PITKIN'S WITTGENSTEIN

The Influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein on Political Theory

by Johannis Bin Abdul Aziz

ABSTRACT

Many contemporary political theorists who work with the ideas and methods of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy owe a debt to Hanna Pitkin’s seminal work, *Wittgenstein and Justice*. In it, Pitkin provided a very early statement about the usefulness of Wittgenstein’s work in delineating a new approach to methodological and substantive issues in the social and political sciences. This paper will first attempt to narrate Wittgenstein’s conceptual influences on Pitkin’s political theory as a point of historical interest in Anglo-American interpretive political thought. However, while Pitkin’s criticisms against a conservative reading of Wittgenstein are valid, it is equally unlikely that Wittgenstein should be read as a liberal. This paper’s secondary aim is to challenge Pitkin’s liberal account of the substantive political implications of Wittgenstein’s work by tracing the source of her liberal commitments to secondary authors.

KEY WORDS

Hanna Pitkin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hannah Arendt, ordinary language, political discourse, liberalism

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The Influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein on Political Theory

The number of political theorists today that work directly with the concepts or investigative method of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is not insignificant but nonetheless modest. Still, many of them owe a debt to Hanna Pitkin’s seminal work, *Wittgenstein and Justice*. In it, Pitkin provided an early statement about the usefulness of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy in delineating a new approach to methodological and substantive issues in the social and political sciences. Methodologically, Pitkin took Wittgenstein’s postanalytic epistemology as requiring a radically holistic approach to social theory, leading her to argue for the (not uncritical) acceptance of certain contradictions such as the ultimately irreconcilable differences between causal and purposive explanation in social science. To Pitkin, Wittgenstein’s epistemology teaches us that the human subject of social science is a situated rational being acting in particular and often opposing contexts. Thus, generalising from different sets of contexts would quite naturally lead to contradictory generalisations. But here, we are more interested in the substantive social and political implications that she finds in Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language and in her justification that, “method often dictates content.”[[1]](#footnote-1) From Wittgenstein’s epistemology she reads a postfoundationalist social ontology based on the situated rationality of our form of life and on this basis she goes on to make substantive claims about politics and the practice of political theory.

Using Wittgenstein’s understanding of the deep structure of human social relations, Pitkin is centrally concerned with uncovering moral issues that lie hidden under sedimented social and linguistic practices – the idiomatic dirt that gets swept under the carpet. In this situation, “those in power and prestige in a society often have an interest in keeping things as they are…and they are in a position to make it to other people’s interest to do so as well. Large groups of people, even whole societies, can thus come to avert their eyes from familiar but uncomfortable realities: dislocations, inconsistencies, injustice. Even victims, up to their necks in the dirt may not see it for what it is.” [[2]](#footnote-2) Consequently, for Pitkin, the political relevance and importance of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy comes from its resemblance to psychoanalysis, “in that both are methods of indirection, designed to liberate their practitioners from constraints that are in some sense self-imposed,”[[3]](#footnote-3) This will give us the opportunity to view our conventional ways of looking at political problems as only one option among many, which is important because we tend to be enthralled by conventional ‘pictures’ of political organization. The correct application of this indirection will, “culminate not in reconciliation to some inescapable feature of our human condition that we had yearned to flee, but rather in the political alteration of offensive social conditions that we had yearned to ignore.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Pitkin’s approach then, echoes Stanley Cavell’s ‘conversation of justice’ which affirms the heterogeneity of human society and, “reveals spaces for political dissent from any society that does not allow for the intelligibility of all its members.” [[5]](#footnote-5) This conversation is of course reflected in language and with Wittgenstein’s philosophy suitably directed at language Pitkin feels she can recover, “the lost realities of the past and the suppressed “dirt” of the present,”[[6]](#footnote-6) that lay buried in our linguistic practices. For Pitkin, Wittgenstein’s method shows her how, “perfectly ordinary people,” can, “reinterpret their own tacit knowledge critically,” and how political theorists like her can join in the, “emancipatory effort”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Clearly then, Pitkin feels that her liberal Arendtian views finds much methodological and ontological support in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy and in taking substantive political implications from a pre-existing philosophy, Pitkin is in good company; she follows a long line of political theorists from J.S. Mill (utilitarian consequentialism) to John Rawls (Kantian deontology). However, Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, even if it exemplified new investigative methods, had anti-theoretical tendencies substantively speaking. And while Pitkin admits that her studies of Wittgenstein’s political implications are nowhere near complete, she still *consistently* finds left civic republican implications from Wittgenstein’s work. *Wittgenstein and Justice*, while expressly meant only to suggest further studies, presents us with a coherent politically normative vision despite it investigating a wide range of subjects. Thus, Pitkin’s work is an unusual combination of a modernist theory-building project based on a postmodernist philosophy (in so far as the later philosophy of Wittgenstein is anti-positivist and anti-formalist). Her project is not only to give a survey of the various ways Wittgenstein’s work has value for the methods of social and political sciences, but also 1) to refute politically conservative readings of Wittgenstein and 2) to counteract the influence of positivism in the social and political sciences that results in the, “vague but persistent feeling about social science and social scientists: that they are somehow destructive or cynical, that they are somehow cowardly or reluctant to make commitments and judgments, that they are somehow intrinsically conservative and supportive of the status quo.” [[8]](#footnote-8)

In the textual analysis to follow, we will see that although most of the direct revelations above about her liberal leanings were only published in the preface to the paperback edition, in the main text itself, Pitkin clearly couples Wittgenstein’s philosophy with left civic republican assumptions and principles. By giving us a political reading of Wittgenstein that is consonant with such liberal Arendtian values, Pitkin sought to refute conservative readings of Wittgenstein. And, as I have shown elsewhere, by delineating a social scientific methodology based on Wittgenstein’s postanalytic epistemology that can give due regard to the role of moral standards in social activity, Pitkin sought to counter the conservative influence of positivism in the social sciences. This work was inspired, in large part, by the totalitarianism Pitkin witnessed spreading across the world after World War II. Evidently, her project is an anti-conservative one.

