Discourse and Language

The recognized Founding Therapist to Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) is **Steve de Shazer** (1940-2005) and his wife **Insoo Kim Berg,** who, after Steve's death, continues the work of the Brief Family Therapy Center inWisconsin, USA.

The therapy is based on a number of works, in particular the founding work of **Ludwig Wittgenstein** (1889-1951). Wittgenstein's major work, the *"Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus"* (1918) is based on the idea that philosophical problems arise from misunderstandings of the logic of language (IEP, 2006).

De Shazer says, "For Wittgenstein, any and all inner-processes and states, such as feeling angry, feeling better, thinking, etc. are connected to and — at least in part — defined by some outside context. … Wittgenstein's way of describing things reminds us to observe what is going on and reminds us to look at everyday life — including language as it is actually used — as the home of our concepts and descriptions. It is these descriptions of everyday life that replace the explanations and theories of traditional philosophy and psychology." (2002)
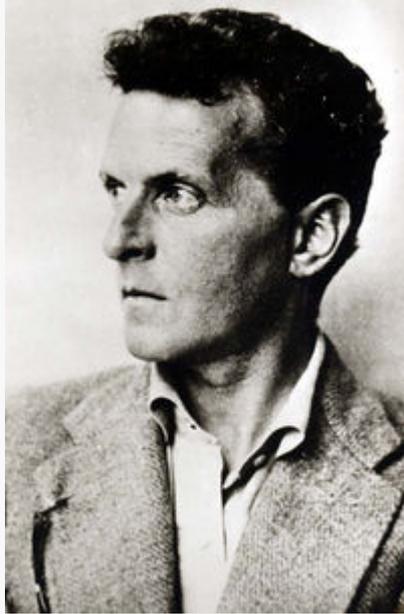

A number of extracts and references are attached.

Also attached is a list of some of the texts of **Michel Foucault**.

Regards
BRIAN WILLIAMSON

Ludwig Wittgenstein

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Name:	Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein
Birth:	1889 April 26 (Vienna, Austria)
Death:	1951 April 29 (Cambridge, England)
School/tradition:	Analytic philosophy
Main interests:	Metaphysics, Epistemology, logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of mathematics
Notable ideas:	The structure of reality determines the structure of language {early}, Meaning is determined by use, in the context of a "language-game" {later}
Influences:	Kant, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Moore, Weininger
Influenced:	Russell, Anscombe, Kripke, Rorty, Frank P. Ramsey, Dennett

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (IPA: ['luːdvɪç 'joːzɛf 'joːhan 'vɪtgənʃtaɪn]) (April 26, 1889 – April 29, 1951) was an Austrian philosopher who contributed several ground-breaking works to contemporary philosophy, primarily on the foundations of logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of language, and the philosophy of mind. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century.[1]

Life

Ludwig Joseph Johann Wittgenstein was born in Vienna on April 26, 1889, to Karl and Leopoldine Wittgenstein. He was the youngest of eight children, born into one of the most prominent and wealthy families in the Austro-Hungarian empire. His father's parents, Hermann Christian and Fanny Wittgenstein, were born into Jewish families but converted to Protestantism, and after they

moved from [Saxony](#) to Vienna in the 1850s, assimilated themselves into the Viennese [Protestant](#) professional classes. Ludwig's father, Karl Wittgenstein, became an industrialist, and went on to make a fortune in [iron](#) and [steel](#). Ludwig's mother Leopoldine, born Kalmus, was also of [Jewish](#) descent on her father's side, but had been brought up as a practising [Roman Catholic](#). Ludwig, like all his brothers and sisters, was [baptized](#) as a Roman Catholic and was given a [Catholic](#) burial by his friends upon his death.

Early life

Ludwig grew up in a household that provided an astonishingly intense environment for artistic and intellectual achievement. His parents were both very musical and all their children were artistically and intellectually gifted. Karl Wittgenstein was a leading patron of the [arts](#), and the Wittgenstein house hosted many figures of [high culture](#)—above all, [musicians](#). The family was often visited by [artists](#) such as [Johannes Brahms](#) and [Gustav Mahler](#). Ludwig's brother [Paul Wittgenstein](#) went on to become a world-famous concert [pianist](#), even after losing his right arm in [World War I](#). Ludwig himself did not have prodigious musical talent, but nonetheless had [perfect pitch](#) and his devotion to music remained vitally important to him throughout his life — he made frequent use of musical examples and metaphors in his philosophical writings, and was said to be unusually adept at whistling lengthy and detailed musical passages. His family also had a history of intense self-criticism, to the point of [depression](#) and [suicidal](#) tendencies. Three of his four brothers committed suicide.

Until 1903, Ludwig was educated at home; after that, he began three years of schooling at the *Realschule* in [Linz](#), a school emphasizing technical topics. [Adolf Hitler](#) was a student there at the same time, when both boys were 14 or 15 years old.[2] Ludwig was interested in physics and wanted to study with [Ludwig Boltzmann](#), whose collection of popular writings, including an inspiring essay about the hero and genius who would solve the problem of heavier-than-air flight ("On Aeronautics") was published during this time (1905).[3] Boltzmann committed suicide in 1906, however.

In 1906, Wittgenstein began studying [mechanical engineering](#) in Berlin, and in 1908 he went to the [Victoria University of Manchester](#) to study for his [doctorate](#) in [engineering](#), full of plans for aeronautical projects. He registered as a research student in an engineering laboratory, where he conducted research on the behaviour of kites in the upper [atmosphere](#), and worked on the design of a propeller with small jet engines on the end of its blades. During his research in Manchester, he became interested in the [foundations of mathematics](#), particularly after reading Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* and Gottlob Frege's *Grundgesetze*. In the summer of 1911, Wittgenstein visited Frege, after having corresponded with him for some time, and Frege advised him to go to the [University of Cambridge](#) to study under Russell.

In October 1911, Wittgenstein arrived unannounced at Russell's rooms in [Trinity College](#), and was soon attending his lectures and discussing philosophy with him at great length. He made a great impression on Russell and [G. E. Moore](#) and started to work on the foundations of logic and mathematical logic. Russell was increasingly tired of philosophy, and saw Wittgenstein as a successor who would carry on his work. During this period, Wittgenstein's other major interests were music and travelling, often in the company of [David Pinsent](#), an undergraduate who became a firm friend. He was also invited to join the elite [secret society](#), the [Cambridge Apostles](#), which Russell and Moore had both belonged to as students.

In 1913, Wittgenstein inherited a great fortune when his father died. He donated some of it, initially anonymously, to Austrian artists and writers, including [Rainer Maria Rilke](#) and [Georg Trakl](#). In

1914 he went to visit Trakl when the latter wanted to meet his benefactor, but Trakl killed himself days before Wittgenstein arrived.

Although he was invigorated by his study in Cambridge and his conversations with Russell, Wittgenstein came to feel that he could not get to the heart of his most fundamental questions while surrounded by other academics. In 1913, he retreated to the solitude of a remote mountain cabin in Skjolden, Norway, which could only be reached on horseback. The isolation allowed him to devote himself entirely to his work, and he later saw this period as one of the most passionate and productive times of his life. While there, he wrote a ground-breaking work in the foundations of logic, a book entitled *Logik*, which was the immediate predecessor and source of much of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

World War I

The outbreak of World War I in the next year took him completely by surprise, as he was living a secluded life at the time. He volunteered for the Austro-Hungarian army as a private soldier, first serving on a ship and then in an artillery workshop. In 1916, he was sent as a member of a howitzer regiment to the Russian front where he won several medals for bravery. The diary entries of this time reflect his contempt for the baseness, as he saw it, of his fellow soldiers. Throughout the war, Wittgenstein kept notebooks in which he frequently wrote philosophical and religious reflections alongside personal remarks. The notebooks reflect a profound change in his religious life: a militant atheist during his stint at Cambridge, Wittgenstein discovered Leo Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief* at a bookshop in Galicia. He devoured Tolstoy's commentary and became an evangelist of sorts; he carried the book everywhere he went and recommended it to anyone in distress (to the point that he became known to his fellow soldiers as "the man with the gospels"). "The Gospel in Brief" is philosophical and practical, rather than theological or spiritual in its intention. Although Monk notes that Wittgenstein began to doubt by at least 1937, and that by the end of his life he said he could not believe Christian doctrines (although religious belief remained an important preoccupation), this is not contrary to the influence that Tolstoy had on his philosophy.[4] Wittgenstein's other religious influences include Saint Augustine, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and most notably Søren Kierkegaard, whom Wittgenstein referred to as "a saint".[5]

Developing the *Tractatus*

Wittgenstein's work on *Logik* began to take on an ethical and religious significance. With this new concern with the ethical, combined with his earlier interest in logical analysis, and with key insights developed during the war (such as the so-called "picture theory" of propositions), Wittgenstein's work from Cambridge and Norway was transfigured into the material that eventually became the *Tractatus*. In 1918, toward the end of the war, Wittgenstein was promoted to reserve officer (Lieutenant) and sent to north Italy as part of an artillery regiment. On leave in the summer of 1918, he received a letter from David Pinsent's mother telling Wittgenstein that her son had been killed in an airplane accident. Suicidal, Wittgenstein went to stay with his uncle Paul, and completed the *Tractatus*, which was dedicated to Pinsent. In a letter to Mrs Pinsent, Wittgenstein said "only in him did I find a real friend". The book was sent to publishers at this time, without success.

In October, Wittgenstein returned to Italy and was captured by the Italians. Through the intervention of his Cambridge friends (Russell, Keynes and Pinsent had corresponded with him throughout the war, via Switzerland), Wittgenstein managed to get access to books, prepare his manuscript, and send it back to England. Russell recognized it as a work of supreme philosophical importance, and after Wittgenstein's release in 1919, he worked with Wittgenstein to get it published. An English translation was prepared, first by Frank P. Ramsey and then by C. K. Ogden, with Wittgenstein's involvement. After some discussion of how best to translate the title, G. E.

[Moore](#) suggested *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* in an allusion to [Baruch Spinoza](#)'s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.* Russell wrote an introduction, lending the book his reputation as one of the foremost philosophers in the world.

However, difficulties remained. Wittgenstein had become personally disaffected with Russell, and he was displeased with Russell's introduction, which he thought evinced fundamental misunderstandings of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein grew frustrated as interested publishers proved difficult to find. To add insult to injury, those publishers who *were* interested proved to be mainly interested in the book because of Russell's introduction. At last, Wittgenstein found a publisher in Wilhelm Ostwald's journal *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, which printed a German edition in 1921, and in Routledge Kegan Paul, which printed a bilingual edition with Russell's introduction and the Ramsey-Ogden translation in 1922.

The "lost years": life after the *Tractatus*

At the same time, Wittgenstein was a profoundly changed man. He had embraced the Christianity that he had previously opposed, faced harrowing combat in World War I, and crystallized his intellectual and emotional upheavals with the exhausting composition of the *Tractatus*. It was a work which transfigured all of his past work on logic into a radically new framework that he believed offered a definitive solution to *all* the problems of philosophy. These changes in Wittgenstein's inner and outer life left him both haunted and yet invigorated to follow a new, ascetic life. One of the most dramatic expressions of this change was his decision in 1919 to give away his portion of the family fortune that he had inherited when his father had died. The money was divided between his sisters Helene and Hermine and his brother Paul, and Wittgenstein insisted that they promise never to give it back. He felt that giving money to the poor could only corrupt them further; the rich would not be harmed by it.

Since Wittgenstein thought that the *Tractatus* had solved all the problems of philosophy, he left philosophy and returned to [Austria](#) to train as a primary school teacher. He was educated in the methods of the [Austrian School Reform Movement](#) which advocated the stimulation of the natural curiosity of children and their development as independent thinkers, instead of just letting them memorize facts. Wittgenstein was enthusiastic about these ideas but ran into problems when he was appointed as an elementary teacher in the rural Austrian villages of [Trattenbach](#), [Puchberg-am-Schneeberg](#), and [Otterthal](#). During his time as a schoolteacher, Wittgenstein wrote a pronunciation and spelling dictionary for his use in teaching students; it was published and well-received by his colleagues.[6] This would be the only book besides the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein published in his lifetime.

Wittgenstein had unrealistic expectations of the rural children he taught, and his teaching methods were intense and exacting - he had little patience with those children who had no aptitude for mathematics. However, he achieved good results with children attuned to his interests and style of teaching, especially boys. His severe disciplinary methods (often involving corporal punishment) — as well as a general suspicion amongst the villagers that he was somewhat mad — led to a long series of bitter disagreements with some of his students' parents, and eventually culminated in April 1926 in the collapse of an eleven year old boy whom Wittgenstein had struck on the head. The boy's father attempted to have Wittgenstein arrested, and despite being cleared of misconduct he resigned his position and returned to Vienna, feeling that he had failed as a school teacher.

