# Chapter 1. A major issues with the philosophy of Wittgenstein

But I think what Wittgenstein doesn’t take into consideration is what happens AFTER we have all mastered a very pragmatic relationship to language. We have the tools to say certain things, using language, and we can speak logically in a manner that will enable others to understand what we have to say.

But Wittgenstein’s analysis doesn’t explain what happens when language is internalized by very different mindsets. His outline is that language is always external to us. But our brains to internalize meanings and concepts and things differently, based on our different temperaments and our varying individual experiences.

The second Wittgenstein has given up on this project.

He recognises that language is too slippery and holistic. And that language always depends on something outside itself. On a pre-existing shared understanding or shared \"form of life\" or shared activities and goals or a shared \"language game\" within a community. Words get their meanings not from a fixed mapping to the facts of the world, but only from what that community wants to use them for.

This is a model which emphasizes the connection between language and lived, shared experience and communal action. It opens up the path to further \"ordinary language\" philosophy. A philosophy of language as tied to \"speech acts\". Etc. It’s a language which can’t be held to absolutely mirror or picture the world. But is simply a tool to operate within it.

It also notes the holism and circularity of definition within language. Words get their meanings from their context. And these meanings can shift, but not all at once. The mechanics are such that you must hold some fixed while changing others. But that doesn’t make the fixed ones \"special\" or \"absolute\". They are simply the ones you are holding fixed at this moment for this context or this \"game\". There’s no real foundation or skeleton of words with hard and fixed meanings to which you add a softer tissue of more \"plastic\" or looser words. They are all plastic and loose.

One thing that’s interesting about this view is that it has parallels with continental philosophy and continental holism about language. But seems to be have been an independent discovery rather than one which comes through an engagement with continentals. I’m guessing (though not certain) that he probably knew something of Husserl, but was unlikely to be very interested by Heidegger or any of the more recent continental tradition philosophers.

Wittgenstein comes up with his model simply through starting with the assumption that language can be an accurate picture of the world, and realizing the failings of that idea.

This makes him a rather odd outsider in the sociology and politics of modern philosophy. He’s a trained engineer. A soldier. An architect. A logician (including being the guy who invented Truth tables for logic). In other words, a total geek. He’s still part of the analytic tradition, dismissed and rejected by many in the continental tradition. But he ends up saying the kind of things that drive your average conservative culture warrior harrumphing about \"post-modernism\" and \"relativism\" up the wall. Simply because he’s thought about it a lot.

The other thing that’s striking is how much he is an \"anti-philosopher\". Always running away from philosophy to do other things in his life. And his work is often intended as \"therapeutic\" not trying to \"solve\" philosophical problems so much as \"cure\" us of worrying about them.

He emphasizes that philosophical \"problems\" are often just misuses and misunderstandings of words rather than deeper issues.

In his first philosophy, many problems come from us not understanding the meaning of the words well enough. If only we could pin them down better, the problems would disappear.

In his second, the fact that we have a word for something doesn’t mean that the world really has that thing. And many philosophical problems, he asserts, are nothing but trying to take words that have a \"function\" in a particular context and abstract them out and using them in a different context where they have no useful function.

To take a simplistic example (which may not be Wittgenstein’s, I’m just making this up), the verb \"to be\" is perfectly useful if I ask an everyday question like \"Is he a doctor?\" \"Yes, he is a doctor\". But if I take this notion of \"is\" and try to abstract it into a thing and say \"so what is being, anyway?\" then I am not confronting a profound and important question about the universe. I’m merely taking the verb \"to be\" away from the contexts where it was a useful tool, and trying to apply it in a context where it has no valid usage.

# Chapter 2. Wittgenstein and the limits of language

In his favour, Wittgenstein was not afraid to admit his own mistakes. He once said: ‘If people never did anything stupid, nothing intelligent would ever get done’. He also said: ‘I don’t know why we are here, but I’m pretty sure that it is not in order to enjoy ourselves’. Students approached his classes at Cambridge University with due trepidation, never sure if they were about to witness a brilliant act of logical deconstruction or the implosion of a tortured mind.