The textual analysis of *Wittgenstein and Justice* to follow will allow us to identify in what manner Wittgenstein’s ideas have affected Pitkin’s political thought and also to identify her secondary influences and the sources of her moral commitments. This analysis is submitted as a matter of interest in the history of Anglo-American political thought. Nonetheless, while Pitkin argues against a conservative reading of Wittgenstein, it is unclear whether a liberal Arendtian reading of Wittgenstein is any more correct given his anti-theoretical tendencies and the fact Pitkin leans heavily on secondary authors for her political commitments. I will consequently argue that while Wittgenstein’s later philosophy does indeed have interesting implications for thinking about politics, accepting and embracing a Wittgensteinian investigative method and social ontology need not exclusively entail liberal views such as Pitkin’s. I will do this by showing how the same method and ontology may also form coherent support for a less liberal and more multiculturalist communitarian view. I offer this alternative reading not as *the* correct political reading of later Wittgenstein, but as evidence that there is probably no *one* correct set of political values that is strictly implied by Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. So while Pitkin is free to build a theory from inspiration gathered from many sources, I argue that one cannot give undue credit to any single source and therefore one cannot hold to Pitkin’s suggestion that “method often dictates content”[[9]](#footnote-9) too strongly.

**Understanding Justice**

It is of course difficult to impose a linear order on the analysis of a work of which the author herself has proclaimed each substantive topic to be, “quite self-contained,” and, “stemming in different directions.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Nevertheless we begin our textual analysis with Pitkin’s discussion on the concept of justice because it provides a foundational statement on her ideas on the standards inherent in the meaning of some concepts and the commitment implied in using those concepts. Pitkin first enunciates the salience of standards in her discussion of Wittgenstein’s treatment of the concept of ‘understanding’ and what it means to say that one understands. There, the puzzle surrounding the meaning of that concept is clarified by Wittgenstein’s distinction between what Pitkin calls the ‘labelling’ and the ‘signalling’ functions of a concept. But more importantly, she applies this same distinction later in the work to political concepts such as ‘justice’ and ‘the political’ and thereby uncovers the normative content implied by their ordinary uses.

Pitkin begins by introducing the familiar dialogue in Plato’s Republic between Socrates and Thrasymachus. In it, Thrasymachus contradicts Socrates’ traditional definition of the concept of justice by suggesting that justice is simply that which serves the interests of the powerful in society. Socrates’ simplified definition on the other hand, is that justice is every person doing what is appropriate to her as an individual member of a collective. Pitkin is correct to point out that this dialogue is an iconic one in the history of political theory and has many times been taken as an exemplar of the fundamental problem of incommensurable arguments in moral and political discourse. “[T]hey disagree *so* fundamentally that they do not really *disagree* at all. Rather, they seem to be addressing and answering different questions, and their arguments never really meet.”[[11]](#footnote-11) While Socrates seems to be trying to tell us what the word ‘justice’ means, Thrasymachus seems to be “making a kind of sociological observation about things which people call “just” or “unjust”.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

One might therefore argue that the dispute here really arises out of the fact that Socrates is speaking from within traditional premises and assumptions about justice and Thrasymachus is speaking from the outside of those accepted premises. That is to say, even though both were socialised in the same society and learnt to use the concept in the same language games, Socrates accepts at face value the conceptual framework in which the concept traditionally resides and Thrasymachus rejects it. Pitkin argues that Socrates speaks from within the signalling function of the concept of justice, carrying the full weight of the commitment inherent in using that word. Thrasymachus on the other hand, suspends this commitment, confining himself to just the labelling function of the word in order to speak about ‘what other people call justice.’ “Part of his point is that other people are not aware of the cultural hypocrisy as he is, and that they therefore would not say what he says. Thrasymachus, then, refuses to step inside the concept of justice and take on the burden, the weight, of what is normally guaranteed or claimed in uttering it. He wants to question precisely those conventions.”[[13]](#footnote-13) The dispute then does not arise from differing uses of the concept’s labelling function (its function in pointing to a referent), the dispute springs from Thrasymachus having different *standards* for what might be called ‘just’ and thus abstaining from signalling the conventional standards the word usually does.

The question now is whether it is legitimate for Thrasymachus to insist on his standards instead of Socrates’. What makes disputes over the concept of justice different from disputes over mere taste such as when we disagree over whether a dish is delicious and what makes it different from disputes over different perceptions such as when we disagree over what the concept of ‘green’ represents? In the former, standards of justification are (almost) entirely created by us and so there is too large a gap for my justifications to properly engage with someone else’s. For the latter, standards of justification are (almost) entirely given to me, therefore there is no logical space at all for that engagement. However, when it comes to justice, the concept is concerned about the facts of the world from which we interpret meaning (using past examples as a guide) and so the standards of the concept are at the same time created by us as they are given to us. This creates, “the possibility of judgment and justification,”[[14]](#footnote-14) which is missing from the grammars of the concepts of ‘delicious’ and ‘green’. It is unreasonable for something to be definitively labelled as just or unjust as a given, but neither is something just or unjust simply because of our say so. We reason about justice; we give reasons to why something is just or unjust, but not simply any sort of reasons. If someone were to make a judgment about the justness of an act by reference to factors unrelated to justice or fairness, we would not say that they have different standards of justice. We would say that they do not understand what justice is. We would say that they are not trained in the language games of making judgments about justice. Not every reason given will be accepted as a consideration for justice; not every factor has a part to play in the language games involving justice.

The rub, though, is that this central feature of the grammar of the concept of justice also allows for inconsistent application. It allows inconsistency because its half-given and half-created nature creates a tension between its ideal substance and its practical form, a tension that can only arise with concepts where meaning is linked to application by way of standards. And this, argues Pitkin, goes to the heart of the conceptual puzzle at the heart of Socrates’ and Thrasymachus’ dispute. For example, we may create an institution like a court of law to practice the ideal of justice, but the complex internal politics of the institution might cause a deviation from that ideal. If ideals did not require application then perhaps there would be no inconsistency in the grammar of the concept of justice, but ideals without application are empty ideals. The embodiment of ideals in practice requires our commitment exactly because actions often fall short of intentions and collective action often leads to outcomes no individual intended. “We need, always, to hold our concepts partly aloof from the practices and institutions in which they are (supposedly) realized, in order to continue to be able to criticize, to renovate and to revise.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Pitkin here, is taking the opportunity to remind us that such abstracted principles, given to us as they are, need not be treated conservatively, for even, “though we learn the meaning of terms like “justice” and acquire some standards of what is just in connection with existing institutions and practices, we can and do use them to criticize and change those institutions and practices.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Here, as will be repeated in other places in *Wittgenstein and Justice*, Pitkin makes the point to argue that although language games and linguistic practices are quite basic to our social reality, a fundamental conservatism should not be read into a Wittgenstein-inspired ontology. Language games are not utterly static as practices and reform and dissent are also part of the language games we play. A Wittgensteinian political analysis need not be conservative. She says further of justice, “We are always potentially able to pry the idea loose from some particular example, and reassess its applicability. That, I think, is a major function of political discourse in our lives.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