After abandoning his work as a school teacher, Wittgenstein worked as a gardener's assistant in a monastery near Vienna. He considered becoming a monk, and went so far as to inquire about the requirements for joining an order. However, at the interview he was advised that he could not find in monastic life what he sought.

Two major developments helped to save Wittgenstein from this despairing state. The first was an invitation from his sister Margaret ("Gretl") Stonborough (who was painted by Gustav Klimt in 1905) to work on the design and construction of her new house. He worked with the architect, Paul Engelmann (who had become a close friend of Wittgenstein's during the war), and the two designed a spare modernist house after the style of Adolf Loos (whom they both greatly admired). Wittgenstein found the work intellectually absorbing, and exhausting — he poured himself into the design in painstaking detail, including even small aspects such as doorknobs and radiators (which had to be exactly positioned to maintain the symmetry of the rooms). As a work of modernist architecture the house evoked some high praise; G. H. von Wright said that it possessed the same "static beauty" as the *Tractatus*. The effort of totally involving himself in intellectual work once again did much to restore Wittgenstein's spirits.

Secondly, toward the end of his work on the house, Wittgenstein was contacted by Moritz Schlick, one of the leading figures of the newly formed Vienna Circle. The *Tractatus* had been tremendously influential to the development of the Vienna positivism, and although Schlick never succeeded in drawing Wittgenstein into the discussions of the Vienna Circle itself, he and some of his fellow circle members (especially Friedrich Waismann) met occasionally with Wittgenstein to discuss philosophical topics. Wittgenstein was frequently frustrated by these meetings — he believed that Schlick and his colleagues had fundamentally misunderstood the *Tractatus*, and at times would refuse to talk about it at all. (Much of the disagreements concerned the importance of religious life and the mystical; Wittgenstein considered these matters of a sort of wordless faith, whereas the positivists disdained them as useless. In one meeting, Wittgenstein refused to discuss the *Tractatus* at all, and sat with his back to his guests while he read aloud from the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.) Nevertheless, the contact with the Vienna Circle stimulated Wittgenstein intellectually and revived his interest in philosophy. He also met with Frank P. Ramsey, a young philosopher of mathematics who travelled several times from Cambridge to Austria to meet with Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle. In the course of his conversations with the Vienna Circle and with Ramsey, Wittgenstein began to think that there might be some "grave mistakes" in his work as presented in the *Tractatus* — marking the beginning of a second career of ground-breaking philosophical work, which would occupy him for the rest of his life.

Returning to Cambridge

In 1929 he decided, at the urging of Ramsey and others, to return to Cambridge. He was met at the train station by a crowd of England's greatest intellectuals, discovering rather to his horror that he was one of the most famed philosophers in the world. In a letter to his wife, Lydia Lopokova, Lord Keynes wrote: "Well, God has arrived. I met him on the 5.15 train."

Despite this fame, he could not initially work at Cambridge, as he did not have a degree, so he applied as an advanced undergraduate. Russell noted that his previous residency was in fact sufficient for a doctoral degree, and urged him to offer the *Tractatus* as a doctoral thesis, which he did in 1929. It was examined by Russell and Moore; at the end of the thesis defence, Wittgenstein clapped the two examiners on the shoulder and said, "Don't worry, I know you'll never understand it." (Monk 271) Moore commented in the examiner's report to the effect that: "In my opinion this is a work of genius; it is, in any case, up to the standards of a degree from Cambridge." Wittgenstein was appointed as a lecturer and was made a fellow of Trinity College.

Although Wittgenstein was involved in a relationship with Marguerite Respinger (a young Swiss woman whom he had met as a friend of the family), his plans to marry Marguerite were broken off in 1931, and Wittgenstein never married. Most of his romantic attachments were to young men. There is considerable debate over how active Wittgenstein's homosexual life was--inspired by W. W. Bartley's claim to have found evidence of not only active homosexuality but in particular several

casual liaisons with young men in the Wiener Prater park during his time in Vienna. Bartley published his claims in a biography of Wittgenstein in 1973, claiming to have his information from "confidential reports from... friends" of Wittgenstein (Bartley 160), whom he declined to name, and to have discovered two coded notebooks unknown to Wittgenstein's executors that detailed the visits to the Prater. Wittgenstein's estate and other biographers have disputed Bartley's claims and asked him to produce the sources that he claims. What has become clear, in any case, is that Wittgenstein had several long-term homoerotic attachments, including an infatuation with his friend David Pinsent and long-term relationships during his years in Cambridge with Francis Skinner and possibly Ben Richards.

Wittgenstein's political sympathies lay on the left, and while he was opposed to Marxist theory, he described himself as a "communist at heart" and romanticized the life of labourers. In 1934, attracted by Keynes' description of Soviet life in *Short View of Russia*, he conceived the idea of emigrating to the Soviet Union with Skinner. They took lessons in Russian and in 1935 Wittgenstein travelled to Leningrad and Moscow in an attempt to secure employment. He was offered teaching positions but preferred manual work and returned three weeks later.

From 1936 to 1937, Wittgenstein lived again in Norway, leaving Skinner behind. He worked on the *Philosophical Investigations*. In the winter of 1936/37, he delivered a series of "confessions" to close friends, most of them about minor infractions like white lies, in an effort to cleanse himself. In 1938 he travelled to Ireland to visit Maurice Drury, a friend who was training as a doctor, and considered such training himself, with the intention of abandoning philosophy for psychiatry.

While in Ireland, the Anschluss took place. Wittgenstein was now technically a German citizen, and a Jew under the German racial laws. While he found this intolerable, and started to investigate the possibilities of acquiring British or Irish citizenship (with the help of Keynes), it put his siblings Hermine, Helene and Paul (all still residing in Austria) in considerable danger. Wittgenstein's first thought was to travel to Vienna, but he was dissuaded by friends. Had the Wittgensteins been classified as Jews, their fate would have been no different from that of any other Austrian Jews (of approximately 600 in Linz at the end of the 1930s, for example, only 26 survived the war[7]). Their only hope was to be classified as Mischlinge – officially, Aryan/Jewish mongrels, whose treatment, while harsh, was less brutal than that reserved for Jews. This reclassification was known as a "Befreiung". The successful conclusion of these negotiations required the personal approval of Adolf Hitler. "The figures show how difficult it was to gain a Befreiung. In 1939 there were 2,100 applications for a different racial classification: the Führer allowed only twelve." [8]

Gretl (an American citizen by marriage) started negotiations with the Nazi authorities over the racial status of their grandfather Hermann, claiming that he was the illegitimate son of an "Aryan". Since the Reichsbank was keen to get its hands on the large amounts of foreign currency owned by the Wittgenstein family, this was used as a bargaining tool. Paul, who had escaped to Switzerland and then the United States in July 1938, disagreed with the family's stance. After G. E. Moore's resignation in 1939, Wittgenstein, who was by then considered a philosophical genius, was appointed to the chair in Philosophy at Cambridge. He acquired British citizenship soon afterwards, and in July 1939 he travelled to Vienna to assist Gretl and his other sisters, visiting Berlin for one day to meet with an official of the Reichsbank. After this, he travelled to New York to persuade Paul (whose agreement was required) to back the scheme. The required Befreiung was granted in August 1939. The amount signed over to the Nazis by Paul Wittgenstein, a week or so before the outbreak of war, was 1.7 tonnes of gold, 2% of the Austrian national gold reserves.

After exhausting philosophical work, Wittgenstein would often relax by watching an American western (preferring to sit at the very front of the theater) or reading detective stories. These tastes

are in stark contrast to his preferences in music, where he rejected anything after Brahms as a symptom of the decay of society.

By this time, Wittgenstein's view on the foundations of mathematics had changed considerably. Earlier, he had thought that logic could provide a solid foundation, and he had even considered updating Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*. Now he denied that there were any mathematical facts to be discovered and he denied that mathematical statements were "true" in any real sense: they simply expressed the conventional established meanings of certain symbols. He also denied that a contradiction should count as a fatal flaw of a mathematical system. He gave a series of lectures which were attended by Alan Turing and in which the two vigorously discussed these matters.

During World War II he left Cambridge and volunteered as a hospital porter in Guy's Hospital in London and as a laboratory assistant in Newcastle upon Tyne's Royal Victoria Infirmary. This was arranged by his friend John Ryle, a brother of the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, who was then working at the hospital. After the war, Wittgenstein returned to teach at Cambridge, but he found teaching an increasing burden: he had never liked the intellectual atmosphere at Cambridge, and in fact encouraged several of his students (including Skinner) to find work outside of academic philosophy. (There are stories, perhaps apocryphal, that if any of his philosophy students expressed an interest in pursuing the subject, he would ban them from attending any more of his classes.)

Final years

"Today there were 18 1p coins on the grave of Ludwig Wittgenstein at the Parish of the Ascension Burial Ground in Cambridge. Originally — some days ago — there were four, spread about; and then five in a little pile to one side. This morning there were 15 neatly underlining his name. Now there are three more, still neatly lined up. Over the years numerous small objects have been placed on the grave including a lemon, a pork pie, a Mr Kipling cupcake and a Buddhist prayer wheel. It is all very intriguing." (Letter to the editor from Nick Ingham, *The Times*, September 3, 2001)

Wittgenstein resigned his position at Cambridge in 1947 to concentrate on his writing. He was succeeded as professor by his friend Georg Henrik von Wright. Much of his later work was done on the west coast of Ireland in the rural isolation he preferred. By 1949, when he was diagnosed as having prostate cancer, he had written most of the material that would be published after his death as *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*Philosophical Investigations*), which arguably contains his most important work.

He spent the last two years of his life working in Vienna, the United States, Oxford, and Cambridge. He worked continuously on new material, inspired by the conversations that he had had with his friend and former student Norman Malcolm during a long vacation at the Malcolms' house

in the United States. Malcolm had been wrestling with [G.E. Moore](#)'s common sense response to [external world skepticism](#) ("Here is one hand, and here is another; therefore I know at least two external things exist"). Wittgenstein began to work on another series of remarks inspired by his conversations, which he continued to work on until two days before his death, and which were published posthumously as *On Certainty*.

The only known fragment of music composed by Wittgenstein was [premiered](#) in November 2003. It is a piece of music that lasts less than half a minute.

Wittgenstein died from prostate cancer at his doctor's home in Cambridge in 1951. His last words were: "Tell them I've had a wonderful life."

Work

Although many of Wittgenstein's notebooks, papers, and lectures have been published since his death, he published only one philosophical book in his lifetime, the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus in 1921. Wittgenstein's early work was deeply influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, and by the new systems of logic put forward by Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege. When the Tractatus was published, it was taken up as a major influence by the [Vienna Circle](#) positivists. However, Wittgenstein did not consider himself part of that school and alleged that logical positivism involved grave misunderstandings of the Tractatus.

With the completion of the Tractatus, Wittgenstein believed he had solved all the problems of philosophy, and he abandoned his studies, working as a schoolteacher, a gardener at a monastery, and an architect, along with Paul Engelmann, on his sister's new house in Vienna. However, in 1929, he returned to [Cambridge](#), was awarded a Ph.D. for the Tractatus, and took a teaching position there. He renounced or revised much of his earlier work, and his development of a new philosophical method and a new understanding of language culminated in his second magnum opus, the Philosophical Investigations, which was published posthumously.

The *Tractatus*
> Main article: [*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*](#)

In rough order, the first half of the book sets forth the following theses:

- the world consists of independent [atomic facts](#) — existing states of affairs — out of which larger facts are built.
- Language consists of atomic, and then larger-scale [propositions](#) that correspond to these facts by sharing the same "[logical](#) form."
- Thought, expressed in language, "pictures" these facts.
- We can analyse our thoughts and sentences to express ('express' as in *show*, not *say*) their true logical form.
- Those we cannot so analyse cannot be meaningfully discussed.
- Philosophy consists of no more than this form of analysis: "*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen"* — whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

Some commentators [[*citation needed*](#)] believe that, although no other type of discourse is, properly speaking, philosophy, Wittgenstein does imply that those things to be passed over "in silence" may be important or useful, according to some of his more cryptic propositions in the last sections of the *Tractatus*: indeed, may be the most important and most useful. He himself wrote about the Tractatus in a letter to his publisher Ficker:

…the point of the book is ethical. I once wanted to give a few words in the foreword which now actually are not in it, which, however, I'll write to you now because they might be a key for you: I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything I have *not* written. And precisely this second part is the important one. For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were by my book; and I'm convinced that, *strictly speaking*, it can ONLY be delimited in this way. In brief, I think: All of that which *many* are *babbling* I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it.