Sometimes a crisis can be productive. Wittgenstein, who was constantly in the grip of some kind of intellectual cataclysm, tended to advance his thinking by debunking what he had previous thought to be true. The best example is his celebrated about turn on the nature of language. In the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein argued for a representational theory of language. He described this as a ‘picture theory’ of language: reality (‘the world’) is a vast collection of facts that we can picture in language, assuming that our language has an adequate logical form. ‘The world is the totality of facts, not of things’, Wittgenstein claimed, and these facts are structured in a logical way. The goal of philosophy, for early Wittgenstein, was to pare language back to its logical form, the better to picture the logical form of the world.

Wittgenstein’s early work inspired a generation of logical positivists – critical analytic thinkers who set out to debunk unverifiable ‘pseudostatements’ in an effort to define the limits of meaningful language. ‘That whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent’, Wittgenstein intoned in the closing passages of the *Tractatus.*To become a philosopher, one must learn to hold one’s tongue. Logical positivism was a powerful movement that defined the shape of analytic philosophy well into the 1960s. However, it was undercut by the work of the same man who was its founder. By the 1930s, Wittgenstein had decided that the picture theory language was quite wrong. He devoted the rest of his life to explaining why. ‘Resting on your laurels is as dangerous as resting when you are walking in the snow’, he commented. ‘You doze off and die in your sleep’.

Wittgenstein’s shift in thinking, between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, maps the general shift in 20th century philosophy from logical positivism to [**behaviourism**](http://http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Behaviorism%5C%22)and [**pragmatism**](http://http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pragmatism%5C%22). It is a shift from seeing language as a fixed structure imposed upon the world to seeing it as a fluid structure that is intimately bound up with our everyday practices and forms of life. For later Wittgenstein, creating meaningful statements is not a matter of mapping the logical form of the world. It is a matter of using conventionally-defined terms within ‘language games’ that we play out in the course of everyday life. ‘In most cases, the meaning of a word is its use’, Wittgenstein claimed, in perhaps the most famous passage in the *Investigations*. It ain’t what you say, it’s the way that you say it, and the context in which you say it. Words are how you use them.

If a lion could talk, we should not be able to understand him’, Wittgenstein argued, because the language games of lions are too different from our own to permit understanding. It is worth noting, as an aside, that Wittgenstein’s theory does allow that lions have a language, based in the social dynamics of their hunting and mating activities. The roaring of two adult male lions, challenging each other for leadership of the pride, is arguably as much of a language gaming activity as the banter of two human rivals, each attempting to outdo the other through a play of words. We are a long way from the formalistic view of language described in the *Tractatus*. We have left the Platonic realm of pure logic and rediscovered the world.

Wittgenstein’s view of language as social practice is instructive for anyone who seeks to communicate clearly and effectively. Writers and communicators are always told to think about the audience that they are speaking to and to craft their communiques accordingly. Wittgenstein’s philosophy pushes this point of view beyond linguistics into ethnography. In order to communicate with a social tribe, listen to how they play with language. In many cases, slang, banter, and jokes are not poorly structured ‘secondary’ forms of communication, but a coded means of crafting pointed exchanges within a community. A picture, they say, is worth a thousand words, but a well-timed joke can express a world-view. Wittgenstein once said that a ‘serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes’.

Jokes are not ephemera. They may be logically incoherent (this is often what makes them funny), yet they play an important role in the language games that bind a community together.

Wittgenstein’s view of language is also important for anyone engaging in philosophy. The dictum: ‘In most cases, meaning is use’ serves as a vital corrective for the impulse to launch into vague metaphysical speculations premised on the misuse of words. Take the word ‘God’, for example. The contemporary debate between atheists and believers is premised on the idea that the word ‘God’ either represents something in the real world, or it does not. Believers argue that it does (and tie themselves in knots trying to verify this claim), while atheists argue that it doesn’t. However, both parties to this debate unwittingly rely on a picture theory of language. On this theory, language represents facts about the world. What is says is either true or false. Never the twain shall meet.