And it is this left civic republican line of argument that for Pitkin helps legitimise Thrasymachus’ position vis-à-vis Socrates’ and shows exactly what the nexus of the disagreement is. For both Socrates and Thrasymachus agree fundamentally on the substantive meaning of the concept of justice and both are able to see the deviation in its application from the ideal meaning of justice. It is just that they simply choose a different path from that fork in the road. Thrasymachus implicitly accepts the labelling function of the concept. His point is that the signalling function has been corrupted and so he will not himself take on the burden of that commitment, for that commitment, he feels, no longer means anything in corrupted times. “Thrasymachus’ kind of detachment and standing outside of the conventional hypocrisy can help to restore health and coherence inside. But it can do so only in combination with the Socratic definition and it’s kind of standing outside of corrupted standards.”[[18]](#footnote-18) Pitkin’s aim was to use a deep Wittgensteinian analysis to uncover the space for dissent against the corruption of politics and using those tools she discovered that the grammar of the concept of justice means that wherever the concept exists, so too the possibilities of taking a stand against injustice. If we do not recognize this option, injustice can otherwise go on undetected.

**Understanding the Political**

We saw above how Pitkin attempted to justify her left civic republican views about political justice by introducing the idea of standards as an inherent component to the content of certain concepts, in addition to facts. Not only does the use of concepts like justice tells us what a speaker means by pointing to the referent, but in relevant circumstances it also shows what standards the speaker is signalling and thereby committing herself to. In this section, we will see how Pitkin attempts to use the same strategy to define the concept of the political in liberal Arendtian terms; we will see how she invokes the political characteristics of the concept’s etymological origins in order to argue that the ideal standards for the political are left civic republican in nature. In her discussion of the meaning of the concept, Pitkin begins by first noting what to her, is its central ambiguity. On one hand, there is the tradition relating the political with participatory, democratic, egalitarian, public-spirited values and a suspicion of a given order. On the other hand, there is the opposing tradition that uses the concept of the political to signal hierarchical, elitist, traditional and manipulative values. To Pitkin, this dichotomy of meaning is much like the dispute about the concept of justice discussed above. She argues that the ambiguity we see in the concept of the political today arises from the deviation from the ideal standards set in ancient Greece and so we live today with two sets of standards that are at odds with each other. But Pitkin’s central message is that the deviant standard we see today is a more or less corrupted standard for politics even though its proponents in political science defend it as a neutral, empirically oriented image of real politics.

In her defence of the ideal standards of the political, Pitkin invokes the work of political theorists Sheldon Wolin and Hannah Arendt. To Wolin, terms like ‘common’, ‘general’, and ‘public’ are central to the meaning of the political because, “[f]rom its very beginnings in Greece, the Western political tradition has looked upon the political order as a common order created to deal with those concerns in which all of the members of society have some interest.”[[19]](#footnote-19) Wolin points to the etymological origins of the word ‘political’ in the Greek word ‘*polis*’ – denoting the independent city-states that were the centre of Greek civilisation. “[T]he political originally was simply what pertained to the *polis*.”[[20]](#footnote-20) And what centrally pertained to a polis was self-governance on concerns of public or common interest. This orientation towards public participation directed at the public good was echoed by Arendt, who followed the Greeks in making the political life distinct from the private life – the former being the realm of freedom and the latter being the realm of necessity stemming from physical needs. Here, the political is not about governance and power, but about the freedom in collective action that frees us from more parochial and individual concerns. From all this, Pitkin concludes that, “the idea of the political involved from its inception a fundamental notion of participation and equality, or participation on the basis of the essential equality of political membership, of citizenship.”[[21]](#footnote-21) In arguing that the political must involve essentially equal men respecting each other’s ends Pitkin takes a Kantian lesson from the etymological origins of the concept of the political.

Pitkin contrasts the above view of the political with the work of empirical realists such as Robert Dahl and David Easton for whom the study of politics is a study in dominance and power. Politics, for this group, is essentially nothing more than the means by which conflicting private interests come to agreement and avoid descending into anarchy. Participation in politics then is not directed at the public good, but one’s own private interests. Politics is therefore defined by Dahl as, “any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent, power, rule or authority.”[[22]](#footnote-22) The decisions from this process are binding for all, but are often the product of the few and, “[p]roponents of such power-oriented or interest-oriented views of politics will point out that nothing visible is modern political life remotely resembles the seemingly idealized picture ascribed to the Greeks by commentators like Wolin and Arendt.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

It would be no surprise then that commentators like Wolin and Arendt have long complained that the political in modern times is but a former shadow of itself, and indeed, has been displaced by the social. Pitkin explains, “Where the political deals with public, shared, common concerns, in which the whole is not merely a summation of separate parts, society is a realm of the unplanned, spontaneous, laissez-faire interaction of separate individuals who remain separate, each pursuing his own private goals and producing, unintentionally, results which affect others.”[[24]](#footnote-24) While the former deals in deliberate, proactive and purposive action negotiated with reasons, the latter trades in unthinking, reactive and automatic responses; where politics is the realm of action, society is the realm of behaviour. Of course, the empirical realists here can ask what is it exactly that has changed about the political – its meaning and substance or its practice and form? The answer surely is not the latter as the Greeks themselves did not historically live up their own ideals. But if the answer is the former, then the question arises why we should take the Greek conception to be the only true one.

Pitkin’s reply is that while the example of the Greeks is illustrative, it is used only as a didactic device to remind ourselves of the standards that we ourselves hold but have somehow left behind. Like Socrates, Wolin and Arendt are trying to tell us what a concept means and what standards come with that meaning, even though those standards are less and less lived by in modern times. Our political institutions may at times make decisions that reflect private interests or execute actions without proper deliberation, but this deviation from the substantive meaning of what it means to call an institution ‘political’ should not be held as the representative standard. Wolin and Arendt, argues Pitkin, were trying to be the gadfly, as it were, forcing us to think about the discrepancies between our ideals and the way we find ourselves living today.