— Wittgenstein, *Letter to Ludwig von Ficker, October or November 1919, transl. Ray Monk*

Other commentators [*citation needed*] point out that the sentences of the *Tractatus* would not qualify as meaningful according to its own rigid criteria, and that Wittgenstein's method in the book does not follow its own demands regarding the only strictly correct philosophical method. This also is admitted by Wittgenstein, when he writes in proposition 6.54: 'My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless'. These commentators believe that the book is deeply ironic, and that it demonstrates the ultimate nonsensicality of any sentence attempting to say something metaphysical, something about those fixations of metaphysical philosophers, about those things that must be passed over in silence, and about logic. He attempts to define the limits of logic in understanding the world.

The work also contains several innovations in logic, including the truth table.

Intermediate works

Wittgenstein wrote copiously after his return to Cambridge, and arranged much of his writing into an array of incomplete manuscripts. Some thirty thousand pages existed at the time of his death. Much, but by no means all, of this has been sorted and released in several volumes. During his "middle work" in the 1920s and 1930s, much of his work involved attacks from various angles on the sort of philosophical perfectionism embodied in the *Tractatus*. Of this work, Wittgenstein published only a single paper, "Remarks on Logical Form," which was submitted to be read for the Aristotelian Society and published in their proceedings. By the time of the conference, however, Wittgenstein had repudiated the essay as worthless, and gave a talk on the concept of infinity instead. Wittgenstein was increasingly frustrated to find that, although he was not yet ready to publish his work, some other philosophers were beginning to publish essays containing inaccurate presentations of his own views based on their conversations with him. As a result, he published a very brief letter to the journal *Mind*, taking a recent article by R. B. Braithwaite as a case in point, and asked philosophers to hold off writing about his views until he was himself ready to publish them. Although unpublished, the *Blue Book*, a set of notes dictated to his class at Cambridge in 1933–1934 contains seeds of Wittgenstein's later thoughts on language (later developed in the Investigations), and is widely read today as a turning point in his philosophy of language.

The *Philosophical Investigations*
Main article: *Philosophical Investigations*

Although the *Tractatus* is a major work, Wittgenstein is best known today for the *Philosophical Investigations* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*). In 1953, two years after Wittgenstein's death, the long-awaited book was published in two parts. Most of the 693 numbered paragraphs in Part I were ready for printing in 1946, but Wittgenstein withdrew the manuscript from the publisher. The shorter Part II was added by the editors, G.E.M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees. (Had Wittgenstein lived to complete the book himself, some of the remarks in Part II would likely have been incorporated into Part I, and the book would no longer have this bifurcated structure.)

It is notoriously difficult to find consensus among interpreters of Wittgenstein's work, and this is particularly true in the case of the *Investigations*. What follows, then, is but one of many readings to be found. In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein presents a picture of our *use* of language which he sees as crucial to the practice of philosophy. In brief, Wittgenstein describes language as a set of [language-games](#) within which the words of our language function and have meaning. This view represents a break from the classical view--also, as presented by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*--of meaning as representation.

One of the most radical characteristics of the "later" Wittgenstein is his [metaphilosophy](#). The "conventional" view of philosophy's "task", accepted by almost every Western philosopher since Plato, is that the philosopher's task was to solve a number of seemingly intractable problems using logical analysis (for example, the problem of "[free will](#)", the relationship between "mind" and "matter", what is "the good" or "the beautiful" and so on). However, Wittgenstein argues that these "problems" are in fact pseudo-problems that arose from philosophers' misuse of language.

On Wittgenstein's account, language provides a way of coping with, what one might call, "everyday purposes," and it works well within that context. But when everyday language attempts to explain something beyond what it is able, problems arise. At root, this is what is known as the say/show distinction: that which can be said can also be shown, but there is that which can only be shown, not said. In other words, that which can only be shown "we must pass over in silence." To illustrate this point, consider the difference between sense and nonsense. If someone says, for instance, "There is a difference between sense and nonsense," one readily understands what this means. However, if someone did not understand the difference, it would certainly be impossible to explain it. Hence, the difference between sense and nonsense can be shown in statements, but this showing cannot be said (explained) in any meaningful way and therefore remains in silence. Put another way, the say/show distinction shows that while we can meaningfully discuss our experience, we cannot meaningfully discuss those things upon which our experience of the world depends. Thus, if someone on the street were to ask another "What time is it?" there can be a straightforward and meaningful answer. However, if the same person goes on to ask, "Well then what *is* time?" the situation would be quite different (for how could you meaningfully explain time without appealing to the very concept?). Thus, questions such as "What is time?" and "What is the difference between sense and nonsense?" are nonsensical questions for Wittgenstein. This does not mean that they should not be asked or that they are bad questions, but that their answers can only be shown. These answers, then, will be descriptive rather than explicatory.

Wittgenstein's new philosophical methodology involved continually reminding his readers of certain aspects of linguistic usage that had been forgotten in the search for metaphysical truths. In general, the point is that if it is left alone, language functions unproblematically; it does not stand in need of correction by philosophers. In this manner, he aimed to demonstrate that the great questions posed by philosophers had arisen because they were operating on a mistaken view of language and its relation to reality. Philosophers in the Western tradition were not "wiser" than anyone else, as had been assumed — they were simply more likely to get caught up in linguistic confusion by taking language beyond the context it was meant to deal with. For Wittgenstein, the philosopher's proper task is therefore to "show the fly out of the fly bottle": to show that the problems with which philosophers torment themselves are not really problems at all, but rather examples of "language gone on holiday" (as he put it). The philosopher is to clear up confusion, but not by crafting philosophical theses.

Later work

- *[On Certainty](#)* — A collection of aphorisms discussing the relation between knowledge and certainty, extremely influential in the [philosophy of action](#).

- *Remarks on Colour* — Remarks on [Goethe](#)'s *[Theory of Colours](#)*.
- *Culture and Value* — A collection of personal remarks about various cultural issues, such as religion and music, as well as critique of [Søren Kierkegaard](#)'s philosophy.

Important publications

(major works in bold)

- *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*, Annalen der Naturphilosophie, 14 (1921)
  - *[Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus](#)*, trans. by C.K. Ogden (1922)
- *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (1953)
  - *[Philosophical Investigations](#)*, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe (1953)
- *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik*, ed. by G.H. von Wright, R. Rhees, and G.E.M. Anscombe (1956) (a selection from his writings on the philosophy of logic and mathematics between 1937 and 1944)
  - *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe, rev. ed. (1978)
- *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958) (Notes dictated in English to Cambridge students in 1933-35)
- *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, ed. by Rush Rhees (1964)
  - *Philosophical Remarks* (1975)
- *Bemerkungen über die Farben*, ed. by G.E.M. Anscombe (1977)
  - *Remarks on Colour* [ISBN 0520037278](#)

Works online

- [Review of P. Coffey's *Science of Logic*](#) (1913): a polemical book review, written in 1912 for the March 1913 issue of the *The Cambridge Review* when Wittgenstein was an undergraduate studying with Russell. The review is the earliest public record of Wittgenstein's philosophical views.
- *[Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus](#)* (1922/1923), German text and Ogden-Ramsey translation
- [Cambridge(1932-3) lecture notes](#)

Influence

Both his early and later work have been major influences in the development of analytic philosophy. Former students and colleagues include Gilbert Ryle, Friedrich Waismann, Norman Malcolm, G. E. M. Anscombe, Rush Rhees, Georg Henrik von Wright and Peter Geach. Contemporary philosophers heavily influenced by him include Michael Dummett, Donald Davidson, Peter Hacker, John Searle, Saul Kripke, John McDowell, Hilary Putnam, Anthony Quinton, Peter Strawson, Paul Horwich, Colin McGinn, Daniel Dennett, Richard Rorty, Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond and James F. Conant. With others, the latter three have been associated with an interpretation of Wittgenstein sometimes known as the New Wittgenstein.

See also

- [Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus](#)
- [Philosophical Investigations](#)
- [Bertrand Russell](#)
- [Karl Popper](#)
- [Paul Feyerabend](#)

- [Truth table](#) - Wittgenstein and [Emil Leon Post](#) are often both independently credited with their introduction in their current form
- [List of Austrian scientists](#)

Notes and references

1. **^** Time 100. [Time 100: Scientists and Thinkers](#). *Time Magazine Online*. Retrieved on [April 29](#), [2006](#).
2. **^** *It is a matter of controversy whether Hitler and Wittgenstein knew each other personally, and if so whether either had any memory of the other. Some school records have been posted on the University of Passau website [\[1\]](#). These include references to the texts studied by Wittgenstein as a student. Kimberley Cornish's [The Jew of Linz](#) explores the thesis that the two figures had a deeper and lifelong significance to each other (beyond their obvious knowledge of public figures).*
3. **^** Susan G. Sterrett: *Wittgenstein Flies A Kite: A Story of Models of Wings and Models of the World*, 2005. Accessible study of early years up to writing of Tractatus, interweaving history of flight, science and technology with logic and philosophy. [ISBN 0131499971](#). Page 75
4. **^** Ray Monk: *Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Duty of Genius*, 1990. A biography that also attempts to explain his philosophy. [ISBN 0140159959](#). Pages 44, 116, 382-84
5. **^** Creegan, Charles. [Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard](#). *Routledge*. Retrieved on [April 23](#), [2006](#).
6. **^** [Philosopher's rare 'other book' goes on sale](#). *Guardian*. Retrieved on [April 29](#), [2006](#).
7. **^** [Jews in Linz](#). Retrieved on [April 29](#), [2006](#).
8. **^** David Edmonds and John Eidinow: *Wittgenstein's Poker: The Story of a Ten-Minute Argument Between Two Great Philosophers*, 2001. Short biographies of Wittgenstein and [Karl Popper](#), and the social and philosophical issues which led to a famous 10-minute confrontation in Cambridge in 1946. [ISBN 0066212448](#). Page 105

Further reading

- [P.M.S. Hacker](#), *Insight and Illusion - themes in the philosophy of Wittgenstein*, 1986. [ISBN 0198247834](#)
- Richard R. Brockhaus: *Pulling Up the Ladder: The Metaphysical Roots of Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1990. Explores the continental influences on Wittgenstein, often overlooked by more traditional analytic works. [ISBN 0812691261](#)
- Maurice O'Connor Drury: *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein*, 1973. A collection of Drury's writings concerning Wittgenstein, edited and introduced by David Berman, Michael Fitzgerald and John Hayes. [ISBN 1855064901](#)
- Hans-Johann Glock: *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, 1996. [ISBN 0631181121](#)
- [A. C. Grayling](#): *Wittgenstein, A Very Short Introduction*, 2001. An introduction aimed at the non-specialist reader. [ISBN 0192854119](#)
- Rom Harre & Michael A. Tissaw *Wittgenstein And Psychology: A Practical Guide*, 2005. Looks at practical uses of Wittgenstein's later theories in a hands-on psychological context.
- Gavin Kitching: "Wittgenstein and Society: Essays in Conceptual Puzzlement" 2003. [ISBN 075463342X](#)
- [Norman Malcolm](#): *Ludwig Wittgenstein, A Memoir*, 1958. A portrait by someone who knew Wittgenstein well. [ISBN 0199247595](#)
- Brian McGuinness: *Young Ludwig: Wittgenstein's Life 1889-1921*, 1988. [ISBN 0199279942](#)
- [Ray Monk](#): *How To Read Wittgenstein*, 2005. Using key texts from Wittgenstein's writings the author gives insight into how his philosophy can be interpreted. [ISBN 186207724X](#)
- Joachim Schulte: *Wittgenstein, An Introduction*, 1992. A concise introduction to Wittgenstein's philosophy illuminated with passages from his work. [ISBN 079141082X](#)
- [P.M.S. Hacker](#), *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy*, 1996. [ISBN 0631200983](#). An analysis of the relationship between Wittgenstein's thought and that of [Frege](#), [Russell](#), and the [Vienna Circle](#).

- Edmonds, D., Eidinow, J *Wittgenstein's Poker*. New York: Ecco 2001. A review of the origin of the conflict between Karl Popper and Wittgenstein, focused on events leading up to their volatile first encounter at 1946 Cambridge meeting.

For an in-depth exegesis of Wittgenstein's later work, see the 4-volume analytical commentary by P.M.S. Hacker, vols 1 and 2 co-authored with G.P. Baker:

1. *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, 1980 (ISBN 0631121110)
2. *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar, and Necessity*, 1985 (ISBN 0631130241)
3. *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind*, 1990 (ISBN 0631187391)
4. *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will*, 1996 (ISBN 0631187391)

Works about Wittgenstein

- *The Jew of Linz*, by Kimberley Cornish, puts forward the controversial thesis that Hitler's antisemitism arose from his dislike of Wittgenstein, and that Wittgenstein was a Soviet agent who recruited the "Cambridge Five".
- E. L. Doctorow imagines a rivalry between Wittgenstein and Einstein in sections of his novel *City of God*, narrated as Wittgenstein.
- Avant-garde filmmaker Derek Jarman directed *Wittgenstein*.