A Wittgensteinian approach to the debate begins by pointing out ‘God’ is a word that has different meanings in the context of different communities. In the context of different linguistic communities, people use ‘God’ in different ways to articulate different facets of experience (consider ‘It’s in God’s hands now’ or ‘When the sun rose, I felt the presence of God’). Another way of thinking about the meaning of ‘God’, therefore, is to see peoples’ use of this term as a move in a social language game – a move that ideally has specific connotations for members of a community. Perhaps the term expresses fidelity to a way of life, as [**Karen Armstrong**](http://http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/jul/12/religion-christianity-belief-science%5C%22) argues. Perhaps it expresses wonder in the face of existence. The bottom line is that using a term does not necessarily imply a belief in an entity that corresponds to this term. The meaning of a word hinges on its usefulness in context, not its ideal referent outside of all possible contexts.

Wittgenstein’s teaching has practical value. Why waste time arguing over issues that will never be resolved when the whole thing could be deflated with a simple question: ‘Are we even talking about the same thing?’ If you struggle to overcome the urge to define things too carefully, or find yourself becoming obsessed about the meaning of words and their ‘true’ definition, or if you are convinced, like many philosophers, that the existence of a word logically implies some metaphysical essence, or Platonic form, that corresponds to this word, remember that what gives a word meaning is the conventional social discourse within which it is employed. By attending to the ordinary language contexts that give words their meaning, we can avoid misusing them and trying to make them mean things that they aren’t made to mean. The more that we return words to their home, seeing them in terms of the ordinary language contexts that they work within, the easier it becomes to untie the knots in language and understand what is really being said.

# Chapter 3. Wittgenstein, Picture Theory and Tractatus logico-philosophicus

The term picture theory of meaning refers to Wittgenstein’s description of language in his book Tractatus logico-philosophicus. From its 7 main propositions number 4 and its sub-propositions deal with language.

Proposition 4: \"The thought is the significant proposition. (= Der Gedanke ist der sinnvolle Satz.)\"

Proposition 4.1: \"The proposition is a picture of reality. The proposition is a model of the reality as we think it is. (= Der Satz ist ein Bild der Wirklichkeit. Der Satz ist ein Modell der Wirklichkeit, so wie wir sie uns denken.)\"

Different interpretations for „picture\" have been suggested. One interpretation takes \"picture\" as mapping in a mathematical sense. Accordingly, a picture is a structure preserving mapping from the proposition to reality, i.e. the structure of the proposition resembles the structure of reality. This covers the property of a \"model\" to represent the structure of the domain of investigation.

Already this Ansatz of the picture theory can be questioned from the viewpoint of constructivism: We do not know the structure of reality, hence we cannot determine whether the proposition maps to its structure. All we can do, is constructing from our sensory input due to repeated experience a model with its structure. As Kant puts it: The thing in itself is not recognizable. Wittgenstein presupposes that reality has a structure which resembles the logical structure of our propositions. Notably, he presupposes a logical structure of reality resembling the logical structure of purged language.

In my opinion, such view overestimates the role of logic as the primordial structure of reality. Overestimation, because reality exists much longer and previous to information processing according to the rules of logic.

In Wittgenstein's own development, he moves on from the picture theory to an interpretation in terms of 'games' which capture actions and motives.

(I like the \"Blue and Brown Books\" which are notes from his lectures during the period this change was taking root. Since he was speaking to humans, it is more comprehensible than the \"Tractatus\", and holds together more tightly than the \"Investigations\")

Actions can in some sense be captured by a sort of 'moving picture', but not in a way that reliably feels like a basic concept has been really captured. We do not so much accumulate these moving pictures, as look behind them for shared structure and how that structure answers to motives. If I teach a child about an activity, at some point fairly early on, unless the motivation is really obvious, she moves on to 'why' before being willing to put up with any more 'what' or 'how'.

And internal wishes and motives are not as easily captured in pictures. If a person did not have the direct experience of hunger, you would not be able to depict it, only its effects, so you would have extreme difficulty conveying the actual 'picture'. But by demonstrating the effects, you are only pointing at the motivation to avoid them, and not very clearly. For less physical motives like power or love, things get worse and worse.