Nevertheless, Pitkin argues that the dispute here is slightly different from the dispute over the concept of justice, for after all, she has previously warned that the grammar of each individual concept is quite unique and here language ‘plays new tricks’. “[I]f we construe the dispute this way, suggesting a choice between the two positions, we may still miss how central this very dispute is to the nature of the political itself. For the rival definitions are both very much bound to the grammar of the word, and both illuminate it.”[[25]](#footnote-25) But Pitkin argues that this central duality is not to be seen as an essential irresolvable *logical* ambiguity, but rather as the consequence of the essentially agonistic *practice* of politics. “Perhaps what characterizes political life is precisely the problem of continually creating unity, a public, in a context of diversity, rival claims, unequal power, and conflicting interests.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Political discourse is neither just manipulative propaganda nor simply the moral concern for others. It exists to address the diversity of interests in society in terms which relate the plural masses to their shared public interest. This plurality of perspectives is central to politics, forming part of the meaning of politics, because the shape and content of public interest is itself a topic of contention.

As members of the polity, we trade in the comfort of individuality and the intimacy of personal relations for the transcendence of public justice. In a polity, we learn to see beyond our own selfish needs and in an Aristotelian manner, fulfil our potential as *zoa politikon*. The household can teach you to be aware of the needs of others, but for Pitkin, this is qualitatively different from the being aware of the common good because at this scale, things can no longer be personal. One requires social imagination at a different level of abstraction to relate one’s interests with the interests of the public, which itself is not a static phenomenon, but a continual negotiation.

**Understanding Membership**

What the above discussion highlights for Pitkin is the problem of political membership. For as we’ve discussed, Pitkin argues that central to the meaning of the political is how the individual finds a balanced relationship with the collective, a balance which nonetheless is in dynamic equilibrium, always in flux and always allowing for creative change; always allowing for present circumstances to at least be questioned if not changed. While that argument was relatively more abstract, in this section we will see how that position is argued for from Pitkin’s Wittgensteinian social ontology. Pitkin takes this second route as well in order to argue that her ontological holism means that individual freedom is indeed compatible with political authority, and also that the political obligation of the citizen does not need to lead to conservative principles and commitments.

Pitkin begins by comparing political membership to linguistic membership, that is, membership to a particular group speaking a particular natural language. She begins by noting Wittgenstein’s concept of language games and the dual perspective of language that it describes: language is both made by and given to us. Yet, because language is largely imposed on us from the outside, we tend to emphasise the latter perspective at the expense of the former. We tend to forget that individually, we use language to conceptualise and understand our social world in new ways. This suggests that the boundary between the individual and society is a fluid and porous one. The two halves of the individual-society dichotomy in traditional methodological individualism are really different aspects of a single reality. “Society is not just “outside” the individual, confronting him, but inside him as well, part of who he is.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Language both binds and separates us. In this model of linguistic membership, Pitkin finds a reflection of political membership. She uses the comparison between political membership and linguistic membership to show how individual freedom is compatible with membership. Although political changes happen in large scales and we use abstract forces such as class and nationalism to explain them, just like linguistic change political changes are in fact still an aggregation of individual acts, inspired by individual beliefs, even if the action of any one person cannot move an entire nation.

Pitkin also suggests that the absence of this dual perspective might be where social contract theorists have gone wrong. She argues that social contract theory makes the wrong assumption that human beings have the kind of individual autonomy that is free from dependence on any type of social ties. This radical autonomy creates a tempting picture of human individuality, but it becomes consequently difficult to create any sort of organic obligation from this point of isolation. Social contract theorists are then forced to conjure up some sort of contractual agreement that arises from individual self-interest. And to avoid the air of artificiality, they argue that this contract precedes social ties and conventions and is written into the very law of nature. But, “[s]elf-interest just does not seem to get translated into obligation to the public interest,”[[28]](#footnote-28) and the issue of free-rider problems are a major stumbling block for methodological individualist theories. Following her social ontology described above, Pitkin argues that we are born as human animals, but we grow and learn to become human persons only by internalizing the norms and standards of society. Our commitment and orientation towards the common good are learnt and not chosen, and hence we do not make contracts, implicit or otherwise, but we *grow* into socially obligated beings. Even our self-interest is very much a social product, and so artificial links with other members of society do not need to be conjured up. They have always existed. The same goes with our linguistic membership. Language is given to us when we are born and we grow and learn to speak our mother tongues, but the obligation to speak in that way is not derived from contract. “[W]e obey them [, the rules of grammar,] because they have become part of our selves. They are not obstacles to freedom, but our very means of free self-expression.”[[29]](#footnote-29) As children, the rules of grammar and language games come to us from the outside, but once internalised, they become the very basis of our identities, from which point innovation can always be negotiated, but this freedom is never as radical as social contract theorists want us to believe.

Of the many social contract theorists, Pitkin seems to think that Rousseau comes closest to her own ontological views, but once again, Pitkin argues against deriving conservative principles from such Wittgensteinian-like anthropological social ontologies. Rousseau gains her attention because while Rousseau uses the language of contractual obligations, his ontological basis is far more ‘communitarian’ (to risk anachronism) than the individualism of others like Hobbes or Locke. For Rousseau, human beings are born free as natural human animals, but social life transforms us, changes our habits and desires and consequently our behaviour. Just like Pitkin, Rousseau argued that social behaviour is learnt and individuals who are true members of the polity identify their interests with the interest of greater society. Hence no real contract is really necessary in Rousseau’s theory if this identification pre-exists. And just like Pitkin, for Rousseau, politics is not built on a *tabula rasa*, where unattached individuals come together from a position of radical autonomy. Nevertheless, Pitkin rejects Rousseau’s conservatism which culminates in his dictum that in the final count, some citizens will have to be ‘forced to be free’. And she rejects that such conservatism is the natural consequence of a Wittgensteinian social ontology. To Pitkin, “[a] theorist like Rousseau accordingly leads us to confuse political life with cultural education; and that is why his political vision, so clearly aimed at perfect freedom, comes in the end to resemble perfect tyranny.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

Pitkin’s rejection of Rousseau stems from the limited way in which she believes linguistic membership and political membership are analogous. While the analogy is useful, it cannot be taken too far because the similarities between the two types of membership do not exhaust the critical characteristics of political membership. For one, Pitkin argues that politics is public and collective while language use is individual and cumulative. Secondly, linguistic membership has no central role for conflict, power and interest while political membership does. And thirdly, linguistic rules are not enforced, while political laws carry official sanctions. Pitkin here, clearly views natural languages as part of the social and not the political, which she continues to define in the Arendtian-Kantian manner as discussed above. Linguistic membership, to her, is clearly not a realm of free action but predominantly a realm of determined behaviour – power and coercion can only be subjected on the free. And so, if we take the analogy between linguistic and political membership too far, Pitkin worries that we will incorrectly view politics as a passive activity. For Pitkin, “[t]o interpret political life entirely on the model of language, culture patterns, morality, or education is to obscure this crucial difference, and thereby to endanger both politics itself and political freedom.”[[31]](#footnote-31) This is because, if we assume that political norms are implicit and fully internalized without question, there will be the tendency for any conflict to be swept under the carpet or for people to be ‘forced to be free’. To obscure this difference is to fall into the same trap Rousseau did and create a very specific rather than general theory of political membership and obligation.