External links

Wikisource has original works written by or about:
Ludwig Wittgenstein

Wikiquote has a collection of quotations related to:
Ludwig Wittgenstein

- Cambridge Wittgenstein Archive - German and English, includes pictures, biography, searchable database of manuscripts.
- Wittgenstein Portal
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy has an extensive article.
- Wittgenstein's works are edited in an electronic edition (and sold on CDROM) at the University of Bergen in Norway.
- A collection of Ludwig Wittgenstein's manuscripts is held by the Trinity College library in Cambridge, England.
- Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is a comprehensive resource of Wittgensteinian material.
- House Wittgenstein at Kundmanngasse 19, Vienna
- Wittgenstein Scrap Book by Ralph Lichtensteiger
- Wittgenstein — Archive (Real audio stream) of BBC Radio 4 edition of 'In Our Time' on Wittgenstein
- The Jew of Linz by Kimberley Cornish a book review listing its detailed arguments for believing Wittgenstein was the object of Hitler's anti-Semitism.
- Wittgenstein on MIS Management Information Systems as proving grounds for the rule following paradox and other Wittgensteinian themes.
- Herbert Marcuse's critique of the conformist tendencies in Wittgenstein's works.
- *Wovon*, as recorded by a popular Finnish commentator on philosophy
- Wittgenstein's writing on set theory
- T.P. Uschanov's page Wittgenstein links
- Works by Ludwig Wittgenstein at Project Gutenberg
- *Wittgenstein* at the Internet Movie Database

Philosophy of language

Philosophy of language is the branch of [philosophy](#) that studies [language](#). Its primary concerns include the nature of linguistic [meaning](#), [reference](#), language use, language learning and creation, language understanding, [truth](#), [thought](#) and [experience](#) (to the extent that both are linguistic), [communication](#), [interpretation](#), and [translation](#).

At heart, the discipline is concerned with five fundamental issues.

- How are sentences *composed* into a meaningful whole, and what are the meanings of the *parts* of sentences?
- What is the *nature* of meaning? (What exactly *is* a meaning?)
- What do we do with language? (How do we *use* it socially? What is the purpose of language?)
- How does language relate to *the mind*, both of the speaker and the interpreter?
- How does language relate to *the world*?

Overview

Extension and intension

Philosophers of language are not much concerned with what individual words or sentences mean. The nearest dictionary or encyclopedia may solve the problem of the meaning of words, and to speak a language correctly is generally to know what most sentences mean. What is more interesting for philosophers is the question of what it means for an expression to mean something. Why do expressions have the meanings they have? Which expressions have the same meaning as other expressions, and why? How can these meanings be known? And the best, and simplest, question might be, "what does the word 'meaning' mean?"

In a similar vein, philosophers wonder about the relationship between meaning and truth. Philosophers tend to be less concerned with which sentences are *actually true*, and more with *what kinds of meanings can be true or false*. Some examples of questions a truth-oriented philosopher of language might ask include: Can meaningless sentences be true or false? What about sentences about things that don't exist? Is it sentences that are true or false, or is it the usage of sentences?

Language, how things 'mean' something, and truth are important not just because they are used in everyday life; language shapes human development, from earliest childhood and continuing to death. Knowledge itself may be intertwined with language. Notions of self, experience, and existence may depend entirely on how language is used and what is learned through it.

The topic of learning language leads to all kinds of interesting questions. Is it possible to have any thoughts without having a language? What kinds of thoughts need a language to happen? How much does language influence knowledge of the world and how one acts in it? Can anyone reason at all without using language?

The philosophy of language is important because, for all of the above reasons, language is important, and language is important because it is inseparable from how one thinks and lives. People in general have a set of vital concepts which are connected with signs and [symbols](#), including all words (symbols): "object," "[love](#)," "good," "[God](#)," "masculine," "feminine," "[art](#),"

"government," and so on. By incorporating "meaning," everyone has shaped (or has had shaped for us) a view of the universe and how they have "meaning" within it.

Set for the task, many philosophical discussions of language begin by clarifying terminology. Some philosophers -- for instance some semiotic outlooks, and some works by linguist Noam Chomsky -- worry that the term "language" is too vague. Entire systems have been developed to clarify the field.

History

The inquiry into language stretches back to the beginnings of western philosophy with Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.

Plato argued in the dialogue *Cratylus* that there was a natural correctness to names. To do this, he pointed out that compound words and phrases have a range of correctness. For example, it is obviously wrong to say that the term "houseboat" is any good when referring to, say, a cat, because cats have nothing to do with houses or boats. He also argued that primitive names (or morphemes) also had a natural correctness, because each phoneme represented basic ideas or sentiments. For example, the letter and sound of "l" for Plato represented the idea of softness. However, by the end of the Cratylus, he had admitted that some social conventions were also involved, and that there were faults in the idea that phonemes had individual meanings. (A link to the full text of the *Cratylus* can be found here, courtesy of M.I.T.)

Aristotle concerned himself with the issues of logic, categories, and meaning creation. He separated all things into notions of species and genus. He thought that the meaning of a predicate was established through an abstraction of the similarities between various individual things. This is called a theory of *nominalism* (see the section below for more details).

Medieval philosophers also had some interest in the subject -- for many of them, the interest was provoked by a dependence upon their job of translating Greek texts. Of particular interest is the work of Peter Abelard, noteworthy for his remarkable anticipation of modern ideas of language.

Many modern western philosophers such as Umberto Eco, Ferdinand de Saussure, J.L. Austin, J. R. Searle, Leibniz, John Locke, Vico, Johann Georg Hamann, Johann Gottfried Herder, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Charles Peirce, Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig Wittgenstein also saw the field as important.

Though philosophers had always discussed language, it took on a central role in philosophy beginning in the late nineteenth century, especially in the English speaking world and parts of Europe. The philosophy of language was so pervasive that for a time, in analytic philosophy circles, philosophy as a whole was understood to be a matter of mere philosophy of language. In the 20th century, "language" became an even more central 'theme' within the most diverse traditions of philosophy. The phrase "the linguistic turn", was used to describe the noteworthy emphasis that modern-day philosophers put upon language.

Major problems and sub-fields

Composition and parts

A major question in the field - perhaps the single most important question for formalist and structuralist thinkers - is, "how does the meaning of a sentence emerge out of its parts?"

Principle of compositionality

Much about composition of sentences is addressed in the work of linguistics of syntax.

More logic-oriented semantics tend to look towards the principle of compositionality in order to explain the relationship between meaningful parts and whole sentences. The principle of compositionality asserts that a sentence can be understood on the basis of the meaning of the *parts* of the sentence (words) along with an understanding of its *structure*.

Problem of universals and composition

One debate that has captured the interest of many philosophers is the debate over the meaning of universals. One might ask, for example, "when people say the word, "rocks", what do they mean?" Two general answers have emerged to this question. Some have said that the expression stands for some real entity out in the world called "rocks". Others have said that it stands for some collection of particular rocks that we put into a common category. The former position has been called **philosophical realism**, and the latter has been called **nominalism**.

Essential terms
Concepts
Categories
Sets
Classes
Natural kinds
Types and tokens
Genus and Species
Property
Entity
Relation

From the radical realist's perspective, the connection between S and M is a connection between two abstract entities. There is an entity, "man", and an entity, "Socrates". These two things connect together in some way or overlap one another. Plato's theory of forms was an instance of this.

From a nominalist's perspective, the connection between S and M is the connection between a particular entity (Socrates) and a vast collection of particular things (men). To say that Socrates is a man is to say that Socrates is a part of the class of "men".

Another perspective is to consider "man" to be a *property* of the entity, "Socrates". A property is a characteristic of the thing.

Still another perspective considers "man" to be the product of a propositional function. A propositional function is an operation of language that takes an entity (Socrates) and outputs a proposition. In other words, a propositional function is like an algorithm. The meaning of man is whatever takes the entity, "Socrates", and turns it into the statement, "Socrates is a man".

The nature of meaning
Main article: Meaning (linguistic).

The answer to the question, "What is the meaning of meaning?", is not immediately obvious. One section of philosophy of language tries to answer this very question.

Types of meaning

Geoffrey Leech posited that there are two essentially different types of linguistic meaning: *conceptual* and *associative*.

The conceptual meanings of an expression have to do with the definitions of words themselves, and the features of those definitions. This kind of meaning is treated by using a technique called the semantic feature analysis. The conceptual meaning of an expression inevitably involves both

definition (also called "connotation" and "intension" in the literature) and extension (also called "denotation").

The associative meaning of an expression has to do with individual mental understandings of the speaker. They, in turn, can be broken up into six sub-types: *connotative, collocative, social, affective, reflected and thematic* (Mwihaki 2004).

Theories of meaning

The question, "What is the meaning of 'meaning'?", may not have an obvious answer. Philosophers of language have tried to give their accounts. Generally speaking, there have been at least four different kinds of attempts at explaining what a linguistic "meaning" is. *Idea theories of meaning*, most commonly associated with the empiricist tradition, emphasize that meanings are thoughts provoked by signs. *Truth-conditional theories* hold meaning to be the conditions under which an expression may be true or false. *Meaning as usage* perspectives understand meaning to involve or be related to speech acts and particular utterances, not expressions themselves. Finally, *Reference theories of meaning* view meaning to be equivalent to those things in the world that are actually connected to signs.

Other theories exist to discuss non-linguistic meaning (i.e., meaning as conveyed by body language, meanings as consequences, etc.)

Puzzles for accounts of meaning

One issue that has bothered philosophers of language and logic is the problem of the vagueness of words (or uses). Often, meanings expressed by the speaker are not as explicit as the listener would like them to be. The consequences of vagueness can be disastrous to classical logic because they give rise to the Paradox of the heap.

Language and the world

Investigations into how language interacts with the world are called "theories of reference".

- Gottlob Frege was an advocate of a mediated reference theory, which appealed to the sense of a referring expression (the *sense* being *the way the referent is presented*).
- By contrast, in response to British idealism, Bertrand Russell sought to scrap all "unreal" things from language. To do this, he created a direct reference theory.

Frege's mediated reference theory seems to differ from Russell's direct reference theory in that logically proper names, on Russell's account, had no meaning but their referent. On Frege's account, any referring expression had a sense as well as a reference. Co-referential names, such as "Samuel Clemens" and "Mark Twain" cause problems for a directly referential view (though, not all versions of Russell's theory, because, for Russell, not all grammatically proper names were logically proper). Frege's view encounters difficulties in spelling out the specifics of senses.

Mind and language

Innateness and learning

Some of the major issues in the philosophy of language that deal with the mind are paralleled by modern psycholinguistics. Some important questions: how much of language is innate? Is language acquisition a special faculty in the mind? What's the connection between thought and language?

There are three general perspectives on the issue of language learning:

- The behaviorist perspective, which dictates that not only is the solid bulk of language learned, but it is learned via conditioning;
- The hypothesis testing perspective, which states that syntactic rules and meanings are triangulated by a child using hypotheses, in much the same way that any learning occurs;
- The innatist perspective, which states that at least some of the syntactic settings are innate and hardwired.

There are varying notions of the structure of the brain when it comes to language, as well:

- Connectionist models, which emphasize the idea that a person's lexicon and their thoughts operate in a kind of network;
- Nativist models, which assert that there are specialized devices in the brain that are dedicated to language acquisition;
- Computation models, which emphasize the work done related to logic-like processing of the mind;
- Emergentist models, which focus upon the notion that natural faculties are a complex system that emerge out of simpler biological parts;
- Reductionist models

Language and thought

Another important question relating to language and the mind is, *to what extent does language influence thought (and vice-versa)?* There have been a number of different perspectives on this issue, ranging across a number of suggestions.

For example, linguists Sapir and Whorf suggested that language limited the extent to which members of a linguistic community can think about certain subjects (a hypothesis paralleled in George Orwell's novel "1984"). To a lesser extent, issues in the philosophy of rhetoric (including the notion of framing of debate) suggest the influence of language upon thought.

There is also some controversy about the very meaning of a "thought". Gottlob Frege believed that thought occupied a "third realm", that was neither psychological nor a part of the universe, and believed that his Begriffsschrift calculus was a theory of thought. By contrast, Wittgenstein - in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus - considered thought to be a "significant proposition".

Social interaction and language

Metasemantics is a term of art used to describe all those fields that examine the social conditions that give rise to meanings and languages. Etymology (the study of the origins of words) and Stylistics (philosophical argumentation over what makes "good grammar", relative to a particular language) are two examples of metasemantic fields.

One of the major fields of sociology, symbolic interactionism, is based on the insight that human social organization is based almost entirely on the use of meanings. In consequence, any explanation of a social structure (like an institution) would need to account for the shared meanings which create and sustain the structure.