But the fact we share motives shapes what we do, and those actions coalesce into negotiations around the motives, even when we do not explicitly discern and point at the motives. Carousing, for instance, serves a genuine need that we generally do not bother to name. But it creates a grand and sprawling vocabulary and a set of rules for negotiation and optimization of the experience. (Ask any autistic or any other earnest-enough introvert how stupid these really seem on their surface, or maybe just anyone from a distinctly different generation.)

Most other kinds of objects have importance to us to the degree they are parts of schemas that answer to motives. When they do not, we can point at them, but the reference is unlikely to become a stable part of our shared language. Non-farmers do not tend to have multiple of different words for dirt, even though we can and do probably occasionally point at varieties of dirt when they matter to us, whereas farmers do. In the picture theory of language, both people should find the relevant pictures equally cogent and memorable.

That indicates that the much more ambiguous category of social motives is what matters to us. (A statement so obvious it is almost a pun.) And we do not pursue any basic approach to just describing reality, including exchanging pictures.

Wittgenstein opened the Tractatus by giving a metaphysics of a world consisting of atomic facts, completely independent of one another, but Wittgenstein gave no examples of what he considered to be atomic facts.

An understanding of Wittgenstein’s terse, abstract metaphysics is key to understanding his picture theory of meaning, which immediately follows it in the Tractatus. The main theses of the Tractatus are that the structure of language consists in complex propositions consisting of atomic propositions, which in turn consist of names and that the language-to-world connection is a picturing relation.

Facts are carried by propositions in language — the proposition \"John sees a red ball\" conveys the fact that John sees a red ball — and propositions are pictures of the state of affairs that is being conveyed. Like visual pictures, propositions can be created that are more detailed or less detailed, that highlight some relationships and downplay or omit others, that present idealized forms of facts or realistic forms.

When Ludwig Wittgenstein writes about \"das Bild\" from section 2.1 in the Tractatus, he works within the alternatives of the image or the picture as something he is able to specify, or leave unspecific, as he needs to. On the one hand, the \"Bild\" is anything we say it is. \"Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen\" – we make or form these pictures of facts. Of course we don’t. If \"ein Bild\" is \"ein Gebildetes\" which it would need to be in we have made or formed it as an image, its status as a \"fact\" is hard to reconcile with the distinction drawn at the outset between facts and things. If we are going to make a distinction between what is the case and what is not the case, then a fact is certainly not a thing.

One kind of meaningless proposition is a tautology, such as \"All bachelors are unmarried men.\" Strictly speaking, of course, this proposition does have truth conditions. But since there are no conditions that could obtain in which it isn’t true, the proposition can yield no real information about the way the world is.

Another kind of meaninglessness would be a proposition that isn’t made up of elementary truth conditional propositions. To explain this, it’s necessary to go into Wittgenstein’s doctrine of \"atomic\" facts. Propositions, he says, are made up of simpler propositions that are connected in various ways by means of logical operators. Any complex proposition is ultimately analyzable into a collection of propositions that are not further analyzable into simpler propositions. These atomic facts or elementary propositions merely posit the existence of a basic object, and, again, we understand their meaning to the extent that we understand their truth conditions. Any proposition that is not constructed of elementary propositions is meaningless. Such a proposition would not picture a way the world could be, and we could not, therefore, understand its meaning.

Now consider everything that Wittgenstein has said about language so far, and ask yourself whether it pictures a way the world could be. How could it? Wittgenstein is making assertions about language, not the world, and upon analysis everything he says, in so far as it’s true, would turn out to be tautologous. On Wittgenstein’s own theory the picture theory of language is, strictly speaking, meaningless. The very conditions that enable language to picture states of affairs prevent it from picturing itself.

The same is true of much else. Morality, for example, doesn’t picture states of affairs that either obtain or do not; it states how things oughtto be. Aesthetic judgments aren’t pictures of the world either, nor are religious beliefs. About none of these things can we speak meaningfully in the sense of asserting something about the way the world is.