**Understanding Discourse**

Another way in which Pitkin argues for her liberal Arendtian reading of the social ontology she finds in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is to look at what Wittgenstein called ‘language regions’ (PI §90). While Wittgenstein only used this term once and it is not explicitly clear what he meant, Pitkin surmises that language regions are those large areas of discourse that we customarily divide our species life by, much like how we divide library collections by topics denoted by the Dewey Decimal System. A language region is therefore a larger conceptual category than a language game and is presumably constituted by language games. Though, much like library books that defy easy classification, language regions are not given to clear and distinct boundaries. Just as there are among language games, there may be significant overlaps among language regions. In our case, Pitkin sees much overlap between political and moral discourses. In both cases, the subject of main interest is human action and the objective is not to remain detached. Both types of discourse are part of and utilised in their respectively named practices. In both cases, you expect a level of unpredictability and the possibility that things can go wrong – which would subsequently require remedial measures. Nevertheless, just like in the last section, Pitkin’s argument relies on the *differences* that she argues exists between political and moral discourses, that is, the differences between the political and the merely social.

Pitkin’s idea of moral discourse is heavily inspired by Hanna Arendt and Stanley Cavell, and draws especially heavily from the latter’s unpublished doctoral thesis, *The Claim to Rationality*. Arendt’s influence lends Pitkin’s writing an emphasis on the distinction between the private and public and Cavell’s work lends a distinct emphasis on ordinary language. So for Pitkin, moral discourse begins with the ordinary ways in which we talk about moral matters and so the content of morality itself, the principles we abstract from behaviour and about which we argue, is not central to her as they primarily depend on ordinary speech for their concepts. Ordinary moral speech logically precedes formal study of ethics and is concerned directly with purposive human action. Of course, new moralities are created in special times but Pitkin here, is interest primarily by conventional, every day moral discourse. And although one can discuss morality publicly, to Pitkin, “the center of gravity of moral discourse”[[32]](#footnote-32) is primarily found in personal conversations between the two parties involved in a morally relevant incident. Moral discourse is therefore personal, though not merely subjective or private; it is interpersonal but not really general or public. It happens when someone is moved to speak and usually that begins with that person or another being accused of some wrongdoing. This is where pleas, explanations and justifications start and the adjudication can begin. Thus, to Pitkin, moral discourse is essentially Kantian in nature and requires mutual identification as rational beings with individual ends and viewpoints that must be respected.

Nevertheless, moral discourse is not the only way to see ourselves past conflict – politics and violence are also ways of solving conflict, sometimes used because of the lack of finality in much of moral discourse. Despite this, Pitkin argues that the lack of finality or conclusiveness in moral discourse does not reveal morality’s irrationality, but shows us instead what sort of rationality is distinctive to such discourse. Moral discourse is aimed at the relevant parties coming to an agreement, but the failure to reach an agreement does not render moral discourse meaningless or pointless. “The point of moral argument is not agreement on a conclusion, but successful clarification of two people’s positions vis-à-vis each other. Its function is to make the positions of the various protagonists clear – to themselves and to the others.”[[33]](#footnote-33) Following Pitkin’s discussion on the inherent ambiguity in picking out human action as action, sometimes, it is not clear to us as moral agents what exactly we have done. The self is opaque in this regard and our taking a moral position requires some level of self-discovery and self-knowledge. “In sum, the pattern of moral discussion is different from that of a discussion on empirical fact, because what is at stake in it is not factual knowledge of the physical world but self-knowledge and the knowledge of actions…”[[34]](#footnote-34)

The conventional picture of moral discourse above is contrasted with Pitkin’s construal of political discourse. For Pitkin, politics is a public and collective activity, which makes political discourse public discourse. Comparatively, moral discourse is most often personal dialogue among a small group of people who were affected by the offending action. The content of political discourse is the common issues meant for public deliberation and therefore, compared to moral discourse, political discourse is much larger in scope and involves the entire mass of the polity. The intimacy of private speech must give way to a more neutral and impersonal tone. It is essential for the legitimacy of political discourse for everything to be discussed in the open. We can speak publicly about morality, “[b]ut public sermons are not what moral discourse is for, what it is primarily about; and personal relationships are not the point of political discourse. There is no such thing as private politics, intimate politics.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

Furthermore, Pitkin finds in the public nature of political discourse a uniquely radical contestability, where the standards or argument and evidence are also part of the discussion. In science for example, disputes about the fundamental nature of science and its methods are not themselves scientific disputes – these disputes are conceptual and inward-looking while scientific disputes are empirical and outward-looking. This contestability is also the basis for the main difference between moral and political discourses. As we saw above, moral discourse is primarily about revealing one’s moral stand based on the conventions of moral justification and it is therefore adjudicative, but political discourse is primarily about future collective action and is therefore more legislative than adjudicative. Obviously there are traditional values and ideas in play in politics, but they are not excluded from contestation themselves. Unlike for morality and science, contestation is the root of political discourse. Nevertheless, as we have seen so far, Pitkin is no nihilist and it would be uncharacteristic of her to accept any notion that politics was at heart about contestation without standards – where the only currency was expediency or efficiency and the natural tools for these were “rhetoric, propaganda, and manipulation.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Without the goal of the common good, all of these are, “but a perversion of political discourse.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

Still, even if for both moral and political discourses the point is to come to some agreement, the rationality of political discourse is not personal revelation as it is for moral discourse. Without hope of agreement, political discourse would lose its point too, but just as with moral discourse, failure to come to agreement does not mean the complete failure of politics. While political discourse is explicitly about questions of action and the details of what and how, Pitkin argues that the rationality of political discourse revolves around the identification of just who the collective is that is asking the question. Just as moral discourse reveals the individual, political discourse reveals the collective. Following Arendt’s ideas about the concept of the political, Pitkin claims that, “The counsels of conscience are initially unpolitical because they are always expressed in purely individual, subjective form. But someone in a position of isolated dissent, who can speak only for himself, is not yet in a position – logically, grammatically, not yet in a position – to speak politically.”[[38]](#footnote-38) And so, just by identifying the relevant individuals as a collective, as a ‘we’, a claim is made about their identity as a polity – about who they are to make a such a decision for action and who will they be if that action is taken. Obviously, that decision will not be made by a total consensus and total agreement is a rare thing in large collectives, but, Pitkin argues that the point of political discourse is not the “eradication of dissent,” but that, “at the end of political deliberation, the polis will be affirmed by its membership, despite continuing dissent.”[[39]](#footnote-39)