Rhetoric is the study of the particular words that people use in order to achieve the proper emotional and rational effect in the listener, be it to persuade, provoke, endear, teach, etc. Some relevant applications of the field include:

- The examination of [propaganda](#) and [didacticism](#);
- The examination of the purposes of [swearing](#) and [pejoratives](#) (especially how it influences the behavior of others, and defines relationships);
- The effects of [gendered language](#);
- [Linguistic transparency](#), or speaking in an accessible manner, inspired by [George Orwell](#)'s essay, *Politics and the English Language*;
- [Performative](#) utterances and the various tasks that language can perform (called "speech acts"), pioneered by [J.L. Austin](#)'s book, *How to Do Things With Words*.
- The logical concept of the [domain of discourse](#).

[Literary theory](#) is a discipline that overlaps with the philosophy of language. It emphasizes the methods that readers and critics use in understanding a text. This field, being an outgrowth of the study of how to properly interpret messages, is closely tied to the ancient discipline of [hermeneutics](#).

Miscellaneous

In 1950s, an [artificial language](#) [loglan](#) was invented that is based on first order [predicate logic](#).

Important theorists

Among the most important theorists in the philosophy of language are:

- [Plato](#) and [Aristotle](#) - classical philosophers
- [Ferdinand de Saussure](#) - founder of linguistic Structuralism
- [John Stuart Mill](#) - influential in theories of reference
- [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#) - creator of the "meaning is use" dictum
- [Ernst Cassirer](#) - theory of language as part of a general theory of symbolic forms
- [Walter Benjamin](#), [Martin Heidegger](#) - philosophers tied to the Humboldtian tradition
- [Valentin Voloshinov](#), [Rossi-Landi](#) - Marxist theoreticians of language
- [Michel Foucault](#), [Jacques Derrida](#) - [Post-structuralist](#) figures
- [Hélène Cixous](#), [Julia Kristeva](#), [Judith Butler](#) - feminist theoreticians of language
- [Mikhail Bakhtin](#), [Maurice Blanchot](#), [Paul de Man](#) - Theoreticians of literature whose work is of philosophical relevance
- [Charles Peirce](#), [Umberto Eco](#) - advocates of philosophically oriented forms of semiotics
- [Gottlob Frege](#), [Bertrand Russell](#), [Saul Kripke](#), [Richard Montague](#) - analytical philosophers of language rooted in logic-like analysis of language
- [Noam Chomsky](#) and [Jerry Fodor](#) - syntactic, computational, and knowledge-oriented perspectives
- [Keith Donnellan](#), [Jürgen Habermas](#), [J.L. Austin](#), [H. P. Grice](#), and [John Searle](#) - use-oriented theorists

Important topics and terms

- Fields of interest
  - [Pragmatics](#), [Rhetoric](#), [Semantics](#), [Semiotics](#), [Syntax](#)
  - [Semantics of logic](#)
  - [General semantics](#)
  - [Symbolic interactionism](#)

- Parts of speech
  - Speaker / (or "Encoder")

- o Interpreter / (or "Decoder")
  - o Intentionality
  - o Signs and Phonemes
  - o Tone
  - o Truth conditions (and / or satisfaction conditions)
  - o Meaning
  - o Ideas
  - o Sense and reference
  - o Speech acts
  - o Linguistic Context (see also deixis)
  - o Linguistic community

- Essential aspects of meaning
  - o Concepts
  - o Categories, sets, classes, and Natural kinds
  - o Types and tokens
  - o Genus and Species
  - o Connotation and denotation (intension and extension)
  - o Statements and propositions
  - o Subject and predicate
  - o Synonyms, antonyms, and all other -onyms

- Essential aspects of reference
  - o Entities
  - o Properties
  - o Relations
  - o Deixis
  - o Referential use
  - o Attributive use

- Linguistic phenomena
  - o Demonstratives and Indexicals
  - o Descriptions, esp. Definite descriptions
  - o Proper names
  - o Metaphor
  - o "Is" (of identity, predication, existence)
  - o Sentences (Commandative, Indicative, and Performative)

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"The Discourse on Language" by Michel Foucault
A Summary

Outline prepared for his students by [Professor John Lye](#), who apologizes for any errors or misrepresentations. The "Discourse" is a dense work, and I hope I've been able to give you the gist without too much confusion or obscurity.

Foucault's hypothesis: in every society the production of discourse is atonce controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is "to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality."

I: The control of discourse

A. Rules of Exclusion (external delimitations)
1. **Prohibition.**

We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, when we like or where we like. There are three types of prohibition:

1. covering objects
2. ritual with its surrounding circumstances
3. the privileged or exclusive right to speak of a particular subject

These prohibitions interrelate, reinforce and complement each other, forming a complex web, continually subject to modification. The areas most tightly woven today are politics & sexuality. The prohibitions surrounding speech reveal its links with desire and power.

2. **The opposition of reason and madness**

This old division, which used to count mad speech either as wholly irrational, therefore devoid of truth, or revealing a hidden rationality, therefore almost preternaturally true, is still here, but proceeds along different lines -- institutions, psychiatrists, etc. The psychiatrist listens to speech invested with desire, crediting itself -- for its greater exaltation or its greater anguish -- with terrible powers.

3. **The opposition between true and false**

There is a will to truth; one can find in its development something like a system of exclusion (historical, modifiable, institutionally constraining); Foucault looks at the time in history when truth moved from the power of the sayer (truth as ritualized act) to the content of what was enunciated -- its meaning, its form, its object and its relation to that to which it referred.

The great mutations of science may be viewed not as flowing from discoveries but as new forms of the will to truth (Foucault also speaks of it as the will to knowledge.), e.g. the rise of empirical science)

The will to truth has had its own history, which is not at all that of the constraining truths: it is the history of a range of subjects to be learned, the history of the functions of the knowing subject, the his tory of material, technical and instrumental investment in knowledge.

This will to truth, like the other systems of exclusion, relies on institutional support: it is both reinforced and accompanied by whole strata of practices such as pedagogy (naturally), the book system, publishing, libraries, the learned societies in the past, and laboratories today. But it is probably even more profoundly accompanied by the manner in which knowledge is employed in society, the way in which it is exploited, divided and, in some ways, attributed.

This will to knowledge, thus reliant upon institutional support and distribution, tends to exercise a sort of pressure, a power of constraint upon other forms of discourse.

We do not recognize the will to truth as desire or power; this is a function of our discourse itself. Only one truth appears before us, and we are unaware of the prodigious machinery of the will to truth, with its vocation of exclusion.

B. Internal systems for the control & delimitation of discourse

Here, discourse exercises its own control, rules regarding principles of classification, ordering and distribution. It is as though we were now involved in the mastery of another dimension of discourse: that of events and chance.

1. Commentary

There is barely a society without its major narratives, told, retold, and varied; formulas, texts, ritualised texts to be spoken in well-defined circumstances and things said once, and conserved because people suspect some hidden secret or wealth lies buried within.

There is a gradation between different types of discourse: from discourse uttered in the course of the day and in casual meetings, discourse which disappears with the act that gave rise to it (ephemeral), to those forms of discourse that lie at the origins of a certain number of new speech acts, which are reiterated, transformed or discussed, discourse which is spoken remains spoken indefinitely, and which remains to be spoken -- in our system religious or juridical texts, literary texts, to a certain extent scientific texts. This gap is not stable, constant or absolute.

There are differences between primary and secondary texts in commentary. This difference has two roles:

1. it permits us to create new discourses *ad infinitum*. The top-heaviness of the original text, its permanence, its status as discourse ever capable of being brought up to date, the multiple or hidden meanings with which it is credited, the reticence and wealth it is believed to contain, all create open possibility for discussion.
2. on the other hand commentary's only role is to say finally, what has silently been articulated deep down. One says in commentary for the first time what has already been said in the text one is commenting on.

Thus Commentary averts the chance element of discourse by giving it its due: it gives us the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is the text itself which is uttered an d, in some ways, finalised.

2. The author, as the unifying principle in a particular group of writings or statements.

The principle does not deny the existence of individuals who write, however when they write, they put on the **author-function**, and texts are organized respectively around the function, not the individual.

Commentary limited the hazards of discourse through the action of an identity taking the form of repetition and sameness. The author principle limits this same chance element through the action of an identity whose form is that of individuality and the I.

3. Disciplines
This control system is opposed to both the commentary-principle and the author-principle

- It is opposed to the author because disciplines are defined by groups of objects, methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, the inter play of rules and definitions, of techniques and tools -- all anonymous systems open to all
- It is opposed to commentary in that as opposed to commentary it does not suppose some meaning waiting to be discovered. It is not an identity to be reiterated, but is what is required for the construction of new statements. For a discipline to exist, there must be a possibility of formulating -- and of doing so ad infinitum -- fresh propositions.

A discipline is not the sum total of truths that can be said about something, nor of all that may be accepted by virtue of some principle of coherence or systematization. It is what can be said as constrained by certain assumptions about a thing, that is, within a certain theoretical field (as medicine cannot talk now about the influence of the stars, etc).

A proposition must fulfill some complex conditions before it can be admitted to a discipline: it must be **"in the true"**, that is, within what are recognized as the delimits of the area of knowledge. For example, Mendel's statements were not accepted because he was not "in the true." It is possible to speak the truth in a void, but one can only speak in the true through the rules a of a discursive policy.

Disciplines constitute a system of control in the production of discourse, fixing its limits through the action of an identity taking the form of a permanent reactivation of the rules.

It is likely impossible to see the enabling role of these forms of constraint without first seeing them as forms of constraint

C. Conditions under which discourse can be employed.
Who is qualified to enter into the discourse on a specific subject? Not all areas of discourse are equally open and penetrable. Moreover, exchange and communication probably cannot operate independently of complex but restrictive systems.

1. Ritual defines the qualifications and role of the speaker, lays down the gestures to be made, the behaviour, circumstances and a whole range of signs, and the supposed or imposed significance of the words, their effect on those addressed, the limitation of their constraining validity. Foucault sees religious, juridical and therapeutic, and in some ways political discourses, as barely dissociable from the functioning of ritual.

2. Fellowship of discourse , whose function is to preserve or to reproduce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, without those in possession being dispossessed by this very distribution. It functions through various schema of exclusivity and disclosure.

3. Doctrine (religious, political, philosophical, etc)
Doctrine is opposed to fellowship of discourse, which limits class of speakers; doctrine tends toward diffusion:

- doctrinal adherence involves both speaker and spoken, the one through the other
- doctrine is the sign, the manifestation and the instrument of a prior adherence
- Doctrine effects a dual subjection, that of speaking subjects to discourse, and that of discourse to the groups, at least virtually, of speakers.

4. Education: the social appropriation of discourse

Most of the time these four conditions are linked together, constituting great edifices that distribute speakers among the different types of discourse, and which appropriate those types of discourse to certain cat egories of subject...these are the main rules for the subjection of discourse.

D. Philosophical themes conforming to & reinforcing the activity of limitation and exclusion: i.e. *eliding the reality of discourse*

Western thought seems to have ensured that discourse should appear merely as a certain interjection between speaking and thinking; that it should constitute thought, clad in its signs and rendered visible by words or, conversely, that the structures of language themselves should be brought into play, producing a certain effect of meaning.

1. The theme of the founding subject.
The task of the founding subject is to animate the empty forms of language with his objectives; through the thickness and inertia of empty things, he grasps intuitively the meanings lying within them.

2. The theme of originating experience (the opposing theme to 1.)
This asserts, in the case of experience, that even before it could be grasped in the form of a cogito , prior significations, in some ways already spoken, were circulating in the world. i.e. there is meaning out there which we find .

3. The theme of universal mediation
The logos is already discourse, or things and events which *insensibly* become discourse in the unfolding of essential secrets.

The result of any of these is that discourse is seen only as an activity, or writing(1), reading(2) or exchange(3), involving only and exchange of signs. Discourse in placing itself as the signified of a signifier, disappears itself.

II: The elucidation of discourse

A. Logophobia
The apparent supremacy given discourse in our culture masks a fear; all our forms of discourse serve to control it, to relieve its richness of its most dangerous elements; to organize its disorder. This logophobia is a fear of the mass of spoken things, the possibility of errant, unrestrained discourse.

B. Decisions in order to erase logophobia

In order to analyze the conditions of this fear, we need to resolve ourselves to accept three conditions, which our current thinking rather tends to resist, and which belong to the three groups of function Foucault has just mentioned:

1. to question our will to truth;
2. to restore to discourse its character as an event;
3. to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier.

C. Methodological demands of these decisions

1. The principle of *reversal*

Where, in our usual thinking, we think we recognize the source of discourse, its principles, the factors in its positive role, we need to recognize the negative activity of the cutting out and rarification of discourse. Then what would we find behind them? -- a world of uninterrupted discourse, virtually complete? We need the folowing methodologies.

