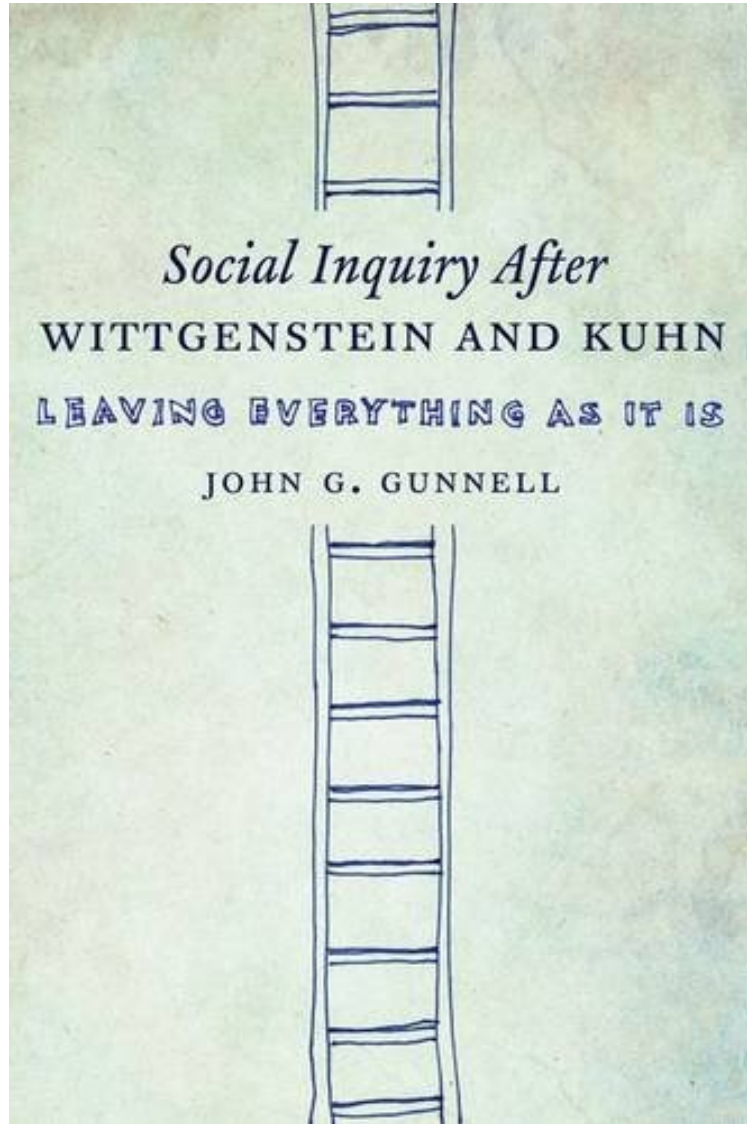


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Social Inquiry After Wittgenstein and Kuhn: Leaving Everything as It Is

John Gunnell

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John Gunnell : Social Inquiry After Wittgenstein and Kuhn: Leaving Everything as It Is before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Social Inquiry After Wittgenstein and Kuhn: Leaving Everything as It Is:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy AnonymousBeautifully written, insightful, and thought provoking. Highly recommended!

A distinctive feature of Ludwig Wittgenstein's work after 1930 was his turn to a conception of philosophy as a form of social inquiry, John G. Gunnell argues, and Thomas Kuhn's approach to the philosophy of science exemplified this conception. In this book, Gunnell shows how these philosophers address foundational issues in the social and human sciences, particularly the vision of social inquiry as an interpretive endeavor and the distinctive cognitive and practical relationship between social inquiry and its subject matter. Gunnell speaks directly to philosophers and practitioners of the social and human sciences. He tackles the demarcation between natural and social science; the nature of social phenomena; the concept and method of interpretation; the relationship between language and thought; the problem of knowledge of other minds; and the character of descriptive and normative judgments about practices that are the object of inquiry. Though Wittgenstein and Kuhn are often criticized as initiating a modern descent into relativism, this book shows that the true effect of their work was to undermine the basic assumptions of contemporary social and human science practice. It also problematized the authority of philosophy and other forms of social inquiry to specify the criteria for judging such matters as truth and justice. When Wittgenstein stated that "philosophy leaves everything as it is," he did not mean that philosophy would be left as it was or that philosophy would have no impact on what it studied, but rather that the activity of inquiry did not, simply by virtue of its performance, transform the object of inquiry.