# Chapter 4. Logics and language in Wittgenstein‘s philosophy

Since substitutions of the thesis of the classical propositional calculus, i.e. substitutions of the propositions of logic, are necessarily true propositions, propositions of logic must express the logical necessity with no reference to anything that is contingent. In other words, the classical propositional calculus must be an effective method for solving which formulas of the classical propositional calculus are the propositions of logic. Logic must maintain its autonomy, as Wittgenstein writes: Logic must take care of itself (NB 22.08.1914; TLP 5.473).

Wittgenstein also adds that elementary propositions assert the existence of a contingent state of affairs (Sachverhalt) (TLP 4.21); that if it exists as a positive fact(positive Tatsache), it is a reference of the true elementary proposition (TLP 2.06, 4.25). For every state of affairs is contingent, the truth of every elementary proposition is contingent, too. One can say that every elementary proposition and every proposition consisting of elementary propositions, which is not the substitution of tautology or contradiction, is bipolar – possibly true and possibly false

Now Wittgenstein can present all propositions of logic as tautologies, i.e. formulas in the classical propositional calculus distinguished by an effective method that expresses the necessary truth of the substitutions of the propositions of logic and the necessary falsehood of the substitutions of the denied propositions of logic. As Wittgenstein writes: tautologies are true and contradictions are false for all the truth-possibilities of the elementary propositions (TLP 4.46).

It is worth emphasizing that elementary propositions are logically independent of each other if, and only if, elementary propositions are bipolar. Although it may seem that substitutions of propositional variables are also non-bipolar propositions, from the logical point of view, every substitution of propositional variables are only bipolar propositions. For example, one can say that in formula Φ⊓⌐Φ variable Φ can represent all formulas, including tautologies and contradictions. Notwithstanding variable Φ is meta-linguistic and does not belong to the formal language of the classical propositional calculus. One can also add that the idea of the truth-table in the classical propositional calculus presumes that the truth-table can be applied to all their substitutions.

Now it is clear why Wittgenstein states that The only necessity that exists is logicalnecessity (TLP 6.37, 6.375). Only substitutions of tautologies are necessarily true and only substitutions of contradictions are necessarily false (TLP 5.525). Others propositions are contingently true, i.e. possibly true and possibly false.

According to Wittgenstein, logical notation must express only what is not arbitrary (TLP 3.342, 6.124). Since logical notation gives a definitive way to show which formulas are its propositions, it expresses only what is not contingent. Even a determination of the scope of arbitrary issues is itself arbitrary, and thus, cannot be expressed by logical notation.

Wittgenstein distinguishes between logic and its application (Anwendung der Logik); he asserts that logic cannot anticipate its application (TLP 5.557). Application of logic seems to be a matter of arbitrary and contingent decisions. If logic anticipates its application, the application would belong to logic, and thereby, would not be the application of logic, but logic itself or logic would not be logic, but only a matter of contingent elements. Contingency must be excluded from logic. Therefore, logical notation cannot express anything that belongs to application of logic.

How can one grasp the relation between necessary logic and the contingent application of logic? The best way is to get this picture: logic is like a stencil which is put on the surface of the natural language. Through this stencil one can see the natural expressions as elementary propositions or the propositions consisting of elementary propositions.

One can deal with the great importance of the distinction between logic and its application in virtue of Wittgenstein’s investigations on the redundancy of the identity sign ‘=’ in logical notation.

The identity of the meaning – or better say, the identity of reference of the names and identity of a possible reference of the propositions – is the identity of the symbols: names or propositions. All expressions of the identity are trivial and redundant. Thus, in the logical notation the same symbols should be represented by the same signs (Fogelin 2006, pp. 73-74).

In logical notation the only thing that is expressed by signs is the identity of a representation of the identical signs. The same signs represent the same symbols (names or propositions) and the same symbols have the same reference. Signs, as it was pointed out, do not depict reality, but they can be used as depictions, i.e. propositional symbols.