2. The principle of *discontinuity*

The existence of systems of rarification of discourse does not imply that over against them lie vistas of limitless, repressed discourse, waiting to be liberated. Discourse is a discontinuous activity, its different manifestations sometimes coming together, but just as easily unaware of, or excluding, the other.

3. the principle of *specificity*

A particular discourse cannot be resolved by a prior system of significations; "the world does not provide us with a legible face, leaving us merely to decipher it; it does not work hand in glove with what we already know....We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them; it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity."

4. The principle of *exteriority*

We "are not to burrow to the hidden core of discourse, to the heart of the thought or meaning manifested in it; instead, taking the discourse itself, its appearance and regularity, we should look for its external conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its limits."

As the regulatory principles of analysis then we have four notions: event, series, regularity, and the possible conditions of existence. These are opposes, term for term, to th four notions which have dominated the traditional history of ideas: signification, originality, unity, creation -- one sought the point of creation; the unity of a work, period or theme; one looked for a mark of individual originality and the infinite wealth of hidden things.

D. Two remarks: on history and on the status of discursive events

1. History

There is a turn of history away from the privileged position of the individual event, and a revealing of more enduring structures, economic and social and so forth, which ground common life; contemporary history has stopped looking for cause and effect and a grand evolutionary processes.

History does not (now) consider an event without defining the series to which it belongs, without specifying the method of analysis used, without seeking out the regularity of phenomena and the probable limits of their occurrence, without enquiring about variations, inflexions and the slope of the curve, without desiring to know the conditions on which these depend. Modern history seeks not to establish structures anterior to, alien or hostile to the event, but those diverse converging, and sometimes divergent, but never autonomous series that enable us to circumscribe the locus of an event, the limits to its fluidity and the conditions of its emergence. The notions no longer consciousness and continuity, or sign and structure, but rather of events and series.

2. The status of discursive events

"If discourses are to be treated first as discursive events, what status does this notion of event have? Of course, an event is neither substance, nor accident, nor quality nor process; events are not corporeal. And yet, an event is certainly not immaterial; it takes effect, becomes effect, on the level of materiality. Events consist in relation to, coexistence with, dispersion of, the cross-checking accumulation and the selection of material elements; it occurs as an effect of, and in, material disperion." -- call it (paradoxically) incorporeal materialism.

Now, as discursive events are not homogeneous but discontinuous series, how are we to understand this discontinuity? What is concerned here are those caesura breaking the instant, and the dispersion of the subject in a multiplicity of possible positions and functions. This conception of discontinuity as a priciple of history invalidates the traditional grounding of history in the (smallest and most difficult to contest) conceptions, those of the instant and the subject.

We need to establish a theory of discontinuous systemization, as these events are not in any order or any (or several) consciousnesses; they have their regularity, within limits, but it is no longer possible to sustain ideas of mechanical causal links or ideal necessity. We must accept the introduction of **chance** as a category.

We feel here the lack, Foucault writes, of a theory linking chance and thought; he wants to introduce into the very roots of thought the notions of chance, discontinuity and materiality. These notions ought to permit us to link the history of systems of thought to the practical work of historians.

E. The analyses Foucault intends to undertake: two groups

1. The critical group

This sets the reversal-principle to work : will attempt to distinguish the forms of exclusion, limitation and appropriation he was speaking of earlier.

2. The geneological group

This sets the other three principles to work (discontinuity, specificity, exteriority). It concerns the effective formation of discourse, within and outside the limits of control.

Criticism analyzes the processes of rarefaction, consolidation and unification in discourse; **geneology** studies their formation, at once scattered, discontinuous and regular. These two tasks are not always complementary. The difference between the critical and the geneological enterprise is not one of object or field, but of point of attack, perspective and delimitation.

The critical side of the analysis deals with the systems enveloping discourse; attempting to mark out and distinguish the principles of ordering, exclusion and rarity in discourse. We might, to play with our words, say it practises a kind of studied casualness. The geneological side of discourse, by way

of contrast, deals with series of effective formation of discourse: it at tempts to grasp it in its power of affirmation, by which I do not mean a power opposed to that of negation, but the power of constituting domains of objects, in relation to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions....the geneological mood is one of felicitous positivism.

"[T]he analysis of discourse thus understood, does not reveal the universality of meaning, but brings to light the action of imposed rarity, with a fundamental power of affirmation."

Resources for Discourse Studies

http://www.discourse-in-society.org/Resources.html

Below are some useful links to other sites, lists, journals, homepages and other information that is relevant for the study of discourse.

Suggestions for other links and information to be included are welcome: vandijk at discourse-in-society.org

Users are requested to report broken links (websites that have changed address or are no longer available).

Last updated: March 10, 2006

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Bibliographies

Bibliographies on various topics in discourse studies.

Web-sites, discussion lists and electronic journals

The Linguist List
The Linguist List is without doubt the major information source for linguists on the internet. Read by thousands, it offers information about homepages of institutes, conferences and linguists, e-mail addresses of linguists, job offers, and much more. It features papers, debates, book reviews, and much more.

DISCOURS: The Discourse Studies List
"DISCOURS is an interdisciplinary forum for scholars from diverse fields to discuss discourse theory and practice from a wide range of perspectives." To date, this list is the only general forum for the study of discourse on the internet.

CRITICS-L

The Critics-L is an interdisciplinary forum for debate for all those actively engaged in the critical study of discourse, language and communication. Scholars working and publishing in this perspective, as well as PhD students who prepare a thesis in the area of critical discourse analysis, are welcome to request access to the list by filling in this form.For further information, please write to *vandijk at discourse-in-society.org*

Language in the New Capitalism

Very useful list, stimulated by Norman Fairclough, set up by Joan Pujolar, and now coordinated by Phil Graham.

Ethno/CA News: E-mail discussion lists

The most prominent website for information, discussion lists, resources and people in Conversation Analysis.

Text Semiotics

Useful page with many references to associations, journals, publications, etc in textual semiotics.

Systemic Page

Website of Systemic-Functional Grammar/Linguistics, one of the linguistic theories most applied by (linguistic) discourse analysts. See also Information for Systemic-Functional Linguists.

Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) Website

RST is a theory of discourse coherence defined in terms of functional relations between discourse units. The website provides introductions to RST in English, French and Spanish, bibliographies, sample analyses and other resourced.

Linganth

Discussion forum for linguistic anthropology.

Discurso

Página argentina de estudios del discurso, con un enlace a la revista de internet *discurso.org*.

Addiscurso

Otra página argentina de estudios del discurso.

AdVersus

Publicación periódica del Centro di Ricerca Semiotica "Ferruccio Rossi-Landi" (CRS), del Istituto Italoargentino di Ricerca Sociale "Antonio Gramsci" (IIRS) dependiente del Istituto Italiano di Ricerca Sociale de Roma y del Institut Européen de Recherche Sociale de Bruselas en colaboración con los institutos de investigación de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires y del CONICET de Argentina.

Sociedad y Discurso

Revista electrónica del Departamento de Español y Estudios Internationales, Instituto de Lenguas y Estudios Interculturales, Universidad de Aalborg, Dinamarca

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Societies and Organizations for the Study of Discourse

[The Society for Text and Discourse](#)
International society for scholars engaged in discourse analysis. Although the society is open to all discourse analysts, most of its members are psychologists working on text processing and related issues. Its homepage has useful information about past and upcoming conferences.

[IPRA-International Pragmatics Association](#)

[ALED. Asociación Latino-americana de Estudios del Discurso.](#)
The first and foremost regional association for the study of discourse. Organizes bi-annual congresses, and soon also its own Journal. [Website temporarily not accessible].

[Xarxa d'Estudis del Discurs/Red de Estudios del Discurso](#)
Network of discourse research groups in Spain, France and Argentina. [In Catalan].

[Cátedra Unesco para la Lectura y la Escritura](#)
The international network in Latin America (Cali, Valparaiso, Buenos Aires) of chairs/departments involved in the applied study of discourse, reading and writing, directed by Cristina Martínez (Cali, Colombia).

Journals

See also the list of [journals](#) of the LINGUIST list.

[Critical Discourse Studies](#)
Critical Discourse Studies is a new journal dedicated to critical study of discourse in research within the social sciences and humanities. It aims to have a broader interdisciplinary appeal than existing journals, and to publish theoretical as well as analytical contributions. The journal has been established in response to the rapidly increasing use of critical discourse studies and critical discourse analysis in many disciplines. It also aims to connect critical academic research with practical concerns and agendas, including those of poliical camaigns and social movements." (Blurb of Routledge, the publisher).

[Discourse Processes](#)
The official journal for the Society for Text and Discourse. Features articles in all areas of discourse analysis, and especially in the field of the psychology of discourse processing.

[Discourse Studies](#)
International and multidiscplinary journal for the study of discourse. Publishes especially work in discourse linguistics, conversation analysis, the psychology of text processing, and cultural studies of discourse.

[Discourse & Society](#)
International and multidisciplinary journal for the study of the social and political aspects of discourse, as well as for critical approaches in discourse studies.

[TEXT. An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse](#)
The first international journal for the study of discourse. Founded in 1980 by Teun A. van Dijk and János Petöfi, and edited by Teun A. van Dijk between 1980 and 1999.

[The Journal of Language and Politics](#)
A new journal, edited by Paul Chilton and Ruth Wodak.

[Research on Language and Social Interaction](#)
Journal specifically dedicated to the publication of work on conversation/dialogue in interaction.

[Journal of Pragmatics](#)
" The journal (...) provides a forum for pragmatic studies in sociolinguistics, general linguistics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, computational linguistics, applied linguistics and other areas of linguistic research."

[Language in Society](#)
The classical journal of sociolinguistics. Also publishes studies on discourse.

[Journal of Sociolinguistics](#)
"The journal is concerned with language in all its dimensions, macro and micro, as formal features or abstract discourses, as situated talk or written text."

[Language and Communication](#)
"This journal is unique in that it provides a forum devoted to the discussion of topics and issues in communication which is of interdisciplinary significance. It publishes contributions from researchers in all fields relevant to the study of verbal and non-verbal communication."

[Semiotica](#)
Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies.

[Social Semiotics](#)
"Social Semiotics invites papers that carry out textual analyses framed by a rigorous understanding of political economy, processes of production and/or patterns of consumption, and issues of embodiment, both race and gender."

[Written Communication](#)
"Provides a forum for the free exchange of ideas, theoretical viewpoints and methodological approaches that better define and further develop thought and practice in the exciting study of the written word."

[Political Communication](#)
"The journal welcomes all research methods and analytical viewpoints that advance understanding of the practices, processes, and policy implications of political communication in all its forms."

[Journal of Linguistic Anthrpology](#)
The journal of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology.

Research Institutes

[DISS. Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung](#)
Founded and directed by Siegfried Jäger. Leading research institute, for the critical study of discourse, specialized in the study of racist discourse. Regularly publishes books and brochures on burning social issues.

[Centre d'Analyse du Discours (C.A.D)](#)
Research center of the Université de Paris 13, directed by Patrick Charaudeau.

Web-sites of Discourse/Conversation Analysts

Since the list of all discourse analysts in the world would be too long for this page, we have provisionally only included some well-known senior scholars who have widely published in discourse or conversation analysis. But the list is somewhat arbitrary. Some well-known senior scholars simply *have* no web-site. NOT being included here does NOT mean you are not a good, great, well-known or famous discourse analyst, only that I did not have your web-site. I at least tried to include most of the board members of *Discourse & Society* and *Discourse Studies.*

Last checked: March 10, 2006

See also the [personal web-pages](#) of the Linguist List.