[The author's] vast knowledge and philosophical erudition come through loud and clear. *Social Inquiry After Wittgenstein and Kuhn* addresses several large issues in mainstream philosophy and the philosophy of science through a discussion of the philosophical thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Thomas Kuhn (with a substantive side glance to Paul Feyerabend). (Dale Turner, Dartmouth University) *Social Inquiry After Wittgenstein and Kuhn* is a highly learned and clearly written contribution to a variety of literatures, including political theory, philosophy of social science, and philosophy of science. Gunnell has a masterful command of his subject matter, and several of the chapters are a delight to read. He brilliantly shows how the challenge posed by both Wittgenstein and Kuhn has been deeply misunderstood by critics and admirers alike. (Linda M. G. Zerilli, University of Chicago) John G. Gunnell has had a long and distinguished career interrogating various claims to authority and certitude made by theorists, philosophers, and social scientists. The aim of this book is to reconsider the practice of social inquiry and its true and purported relations to reality through perspicuous re-presentations of the writings of Wittgenstein and Kuhn. What emerges is a distinctive and provocative philosophy of education that should become an essential part of the training of future political theorists and social scientists. It is a brilliant work of scholarship and philosophical creativity. (Christopher C. Robinson, Clarkson University) This book is a major milestone in the recuperation of the reputations of Wittgenstein, Kuhn and Winch. Far from being 'relativists' or abstract controversialists, Gunnell shows these three to be major figures in the 'philosophy of the sciences', figures who together can be seen as renewing our very conception of philosophy: by turning philosophy itself into what it always has been, but has always resisted being seen as: itself a form of social inquiry. Gunnell takes seriously, as few ever have before, Winch's crucial move of pointing up that social relations are "a species of internal relations". He thus brings alive a radically different conception of society from that which a widespread scientism purveys. Furthermore, Gunnell makes the Wittgensteinian point brilliantly that the social world is 'autonomous' in a way that the natural world is not: whereas natural science goes 'all the way down', for the natural world does not already have any preferred way of describing itself, social studies come up against the autonomy of the already pre-categorised social world at every turn. Gunnell's depiction of Kuhn is deft, and brings out helpfully aspects of the huge influence that Cavell had on Kuhn. This book deserves to be read by philosophers and 'social scientists' alike. (Rupert Read, author of *Wittgenstein Among the Sciences: Wittgensteinian Investigations into the "Scientific Method"*) Despite the special meanings of its subtitle, this book will not, in common parlance, 'leave everything as it is.' Thanks to his exacting attention to what they actually wrote and avoiding the polemical debates into which their work was subsequently drawn, John G. Gunnell vividly demonstrates the relevance of the insights of Wittgenstein and Kuhn to the conceptual, interpretive, and historical dimensions of social inquiry. Indeed, with characteristic clarity and historical acumen, Gunnell presents Wittgenstein's philosophy as the very basis for social inquiry and Kuhn's history of science as an exemplar of that social inquiry in action. If, with Wittgenstein, 'words are deeds,' then the words in this book are deeds exceedingly well done. (James Farr, Northwestern University) The author's scholarship is exceptional. His grasp of detail and the interrelations between the protagonists, Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Winch, Feyerabend, and others is extraordinary. His knowledge of the texts and of Wittgenstein especially is remarkable and detailed. (of *Metaphysics*) About the Author John G. Gunnell is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the Department of Political Science at the State University of New York at Albany. He is currently a research associate at the University of California, Davis. His most recent books include *Political Theory and Social Science: Cutting Against the Grain* and *Imagining the American Polity: Political Science and the Discourse of Democracy*.