Wittgenstein Abstract

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If “rationalism” refers to the thesis that there is a right way to do whatever it is that we do—a way that we, with our reason, can discover—then Ludwig Wittgenstein is a critic of rationalism. For our words and deeds are justified only by the rules of particular language-games—but these language-games are themselves justified only insofar as they meet our needs; certainly none of them need be justified by reference to any of the others. Together, our language-games constitute our form of life; though this form of life is not entirely arbitrary—some of its features can be explained by reference to our nature—nonetheless it could be different in many ways. Indeed, it *has* been—and therefore probably *will* be—different in many ways; on some level, we all know this. Philosophy at its worst is the attempt to forget it; philosophy at its best is, therefore, the attempt to remember it.