[Charles Antaki](#)
[Douglas Biber](#)
[Michael Billig](#)
[Charles Briggs](#)
[Mary Bucholtz](#)
[Wallace Chafe](#)
[Paul Chilton](#)
[Herbert Clark](#)
[Malcolm Coulthard](#)
[Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen](#)
[Nikolas Coupland](#)
[John Downing](#)
[Paul Drew](#)
[Alessandro Duranti](#)
[Derek Edwards](#)
[Susan Ehrlich](#)
[Norman Fairclough](#)
[Sonja Foss](#)
[Barbara Fox](#)
[MortonAnn Gernsbacher](#)
[Charles Goodwin](#)
[Art Graesser](#)
[Phil Graham](#)
[Kirah Hall](#)
[Monica Heller](#)
[John Heritage](#)
[Dell Hymes](#)
[Janet Holmes](#)
[Siegfried Jäger](#)
[Adam Jaworski](#)
[Walter Kintsch](#)
[Helga Kotthoff](#)
[Gunther Kress](#)
[William Labov](#)

Robin Lakoff
Geoffrey Leech
Stephen C. Levinson
Dominique Maingueneau
James R. Martin
Greg Myers
Elinor Ochs
Jonathan Potter
Anita Pomerantz
Ellen Prince
Tanya Reinhart
Emanuel A. Schegloff
Bambi Schieffelin
Ron Scollon
Michael Stubbs
John Swales
Deborah Tannen
Paul ten Have
Sandra Thompson
Karen Tracy
Teun A. van Dijk
Eija Ventola
Jef Verschueren
Karen Watson-Gegeo
Bonnie Webber
Candace West
Margaret Wetherell
Uli Windisch
Ruth Wodak (Project Vienna)
Ruth Wodak (Lancaster)
Stanton Wortham

Michel Foucault

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Name:	Michel Foucault
Birth:	October 15, 1926 (Poitiers, France)
Death:	June 25, 1984 (Paris, France)
School/tradition:	Continental philosophy, Post-structuralism, Structuralism
Main interests:	History of ideas, Epistemology, Ethics, Political philosophy
Notable ideas:	"Power", "archaeology", "genealogy", "episteme"
Influences:	Nietzsche, Althusser, Kant, Canguilhem, Heidegger, Bataille
Influenced:	Judith Butler

Michel Foucault (October 15, 1926 – June 25, 1984) was a French philosopher who held a chair at the Collège de France, which he gave the title "The History of Systems of Thought." His writings have had an enormous impact on other scholarly work: Foucault's influence extends across the humanities and social sciences, and across many applied and professional areas of study.

Foucault is known for his critical studies of various social institutions, most notably psychiatry, medicine, and the prison system, and also for his work on the history of sexuality. His work concerning power and the relation between power and knowledge, as well as his ideas concerning "discourse" in relation to the history of Western thought, have been widely discussed and applied.

His work is often described as postmodernist or post-structuralist by commentators and critics. During the 1960s, however, he was more often associated with the structuralist movement. Although he was initially happy with this description, he later emphasised his distance from the structuralist approach. He also rejected the post-structuralist and postmodernist labels in an interview with Gerard Raulet.

Biography

Early life

Foucault was born in 1926 in [Poitiers](#) as Paul-Michel Foucault to a notable provincial family. His father, Paul Foucault, was an eminent [surgeon](#) and hoped his son would join him in the profession. Foucault later dropped 'Paul' from his name for reasons that are not entirely clear. His early education was a mix of success and mediocrity until he attended the [Jesuit](#) Collège Saint-Stanislaus where he excelled. During this period, Poitiers was part of [Vichy France](#) and later came under German occupation. After [World War II](#), Foucault gained entry to the prestigious [École Normale Supérieure](#) (rue d'Ulm), the traditional gateway to an academic career in the humanities in [France](#).

The École Normale Supérieure

Foucault's personal life during the École Normale was difficult—he suffered from [acute depression](#), even attempting [suicide](#). He was taken to see a psychiatrist. Perhaps because of this, Foucault became fascinated with [psychology](#). Thus, in addition to his *licence* (degree) in philosophy he also earned a *licence* in psychology, which was at that time a very new qualification in France, and was involved in the clinical arm of the discipline where he was exposed to thinkers such as [Ludwig Binswanger](#).

Like many *'normaliens'* , Foucault joined the [French Communist Party](#) from 1950 to 1953. He was inducted into the party by his mentor [Louis Althusser](#). He left due to concerns about what was happening in the [Soviet Union](#) under [Stalin](#). Various people such as historian [Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie](#) have reported that Foucault never actively participated in his cell, unlike many other party members.

Early career

Foucault passed his *[agrégation](#)* in 1950. After a brief period lecturing at the École Normale, he took up a position at the [University of Lille](#), where from 1953 to 1954 he taught psychology. In 1954 Foucault published his first book, *Maladie mentale et personnalité,* a work which he would later disavow. It soon became apparent that Foucault was not interested in a teaching career, and he undertook a lengthy exile from France. In 1954 Foucault served France as a cultural delegate to the [University of Uppsala](#) in [Sweden](#) (a position arranged for him by [Georges Dumézil](#), who was to become a friend and mentor). In 1958 Foucault left [Uppsala](#) for briefly held positions at [Warsaw University](#) and at the [University of Hamburg](#).

Foucault returned to [France](#) in 1960 to complete his doctorate and take up a post in [philosophy](#) at the [University of Clermont-Ferrand](#). There he met [Daniel Defert](#), with whom he lived in a non-monogamous partnership for the rest of his life. He gave his lover an assistantship, and in response to this, there was a faculty inquiry. In 1961 he earned his doctorate by submitting two theses (as is customary in France): a "major" thesis entitled *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* and a 'secondary' thesis which involved a translation and commentary on [Kant](#)'s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. *Folie et déraison* (ironically published in English as *Madness and Civilization*) was extremely well-received. Foucault continued a vigorous publishing schedule. In 1963 he published *Naissance de la Clinique* (*[Birth of the Clinic](#)*), *[Raymond Roussel](#)*, and a reissue of his 1954 volume (now entitled *Maladie mentale et psychologie*) which he would again disavow.

After Defert was posted to [Tunisia](#) for his [military service](#), Foucault moved to a position at the [University of Tunis](#) in 1965. In 1966 he published *Les Mots et les choses* (*[The Order of Things](#)*),

which was enormously popular despite its length and difficulty. This was during the height of interest in structuralism and Foucault was quickly grouped with scholars such as Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Roland Barthes as the newest, latest wave of thinkers set to topple the existentialism popularized by Jean-Paul Sartre. Foucault made a number of sceptical comments about Marxism, which outraged a number of Left wing critics, but he quickly tired of being labelled a 'structuralist'. He was still in Tunis during the May 1968 student rebellions, where he was profoundly affected by a local student revolt earlier in the same year. In the fall of 1968 he returned to France, where he published *L'archéologie du savoir* (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*) — a methodological response to his critics — in 1969.

Post-1968: Foucault the activist

In the aftermath of 1968, the French government created a new experimental university at Vincennes. Foucault became the first head of its philosophy department in December of that year and appointed mostly young leftist academics (such as Judith Miller) whose radicalism provoked the Ministry of Education to withdraw the department's accreditation. Foucault notoriously also joined students in occupying administration buildings and fighting with police.

Foucault's tenure at Vincennes was short-lived, as in 1970 he was elected to France's most prestigious academic body, the Collège de France as Professor of the History of Systems of Thought. His political involvement now increased, Defert having joined the ultra-Maoist Gauche Proletarienne (GP). Foucault helped found the Prison Information Group (in French: Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons, (or GIP) to provide a way for prisoners to voice their concerns. This fed into a marked politicization of Foucault's work, with a book, *Surveiller et Punir* (*Discipline and Punish*), which "narrates" the micro-power structures that developed in Western societies since the eighteenth century, with a special focus on prisons and schools.

The late Foucault

In the late 1970s political activism in France tailed off with the disillusionment of many left wing militants. A number of young Maoists abandoned their beliefs to become the so-called New Philosophers, often citing Foucault as their major influence, a status about which Foucault had mixed feelings. Foucault in this period embarked on a 6 volume project *History of Sexuality*, which he was never to complete. Its first volume, *The Will to Knowledge*, was published in 1976. The second and third volumes did not appear for another eight years, and they surprised readers by their relatively traditional style, subject matter (classical Greek and Latin texts) and approach, particularly Foucault's focus on the subject, a concept he had previously neglected. He made more specific comments with respect to prisons, stating it would be best for all courts to be abolished and all prisoners freed.

Foucault began to spend more time in the United States, at University at Buffalo (where he had lectured on his first ever visit to the United States in 1970) and especially at UC Berkeley. In 1975 he took LSD at Zabriskie Point in Death Valley National Park, later calling it the best experience of his life. In 1978 Foucault made two tours of Iran, undertaking extensive interviews with political protagonists in support of the new revolutionary Islamic government there. His many essays on Iran were published in the Italian newspaper *Corriere Della Sera*, only appeared in French in 1994 and in then in English in 2005. These essays caused some controversy, with some commentators arguing that Foucault was insufficiently critical of the new regime.

Foucault enthusiastically participated in the gay culture in San Francisco — it is suspected that it was here that he contracted HIV, in the days before the disease was described as such. It is of

considerable speculation as to whether or not he knowingly infected others upon his last visit to San Francisco. Foucault died of an [AIDS](#)-related illness in [Paris](#) June 26th, 1984.

Works

Madness and Civilization

Main article: [Madness and Civilization](#)

The English edition of *Madness and Civilization* is an abridged version of *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, originally published in 1961. (A full translation titled *The History of Madness* is due to be published by [Routledge](#) : [ISBN 0415277019](#)) This was Foucault's first major book, written while he was the Director of the Maison de France in Sweden. It examines ideas, practices, institutions, art and literature relating to [madness](#) in Western history.

Foucault begins his history in the [Middle Ages](#), noting the social and physical exclusion of [lepers](#). He argues that with the gradual disappearance of leprosy, madness came to occupy this excluded position. The [ship of fools](#) in the 15th century is a literary version of one such exclusionary practice, the practice of sending mad people away in ships. In 17th century Europe, in a movement which Foucault famously describes as the Great Confinement, "unreasonable" members of the population were locked away and institutionalised. In the eighteenth century, madness came to be seen as the obverse of Reason, and, finally, in the nineteenth century as [mental illness](#).

Foucault also argues that madness lost its power to signify the limits of social order and to point to the truth and was silenced by Reason. He examines the rise of scientific and "humanitarian" treatments of the insane, notably at the hands of [Philippe Pinel](#) and [Samuel Tuke](#). He claims that these new treatments were in fact no less controlling than previous methods. Tuke's country retreat for the mad consisted of punishing the madmen until they learned to act "reasonably". Similarly, Pinel's treatment of the mad amounted to an extended [aversion therapy](#), including such treatments as freezing showers and use of a straitjacket. In Foucault's view, this treatment amounted to repeated brutality until the pattern of judgment and punishment was [internalized](#) by the patient.

The Birth of the Clinic

Foucault's second major book, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (*Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical* in French) was published in 1963 in France, and translated to English in 1973. Picking up from *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic* traces the development of the medical profession, and specifically the institution of the *clinique* (translated as "clinic", but here largely referring to teaching hospitals). Its motif is the concept of the medical *regard* (a concept which has garnered a lot of attention from English-language readers, due to Alan Sheridan's unusual translation, "[medical gaze](#)").

The Order of Things

Main article: [The Order of Things](#)

Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* was published in 1966. It was translated into English in 1970 under the title *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Foucault had preferred *L'Ordre des Choses* for the original French title, but changed the title as there was already another book of this title.

The book opened with an extended discussion of [Diego Velázquez](#)'s painting *[Las Meninas](#)* and its complex arrangement of sight-lines, hiddenness and appearance. Then it developed its central claim: that all periods of history possessed certain underlying conditions of truth that constituted

what was acceptable as, for example, scientific discourse. Foucault argued that these conditions of discourse changed over time, in major and relatively sudden shifts, from one period's episteme to another.

The Order of Things brought Foucault to prominence as an intellectual figure in France. A review by Jean-Paul Sartre attacked Foucault as 'the last rampart of the bourgeoisie'.

The Archaeology of Knowledge
   Main article: The Archaeology of Knowledge

Published in 1969, this volume was Foucault's main excursion into methodology. He wrote it in order to deal with the reception of *Les Mots et les choses*. It makes references to Anglo-American analytical philosophy, particularly speech act theory.

Foucault directs his analysis toward the "statement", the basic unit of discourse that he believes has been ignored up to this point. "Statement" is the English translation from French *énoncé* (that which is enunciated or expressed), which has a peculiar meaning for Foucault. "Énoncé" for Foucault means that which makes propositions, utterances, or speech acts meaningful. In this understanding, statements themselves are not propositions, utterances, or speech acts. Rather, statements create a network of rules establishing what is meaningful, and it is these rules that are the preconditions for propositions, utterances, or speech acts to have meaning. Statements are also 'events'. Depending on whether or not they comply with the rules of meaning, a grammatically correct sentence may still lack meaning and inversely, an incorrect sentence may still be meaningful. Statements depend on the conditions in which they emerge and exist within a field of discourse. It is huge entities of statements, called discursive formations, toward which Foucault aims his analysis. It is important to note that Foucault reiterates that the analysis he is outlining is only one possible tactic, and that he is not seeking to displace other ways of analysing discourse or render them as invalid.

Foucault's posture toward the statements is radical. Not only does he bracket out issues of truth; he also brackets out issues of meaning. Rather than looking for a deeper meaning underneath discourse or looking for the source of meaning in some transcendental subject, Foucault analyzes the conditions of existence for meaning. In order to show the principles of meaning production in various discursive formations he details how truth claims emerge during various epochs on the basis of what was actually said and written during these periods of time. He particularly describes the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment, and the 20th Century. He strives to avoid all interpretation and to depart from the goals of hermeneutics. This posture allows Foucault to move away from an anthropological standpoint and focus on the role of discursive practices.

