wittgenstein"). Since Iser's theory is founded on the historic context of literature, this approach also demonstrates the feasibility of situating *Investigations* within the history of writing.

In my presentation, firstly, it is shown that there is an affinity between *Investigations* and literary texts. (1) Iser asserts that any work of literature contains, either naturally or intentionally, incompletely described elements, which he calls "gap" or "indeterminacy". These gaps may manifest as imbalance between storylines, or a character who receive multiple, often contradictive evaluations from various perspectives. In such cases, it is the reader's act that fills these gaps to complete the meaning of the work. (2) Turning to *Investigations*, there is not only the difficulty in understanding the connection between paragraphs (like between storylines), but also the intention of the author remains often implicit, both of which resembles the "gaps" Iser describes. Additionally, as Stern points out, some paragraphs in *Investigations* keep their distance from the ongoing discussion in the text (Stern, G. David, (2016) "Wittgenstein's Texts and Style"), akin to the authorial "comments" that explain about the story in the text, and which also play a crucial role in Iser's theory.

Secondly, the difficulties of applying Iser's theory to *Investigations* are addressed, focusing on two issues: (1) Iser's theory is primarily designed for literary works, whereas *Investigations* is a philosophical text; (2) Iser's theory presupposes a calculating author who is fully aware of every impact of his words on *others*, namely on readers, but this image doesn't quite match the character of Wittgenstein as an author, who can also be understood as treating *himself*.

This whole analysis aims to yield two outcomes. (1) By exploring the affinities and differences between *Investigations* and literary works, the therapeutic structure of *Investigations* will become clearer. (2) By demonstrating the applicability of Iser's theory, which draws insights

partly from contemporary literature such as Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Wittgenstein's writing can be situated within the broader literary landscape of his time.