Wittgenstein’s investigations on the material shape of logical notation lead to the following conclusions: logical notation is only a tool for logical analysis, and thus, it is only the system of signs which cannot depict reality, but which can be used to analyze propositions depicting reality. For example, propositional variables are not elementary propositions, but they are only signs which represent elementary propositions.

Now it is also clear that for Wittgenstein, logical notation is not a perfect language. One can even say: for the author of Tractatus logical notation is not a language at all. It is only a scheme that can be used to show which expressions are elementary propositions and which are propositions consisting of elementary propositions.

To sum up this section, the perspective from the viewpoint of necessary logic and the perspective from the viewpoint of the contingent application of logic in natural language are not mutually exclusive. They complete each other and create a picture of any language on which there is a place for both what is logically, non-arbitrary and for what is contingent, arbitrary. Finally, one shouldn’t reject Wittgenstein’s early philosophy as the doctrine of the artificial or perfect language. Wittgenstein presents not a language, but merely a stencil which one can use without any restraint in analyzing any representation of reality.

# Chapter 5. Language games of Wittgenstein

w.’s ‘language games’ is a description of the realistic limits of language as talk. all our talk is done in a game of ‘this is how to talk about that.’

our reality is held but not owned — we believe in our reality and can project it out any way we need to. sometimes as instructions and other times as descriptions.

We are playing our end game because so many educated people who hold power are purposely using words as lies to control and influence confusion with. The stakes have become so high that a group of elites at the very top levels of our society are soul bent of killing off 90% of us. They are the continuation of plans that had been put into place in the days of Wittgenstein which never gained the planned outcome because of the source energy of humanity.

The source energy of all that there is has been called God but always inappropriately defined by religions since Moses spoke with the burning bush. I find that by defining words from a perspective of unconditional love and self-respect, words that are lies begin to darken and shrivel into entropy of the field of human magnificence. Entropy is one of those shriveling words that use negative space as a measure of the energy that is not available. Source energy on the other hand is love and abundantly available. As small as they appear to be even atoms and molecules carry the burden of consciousness’, responsibility and are full of source energy

After all, he is, of course, using language to explain his philosophy of language to us. What is he playing at? Well, see what he says about interpreting facts (states of affairs) in Philosophical Investigations:

Don't always think that you read off what you say from the facts; that you portray these in words according to rules. For even so you would have to apply the rule in the particular case without guidance.

What guidance? Doesn’t the world make itself obvious? When I look outside and say ‘the sun is shining’ or ‘that man is clutching his knee’ am I not merely expressing pictures as propositions that correspond to the actual arrangement of things - like pixel groups portraying a portrait? Surely it’s clear what these words mean! They’re defined!

By…um…other words.

Everyone interprets them their own way, but those interpretations are pretty similar, right? When I say ‘similar’, of course, you know what I mean….

If I say of myself that it is only from my own case that I know what the word \"pain\" means—must I not say the same of other people too? And how can I generalize the one case so irresponsibly?

Now someone tells me that he knows what pain is only from his own case!——Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a \"beetle\". No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word \"beetle\" had a use in these people's language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a something: for the box might even be empty.—No, one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.

That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.

What is the purpose of a game? What does it achieve? When I spiel, what does that do?

Games are metaphysical. They are in the world, but not of it. When kittens play, are they ‘learning to hunt’? But they do not hunt each other, and what they are doing is essentially separate from what we presume the activity is for.

Language may allow for connecting and combining thoughts together to create new \"composite thoughts.\" There’s a really cool study with rats and a blue wall that I’ll link down at the bottom. They stick a rat in a room, disorient it, and put a treat in one corner of the box, and see if the rat can find it. All the walls are white except for one blue wall, and the treat is always in the corner that is to the left of the blue wall. The rats are unable to catch on — they can remember left and right, and they can see blue, but they don’t put those two thoughts together — \"to the left of the blue wall.\"

# Chapter 6. Wittgenstein, Theories of Meaning and Linguistics

Immediately after this remark, Wittgenstein goes on to introduce, in the 3.31s, the notion of symbol. Then, in the 3.32s, he defines the notion of sign, discusses how signs are related to symbols, and explains the role of use in constituting the relationship between signs and symbols. As we shall see, this order of presentation can be taken to have great philosophical significance.