Dispensing with finding a deeper meaning behind discourse would appear to lead Foucault toward structuralism. However, whereas structuralists search for homogeneity in a discursive entity, Foucault focuses on differences. Instead of asking what constitutes the specificity of European thought he asks what differences develop within it over time. Therefore, he refuses to examine statements outside of their role in the discursive formation, and he never examines *possible* statements that could have emerged from such a formation. His identity as a historian emerges here, as he is only interested in analysing actual statements in history. The whole of the system and its discursive rules determine the identity of the statement. But, a discursive formation continually generates new statements, and some of these usher in changes in the discursive formation that may or may not be realized. Therefore, to describe a discursive formation, Foucault also focuses on expelled and forgotten discourses that never happen to change the discursive formation. Their difference to the dominant discourse also describe it. In this way one can describe specific systems that determine which types of statements emerge.

Discipline and Punish

Main article: *Discipline and Punish*

Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison was translated to English in 1977, from the French *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, published in 1975.
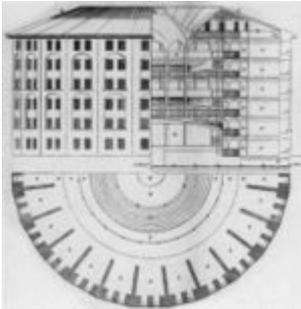
Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, discussed in *Discipline and Punish*

The book opens with a graphic description of the brutal public execution in 1757 of Robert-François Damiens, who attempted to kill Louis XV. Against this it juxtaposes a colourless prison timetable from just over 80 years later. Foucault then inquires how such a change in French society's punishment of convicts could have developed in such a short time. These are snapshots of two contrasting types of Foucault's "Technologies of Punishment". The first type, "Monarchical Punishment", involves the repression of the populace through brutal public displays of executions and torture. The second, "Disciplinary Punishment," is what Foucault says is practiced in the modern era. Disciplinary punishment gives "professionals" (psychologists, programme facilitators, parole officers, etc.) power over the prisoner, most notably in that the prisoner's length of stay depends on the professionals' opinion.

Foucault also compares modern society with Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon" design for prisons (which was unrealized in its original form, but nonetheless influential): in the Panopticon, a single guard can watch over many prisoners while the guard remains unseen. The dark dungeon of pre-modernity has been replaced with the bright modern prison, but Foucault cautions that "visibility is a trap". It is through this visibility, Foucault writes, that modern society exercises its controlling systems of power and knowledge (terms which Foucault believed to be so fundamentally connected that he often combined them in a single hyphenated concept, "power-knowledge"). Increasing visibility leads to power located on an increasingly individualized level, shown by the possibility for institutions to track individuals throughout their lives. Foucault suggests that a "carceral continuum" runs through modern society, from the maximum security prison, through secure accommodation, probation, social workers, police, and teachers, to our everyday working and domestic lives. All are connected by the (witting or unwitting) supervision (surveillance, application of norms of acceptable behaviour) of some humans by others.

The History of Sexuality

Main article: *The History of Sexuality*

Three volumes of *The History of Sexuality* were published before Foucault's death in 1984. The first and most referenced volume, *The Will to Knowledge* (previously known as *An Introduction* in English — *Histoire de la sexualité, 1: la volonté de savoir* in French) was published in France in 1976, and translated in 1977, focusing primarily on the last two centuries, and the functioning of sexuality as an analytics of power related to the emergence of a science of sexuality (scientia sexualis) and the emergence of biopower in the West. In this volume he attacks the "repressive hypothesis," the widespread belief that we have, particularly since the nineteenth century,

"repressed" our natural sexual drives. He shows that what we think of as "repression" of sexuality actually constituted sexuality as a core feature of our identities, and produced a proliferation of discourse on the subject.

The second two volumes, *The Use of Pleasure* (*Histoire de la sexualite, II: l'usage des plaisirs*) and *The Care of the Self* (*Histoire de la sexualité, III: le souci de soi*) dealt with the role of sex in Greek and Roman antiquity. Both were published in 1984, the year of Foucault's death, with the second volume being translated in 1985, and the third in 1986. Some believe that a fourth volume, dealing with the Christian era, was almost complete at the time of Foucault's death. Foucault scholar and friend, Arnold Davidson, has denied that an intended fourth and fifth volume in the series had ever been written.

Lectures

From 1970 until his death in 1984, from January to March of each year except 1977, Foucault gave a course of public lectures and seminars weekly at the Collège de France as the condition of his tenure as professor there. All these lectures were tape-recorded, and Foucault's transcripts also survive. In 1997 these lectures began to be published in French with six volumes having appeared so far. So far, four sets of lectures have appeared in English: *Psychiatric Power 1973-1974*, *Abnormal 1974-1975*, *Society Must Be Defended 1975 - 1976*, and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject 1981-1982*. Notes of Foucault's lectures from UC Berkeley has also appeared as *Fearless Speech*.

- *Society Must Be Defended* (1975-76)

In this course, Foucault analyzed the historical and political discourse of "race struggle". He also created the concept of "state racism".

Terminology

Terms coined or largely redefined by Foucault, as translated into English:

- biopower/biopolitics
- Disciplinary institutions
- episteme (*épistémé*)
- genealogy
- governmentality
- heterotopia
- parrhesia
- power
- state racism

Foucault on age of consent

Michel Foucault has also had some participation in political life.

In 1977, while a Comission of the French Parliament discussed a reform in the French Penal Code, he signed a petition, along with Jacques Derrida and Louis Althusser, among others, asking for the abrogation of some articles of the law in order to decriminalize all consented relations between adults and minors below the age of fifteen (the age of consent in France).

These ideas are expressed in his text *Sexual Morality and the Law*, chapter 16 of his book *Politics, Philosophy, Culture – Interviews and other writings 1977-1984*.

He believed that the penal system was replacing the punishment of criminal acts by the creation of the figure of the individual dangerous to society (regardless of any actual crime), and predicted that a **society of dangers** would come, where sexuality would be a kind of roaming danger, a "phantom". He stressed that this would be possible thanks to the establishment of a "new medical power", interested in profits coming from the treatment of this "dangerous individual". [1].

Criticisms of Foucault

Many thinkers have criticized Foucault, including Charles Taylor, Noam Chomsky, Camille Paglia, Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, Nancy Fraser, Slavoj Žižek and historian Hayden White, among others. While each of these thinkers takes issue with different aspects of Foucault's work, all of these approaches share the same basic orientation: they argue that Foucault rejects the values and philosophy associated with the Enlightenment while simultaneously secretly relying on them. This criticism is developed, for example, in Derrida (1978). It is claimed that this failure either makes him dangerously nihilistic, or that he cannot be taken seriously in his disavowal of normative values because in fact his work ultimately presupposes them.

It is important to note, however, that there has been considerable debate over these criticisms and that they are not universally accepted as valid by all critics. Foucault himself on a number of occasions explained that he believed strongly in human freedom and that his philosophy was a fundamentally optimistic one, as he believed that something positive could always be done no matter how bleak the situation. One might also add that his work is actually aimed at refuting the position that Reason (or "rationality") is the sole means of guaranteeing truth and the validity of ethical systems. Thus, to criticise Reason is not to reject all notions of truth and ethics as some of these critics claim.

Foucault has also been criticised for his use of historical information, with claims that he frequently misrepresented things, got his facts wrong, or simply made them up entirely. For example, some historians argue that what Foucault called the "Great Confinement" in *Madness and Civilization* did not in fact occur during the 17th century, but rather in the 19th century,[2] which casts doubt on Foucault's association of the confinement of madmen with the Age of Enlightenment. However, Foucault's analysis and methods have influenced number of other historians such as Roger Chartier and his studies about the "invention" of the Author.

Madness and Civilization was also famously criticised by Jacques Derrida who took issue with Foucault's reading of René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Derrida's criticism led to a break in their friendship and marked the beginning of a fifteen-year–long feud between the two. They eventually reconciled in the early 1980s.

There are also notable exchanges with Lawrence Stone and George Steiner on the subject of Foucault's historical accuracy, as well as a discussion with historian Jacques Leonard concerning *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault's "histories" have nonetheless drawn considerable attention from "mainstream" historians as Foucault's works frequently dealt with unique or overlooked historical problems.

Foucault's changing viewpoint

The study of Foucault's thought is complicated because his ideas developed and changed over time. Just how they changed and at what levels is a matter of some dispute amongst scholars of his work.

Some scholars argue that underneath the changes of subject matter there are certain themes that run through all of his work. But as David Gauntlett (2002) suggests:

Of course, there's nothing wrong with Foucault changing his approach; in a 1982 interview, he remarked that 'When people say, "Well, you thought this a few years ago and now you say something else," my answer is… [laughs] "Well, do you think I have worked [hard] all those years to say the same thing and not to be changed?"' (2000: 131). This attitude to his own work fits well with his theoretical approach — that knowledge should transform the self. When asked in another 1982 interview if he was a philosopher, historian, structuralist, or Marxist, Foucault replied 'I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning' (Martin, 1988: 9).

— David Gauntlett, *Media, Gender and Identity, London: Routledge, 2002)*

In a similar vein, Foucault preferred not to claim that he was presenting a coherent and timeless block of knowledge; rather, as he says:

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area… I would like the little volume that I want to write on disciplinary systems to be useful to an educator, a warden, a magistrate, a conscientious objector. I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.

— Michel Foucault (1974), '*Prisons et asiles dans le mécanisme du pouvoir' in Dits et Ecrits, t. II. Paris: Gallimard, 1994, pp. 523-4).*

Intellectual contexts

Influences on Foucault's work

Thinkers whose work had a strong impact on Foucault's thought include:

- Louis Althusser — French structuralist Marxist philosopher and Foucault's sometime teacher and mentor.
- Roland Barthes — French (post) structuralist literary critic who was at one time very close to Foucault.
- Georges Bataille — French Nietzschean political and aesthetic philosopher.
- Maurice Blanchot — Literary critic and novelist whose views on non polemical critique had a strong impact on Foucault
- Georges Canguilhem — French historian of science.
- Gilles Deleuze — French philosopher. A great friend and ally of Foucault's in the early 1970s.
- Georges Dumézil — French structuralist mythologist, known for his reconstruction of Indo-Aryan mythology.
- Martin Heidegger — German philosopher whose influence was enormous in post-war France. Foucault rarely referred to him, but called him 'the essential philosopher'.
- Jean Hyppolite — French Hegel scholar and Foucault's sometime khâgne teacher.
- Karl Marx — Marx's influence in French intellectual life was dominant from 1945 through to the late 1970s. Foucault often opposed unthinking forms of Marxist ideology, but was not adverse to referring to Marx's own work on occasion.
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty — French philosopher and sometime teacher of Foucault. Phenomenologist instrumental in popularising Saussure's structuralism for a philosophical audience.

- [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) — German philosopher whose work greatly influenced Foucault's conception of society and power. Towards the end of his life, Foucault stated quite categorically: "I am a Nietzschean".

Influence of Foucault's work

Foucault's work is frequently referred to in disciplines as diverse as [art](#), [philosophy](#), [history](#), [anthropology](#), [archaeology](#), [communication studies](#), [rhetoric](#), [cultural studies](#), [linguistics](#), [sociology](#), [education](#), [psychology](#), [literary theory](#), [feminism](#), [queer theory](#), [management studies](#), [the philosophy of science](#), [urban design](#), [museum studies](#), and many others. Quantitative evidence of the impact of his work can be found in the sheer volume of citations in standard academic journal indexes such as the Social Sciences Citation Index [1] (more than 9000 citations). A keyword search of the [Library of Congress](#) catalogue [2] reveals over 750 volumes in a variety of languages relating to his writings, and a search on [Google Scholar](#) [3] reveals thousands of citations.

Repository of texts written by Michel Foucault

English [select bibliography ~ extensive bibliography (pdf)]

Books (excerpts)

- Archaeology of Knowledge - Introduction
- Discipline and Punish - Chapter 1, The Body of the Condemned
- Discipline and Punish - Chapter 3, Panopticism
- Pierre Rivière - Foreword to the book
- This is Not a Pipe - Non-affirmative painting

Articles

- "Foucault" - Retrospective view about his work
- What Is Enlightenment ?
- Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias
- The Author Function - Excerpt from "What is an Author ?"

Interviews

- Polemics, Politics and Problematizations
- Pierre Rivière - Interview about the book
- Hypomnemata - Excerpts
- The Eye of Power - Excerpt

Transcriptions of conferences

- Discourse and Truth - The unabridged seminar on parrhesia
- Omnes et Singulatim - Towards a criticism of *Political Reason*
- The Subject and Power - Excerpt
- Truth and Juridical Forms - Excerpt