**Political Theory**

In the above sections, we have discussed Pitkin’s views on the concept and practice of politics. In this section, we will discuss her views on what implications the later philosophy of Wittgenstein has on the shape of political theory as a discipline. But while Wittgenstein’s most basic lesson for the social scholar is for her to have better sensitivity to language as a medium of personal and social expression, this is a lesson he shares with other philosophers of language. What is distinctive about Wittgenstein’s influence is the social ontology scholars have read into his later philosophy and the methodological holism and postanalytic epistemology this ontology seems to entail. For Pitkin, this methodological holism has never been more important for the discipline of political theory than in our modern times.

To Pitkin, the modern condition is characterized by “a story of increasing knowledge and objectivity, increasing detached, scientific, rational awareness both of the world and each other; but all of this accompanied by, even purchased at the price of, a steadily decreasing sense of security, of stable foundations.”[[40]](#footnote-40) So instead of enhancing our capacity to act, positivist objectivity has caused us to become increasingly hapless, inactive and alienated from ourselves and each other. Pitkin identifies two consequences: The first is the increasing likelihood of seeing and consequently treating other human beings as mere objects, as mere furniture that populate our world, to be used and abused without any guilt. The second is a decreasing ability to experience ourselves as fully moral beings – as beings able to commit to judgment and standards and to act where that commitment calls for action. With a distinctively Kantian concern, Pitkin sees the peril of looking at governance as a merely technical realm where problems are to be solved scientifically and people are objects to be manipulated at will. Linguistic exchange is reduced to not much more than manipulation and propaganda, which in turn breeds cynicism and paranoia. True collective action cannot take place under such conditions.

Pitkin argues that a Wittgensteinian political theory can provide a way out of this desperate situation. What a Wittgensteinian approach gives us is a renewed confidence in speech. With the modern condition instilling powerlessness and subsequent distrust in us, a Wittgensteinian approach can restore responsibility and commitment to our speech and actions. It takes us from the abstract and the general that seem to no longer have any firm basis in the truth of the world, to the particular and concrete, which happens against the background of actual practices and standards. Vagueness and ambiguity still exist, but they do not entail that everything is therefore up for grabs. “Wittgenstein allows us to see how, when it comes to choosing (an action, a position, a standard, but also a book, a friend, an example) we already are somebody; we never have to start from scratch, because we never can start from scratch. Values, and order, and meaning are indeed created by men, by men’s choices. But that does not mean that they are created in their entirety by each man at each point in time; it does not mean that they are created in just any way at all, arbitrarily.” [[41]](#footnote-41)

For Pitkin, Wittgenstein replaces the positivistic objectivity of science which deals in formal perfections not with a relativistic vertigo, but with the stability of the ‘rough ground’ of our concepts, where things are admittedly not perfect and boundaries are blur. As such, Pitkin expects that a Wittgensteinian political theory would be very different in kind than what the discipline has hitherto seen. “It would presumably share his suspicion of broad, systematic generalization, his therapeutic stress on the particular case, on the investigating and speaking self, and on the acceptance of plurality and contradiction.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Pitkin recognizes, however, that this description does not sound much like a theory at all, and she accepts that Wittgenstein’s anti-theoretical leanings might mean that there could be no such thing as a Wittgensteinian political theory – at least not the comprehensive kind we have hitherto understood theories to be. A Wittgenstein-inspired political theory would stress the act of philosophizing rather than conclusions that might form a coherent system of thought.

This way of philosophizing ostensibly dovetails nicely with Pitkin’s pluralist vision which calls for a variety of political perspectives that would guard against, “the older vision of a single, dominating politico-theoretical system.”[[43]](#footnote-43) The result of which, in her opinion, has always been to distort what is truly political in human society. “[T]here seems to be something in the enterprise of theorizing itself that makes the resulting system seem totalitarian and in that sense nonpolitical.”[[44]](#footnote-44) In order to theorize, the political theorist stands outside the polity, and under the guise of a detached, neutral point of view, impose a political order from the outside. Pitkin feels that perhaps this is the natural outcome when we try to look at politics in the largest and longest scales in space and time. It is difficult not to reduce people to mere objects from the abstracted neutral viewpoint of the theorist. She suggests then, that a Wittgensteinian political theory would not be an expert theory, created by a political sage to be distributed to the masses, but one to be communicated from one citizen to another as equal members of the polity.

Thus, for Pitkin, while a Wittgensteinian political theory would be post-analytic and to some extent anti-theoretical it would not be completely anti-foundationalist. A Wittgensteinian political theory, as envisioned by Pitkin, would be anti-foundationalist in the sense that it would not be based on ideal forms, epistemological guarantees or fundamental universal laws of human behaviour. However, it would still be based on Wittgenstein’s ontological notion of our human form of life, even if that notion is a non-essentialist one and describes a plethora of unrelated basic facts about human beings. “Wittgenstein teaches us that, by the time we are old enough for the [modernist] problem to arise, we already have values and standards and meanings and a conception of the world, just as we already have a language in which they are largely embodied. In this sense, we really are part of an ongoing human community, whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not.”[[45]](#footnote-45) While we might feel lost without the firm foundations of a supernatural being underwriting our reality, that has always been an illusion of security and we have always anyway depended on the foundations of our own human conventions. It is our human form of life that bridges thought and action, meanings and standards, our minds and the world.

Thus, as an antidote to the modern condition which Pitkin argued leads to inauthenticity and dishonesty, she clearly finds in Wittgenstein’s later work a liberating philosophy that frees us from the mental cages of our own creation. It liberates us from our craving for absolute certainty and clear and distinct conceptual categories – cravings that ultimately cause our own alienation from ourselves and others. She finds liberation despite acknowledging Wittgenstein’s call for purely descriptive philosophy and the acceptance of our form of life as a given, as the unchanging bedrock for all explanations of human life. For once again, despite other commentators finding in this part of Wittgenstein’s work a conservative quietism, Pitkin sees spaces for freedom. Pitkin suggests that true freedom can only be founded on true self-knowledge. By knowing what cannot change, the identity of what can becomes clearer, and we can investigate the culturally contingent by using a Wittgensteinian analysis, a, “deep anthropological acquaintance,” with different cultures and a, “deep historical acquaintance,” of different times.[[46]](#footnote-46) Of course this freedom is far less radical than that offered by existentialism, but, “[h]ere freedom lies not in plurality or in changed patterns of life, but in acceptance of the inevitable, or our real selves and our situation.”[[47]](#footnote-47) We cannot hope to escape our human condition in its totality, we are not free to reinvent ourselves in whichever way we fancy, but accepting our form of life as given does not mean accepting everything about the way we happen to live now.

**Critique and Conclusion**

As I have asserted elsewhere, Pitkin’s social theory in *Wittgenstein and Justice* was built by taking Peter Winch’s and J. L. Austin’s methodological work to complement and expand the fundamental ontological and epistemological precepts she draws from Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. In comparison, in this paper we saw how she built her political theory by using Wittgenstein’s ontology to flesh out and justify the fundamental political values she draws from Kant and Arendt. As such, it is not surprising that Wittgenstein’s influence is more direct in the former than it is the latter. After all, Arendt and Kant are relatively further removed from Wittgenstein’s philosophical ethos than Winch and Austin. From Kant, Pitkin inherits his deontological commitment to respect other human beings as subjects with their own cares and ends – human beings whose manipulation is unjust oppression. And from Arendt, she inherits a deontological commitment for political openness, honesty and a commitment for the democratically and deliberatively defined public good.

Applying Wittgensteinian ontology and methodology to the above political values, Pitkin arrives at a left civic republican and anti-conservative vision of the political realm. However, while she is quite right in insisting that Wittgenstein was not a conservative, she makes no direct argument as to why her reading might be the only correct one. While Pitkin’s main aim was to use a Wittgensteinian perspective to uncover spaces for dissent, to use Wittgenstein’s work as a spade to crack open the sedimented modes of our political life and uncover the injustices that lie beneath, those injustices are not so defined by anything Wittgenstein wrote, but by the political values she finds in Arendt and Kant. Understandably finding no moral commitments from Wittgenstein, Pitkin must bring them in from elsewhere. And so, even if method does often dictate content as Pitkin claims, it is not really in this case, that Wittgenstein’s method dictates liberal Arendtian content. Nevertheless, perhaps one might argue that if positivism is intrinsically conservative as Pitkin charges and Wittgenstein is anti-positivist, then Wittgenstein is intrinsically liberal or left-leaning. But this is a false dichotomy. It is also possible that although anti-positivist, Wittgenstein’s work is intrinsically apolitical and thus can be easily read as either conservative or liberal or anything in between without apparent internal contradiction in whichever way, but also not without adding particular normative commitments from the outside.

Subsequently, as much as Pitkin explicitly attempted to delineate the concept of the political without implying any particular political system, it seems that she did not succeed. She of course attempted to justify her construal of the concept by tracing its etymological roots back to the Greek ‘*polis*’ and delineating the value commitments inherent in the politics of the *polis.* And she dealt with the dissenting question of why we should accept the two millennia old Greek conception of the political as the true one by saying that the ideal standards of politics delineated by Wolin and Arendt are, “not really the Greek conception of politics, but our own.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Nevertheless, while an argument with an etymological-historical emphasis is ostensibly inspired by the ordinary language methodology of Austin, that emphasis is not necessarily fully consonant with Wittgenstein’s ontology. Wittgenstein’s emphasis was on the language games that people ‘play’ (in the present tense) and while conservative readers have read a conservative quietism in that, it was Pitkin who pointed out that Wittgenstein allowed for language games to have a dynamic and evolving character to them. So, while Austin’s assertion is true – that most concepts have some residue of past meanings – by Pitkin’s own anti-conservative argument, she overemphasizes this link to the past. Using a concept today without the commitments the concept used to embody may not necessarily be the result of moral decay. It might simply be part of the natural evolution of the concept as it is adjusted to fit contemporary society. After all, few people live in a city-state today, even fewer own the slaves necessary for individual participation and many live in increasingly multicultural and multilingual societies. And thus, while the impersonal and alienated modes of interaction in modern post-industrialised societies are to be lamented, it is unclear why the normative force of that lament should be argued through a cultural inheritance that not everybody shares and one that implies a socio-structural background that no longer applies. By Pitkin’s own argument about sedimented understandings and practices, it is possible for a concept to grow and change and become less about commitment to a single set of ideals not because of corruption but because adhering to those ideals is no longer adequate in dealing with a diversity of values and standards in contemporary society and because whatever standards of justice that applied to the Greek *polis* may require authentic and legitimate revision. After all, Pitkin argued that part of the grammar of politics is that different values have legitimacy in the conversation of politics. The modern usage of the concept of the political looks like corruption from one point of view, but from another, it might be liberating and inclusive. This discussion of course, is another iteration of liberalism’s problem with accounting for and dealing with pluralism. However, in our case, if modern societies are not free to adapt the concepts of ‘politics’ or the ‘political’ to their own language games, signalling their own present commitments, then Pitkin is vulnerable to her own anti-conservative arguments.

Further, if we insist that the concept of the political is given meaning by historically Greek commitments, then the governing activities of non-Western or non-English-speaking or non-deliberative-democratic societies cannot be validly translated as ‘politics’ or described as ‘political’. By Pitkin’s own line of reasoning, only what happens in Western deliberative democracies can be called ‘politics’ or ‘political’. But by the lights of Pitkin’s own ordinary language philosophy methodology – that we should investigate the meanings of words by generally discounting deviant sounding locutions – one would say that that sounds odd. Here we have arrived at something similar to Aristotle’s puzzle as discussed by Pitkin[[49]](#footnote-49). By defining a citizen by the participation she gives to her society’s governance, Aristotle came to the odd conclusion that people are only citizens in a democracy and the corollary is that in a monarchy, only the monarch is a citizen. But of course if we define a concept with deliberative democratic principles, then we should scarcely expect it to apply to non-deliberative-democratic contexts. When we do invent such definitions we get the odd grammatical result that if politics is to be defined by freedom and the public good, then tyranny is not subsequently a political problem; that is, it is not a problem about politics. It becomes a problem that arises from not having politics, a problem that appears in the absence of politics – to be solved by *acquiring* politics. [[50]](#footnote-50) Clearly, this goes against contemporary ordinary usage of the concept and Pitkin attempted to perfect the ordinary. From this perspective, the methods of Wittgenstein and Ordinary Language Philosophy come into tension with each other and Pitkin chooses the latter over the former.

Pitkin’s definition of the political along Arendtian lines also makes the political conceptually distinct and separate from the social and therein lies her objection to Rousseau, who, according to this definition, invalidly tied cultural education to political life. Where the political is the realm of rational free collective action, the social is the realm of determined and caused behaviour. However, to argue this is to severely underplay the importance of the social context (of cultural and linguistic membership) for the individual to understand her own agency. Pitkin herself argued that we have no need of social contracts when we *grow* into obligated and connected individuals, that is, we grow as moral and political agents in our *social* context. Of course if we interpret political life entirely on the model of social life we might risk *some* amount of political freedom, but to argue that this would make political norms implicit and fully internalized *without question* is firstly already to envision a particular and not a general social compact and secondly to make no distinction between non-liberal and illiberal cultures. This, of course, is an example of Western commentary’s tendency to conceptually categorise communal societies with those that are oppressive, but clearly, being non-liberal does not entail being illiberal. Again, this reflects liberalism’s problem with accounting for pluralism. It is not so much that Rousseau is not incorrect in creating a specific rather than a general theory of political membership; rather, it is that Pitkin is guilty of this herself.

Pitkin’s distinction between the political and the social is also a subject about which Wittgenstein was silent. Pitkin based this distinction not on Wittgensteinian ontology but on Arendtian values and thereby, ultimately on Aristotelian teleology – where a human being can only fulfil her potential as a human being by participating in the political realm and expanding her social imagination to the largest of scales and acting on judgement and responsibility. In contrast, the social realm is the biological realm of blind reactive response where she remains an instinctive animal. But this utilisation of a teleological vision is in tension with Pitkin’s other commitments on two points. The first is her explicit avowal of Wittgenstein’s call for philosophy to leave things as they are. At the very least, this means that the burden of proof that any set of normative values are indeed compatible with Wittgenstein’s philosophy falls on her, but she offered no direct argument as to why an Aristotelian teleology does indeed follow from a Wittgensteinian ontology from our species form of life. The second point of tension is with Pitkin’s stand with regards to moralising and political theory, where she regards comprehensive, abstract theorizing as manipulative of the individual citizen whose wishes and opinions were not consulted. Yet in *Wittgenstein and Justice*, Pitkin introduces a teleological vision from the outside, telling readers what their best selves are like by abstracting from a particular vision of politics. Of course, Pitkin admits that stripping all moralising from political theory might be impossible, but she has given us no indication as to why her own efforts at moralising are justified.

Pitkin’s distinction between the political and the social also parallels her distinction between political and moral discourses, because as opposed to politics’ public nature, morality to her is a private realm of personal intercourse. To Pitkin, only the *polis* can teach men about justice – a lesson learnt from a life shared publicly and impersonally with others in society at large. According to her, the household can teach you unselfishness, but it cannot teach you justice. But Pitkin’s analysis is based on concentrating on what for her are the differences in what these discourses are ‘mainly’ for, at the expense of studying carefully how much variation these differences can have in different cultures where moral discourse can serve a different main purpose. As such, Pitkin’s idea of moral discourse is as particular as her idea of political discourse, and similar problems arise from taking it as universal. While she argues that moral discourse can be public but that is not what it is mainly for, that vision of moral discourse mostly fits societies with an individual ethos where there is no moral authority and where morality is never externally enforced. In more communal societies, the line between morality and politics (the line between private and public) is blurred and the moral failing of an individual affects more than a handful of people around her. In these societies, the immoral act of one person, especially (but not necessarily) of a public figure, can raise the question of membership for the entire society. Pitkin was mistaken in conflating the intimate and the private. There could be such a thing as ‘intimate politics’ in a society for whom the identity of the one is bound very tightly with the identity of the whole. Rousseau may have gone too far in using the words ‘forced to be free’, but he was essentially speaking about the same reaffirmation of political membership as Pitkin was.

Thus, while elsewhere I have argued that Pitkin’s social theory was post-modern in its holism and acceptance of ambiguities and contradictions, Pitkin’s political theory is quite modernist in the sense that it is systematic in building its normative vision and looks very much like the beginnings of a coherent comprehensive political theory. Oddly though, Pitkin’s political theory seems to go against her own suggestion that a Wittgensteinian political theory would be accepting of plurality and suspicious of broad, systematic generalisation. However, if we are to take *Wittgenstein and Justice* as something other than a Wittgensteinian political theory, that alternative would be inconsistent with her assertion that method often dictates content. This ambiguity stems from the fact that in forming her anti-conservative project, Pitkin extrapolated from the Western political experience and perspective to the exclusion of the multiplicity of political experiences and perspectives around the world. But Wittgenstein tried to tell us who we are, not who we should be. And so perhaps a Wittgensteinian political theory can at best only tell us who we can and cannot be. Our choice among alternatives ways of being political has to be guided by moral or teleological commitments which have to be acquired from elsewhere and Pitkin underplays the contribution of her secondary influences. Wittgenstein’s work is useful for social and political studies, but we must not give him more credit than he is due. Accepting and embracing a Wittgensteinian investigative method and social ontology need not exclusively entail liberal views such as Pitkin’s left civic republicanism.

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2. *Ibid*, pg. xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Ibid*, pg. ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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5. Heyes, Cressida J. “Introduction” in *The Politics of Grammar: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy*, edited by Cressida J. Heyes, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pg. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Pitkin, pg. xviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid*, pg. xviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Ibid*, pg. 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Ibid*, pg. xxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Ibid*, pg. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid*, pg. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Ibid*, pg. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Ibid*, pg. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Ibid*, pg. 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Ibid*, pg. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Ibid*, pg. 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ibid*, pg. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
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19. Wolin, Sheldon. *Politics and Vision*: *Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought,* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1960), pg. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Pitkin, pg. 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Ibid*, pg. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Dahl, Robert. *Modern Political Analysis*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pg. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Pitkin, pg. 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Ibid*, pg. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Ibid*, pg. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ibid*, pg. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Ibid*, pg. 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Ibid*, pg. 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Ibid*, pg. 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Ibid*, pg. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Ibid,* pg. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Ibid*, pg. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Ibid*, pg. 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Ibid*, pg. 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Ibid*, pg. 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Ibid*, pg. 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. *Ibid*, pg. 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *Ibid*, pg. 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *Ibid,* pg. 326. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Ibid*, pg. 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *Ibid*, pg. 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Ibid*, pg. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *Ibid*, pg. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See *Ibid*, pg. 326. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)