For the sake of illustration, let’s suppose that the word ‘Socrates’, understood as the name of a certain philosopher, counts for the Tractatus as a name. This name, then, is what is common to all the possible propositions in which the word ‘Socrates’ fulfills the logical function of standing for that specific person. As such, it is properly presented by a ‘propositional variable’ (3.312-3.315), i.e. a variable—say ‘...Socrates...’6—whose values are all the significant propositions in which the word ‘Socrates’ fulfills the same logical function. A contentful sub-propositional symbol can be singled out for special attention only by abstracting from the features that all the propositions in which it may occur do not have in common. In accordance with the Context Principle, sub-propositional meaning presupposes propositional meaning.

Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life?—In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there?—Or is the use its life? (Wittgenstein 2001: §432)
The relation between these passages and Frege’s views is a complex issue and exceeds the scope of this paper. Our question, here, is how to understand Wittgenstein’s characterization of a living sign as a sign in use.
One option is to hold that a living sign, for Wittgenstein, is the result of the combination of two ingredients, the ‘dead sign’ and its ‘use’, each of which is intelligible independently of the notion of a living sign. This reading has the same structure of the Extra-Feature Account of the relation between Tractarian signs and Tractarian symbols. The point of Wittgenstein’s characterization, according to this reading, is to answer the question: What must be added to a dead sign in order to give it semantic life?

[Wittgenstein] is not thinking of life as a force that closes the gap [between sign and application]; rather, he questions what one has to have done to the sign—as the sign it is, in its use—to have killed it, to have come to think that it must be resurrected. In other words, he questions the role that the life-giving ingredient would play. (Minar 2012: 288)
According to this alternative reading, later Wittgenstein is not trying to show how a living sign can be obtained from independently intelligible ingredients, namely a ‘dead sign’ and some sort of ‘use’. On the contrary, he is vindicating the irreducible unity of the living sign.

While this terminology has its merits, it does not reflect the way in which Wittgenstein actually speaks of ‘dead signs’ in the passages considered above. In those passages, Wittgenstein gives voice to a philosophical mood which employs the living/dead contrast in a peculiar register—one in which it makes sense to say that something alive may be considered as dead. For example, you may consider the sentence that you are now reading as a ‘dead complex of dashes’, or a living body as a dead bundle of atoms. While this register is not exclusive to philosophy, it differs from more common ways of talking about living and dead things. In the sense in which we speak of a corpse as a dead body, we may not consider a living body, or a stone, as dead.

In order to see how Wittgenstein’s skeptical arguments bear on the question of the possibility of theories of meaning, it is helpful to divide such theories into two families. On the one hand, we have theories according to which signs acquire semantic properties, and correspondent proprieties of use, if and only if they are interpreted, where interpreting a sign consists in setting up a semantic relation (such as a relation of ‘meaning’ or ‘referring’ or ‘expressing’) between the independently specifiable sign (construed, say, as a geometrical shape or acoustic pattern) and some independently specifiable item (such as an ‘object’ or ‘function’ or ‘sense’). The theory ascribed to the Tractatus by the Realist Reading, for example, falls within this category: each name acquires a meaning as soon as it is made to ‘stand for’ an object. The challenge faced by theories belonging to this first family, according to Wittgenstein’s skeptical arguments, is that they embark in an infinite regress of interpretations.

Wittgenstein’s views about language may have evolved along at least two different dimensions. On the one hand (a), his later discussion of ostensive definition and rule- following can be taken to show that he came to a deeper understanding of why theories of meaning should be rejected. And on the other hand (b), it can be argued that he offered, at different points of his career, different elucidations (as opposed to non-circular analyses) of the notion of a meaningful linguistic expression.

# Chapter 7. Wittgenstein‘s Aesthetics

Wittgenstein's opening remark is double-barreled: he states that the field of aesthetics is both very big and entirely misunderstood. By \"very big\", I believe he means both that the aesthetic dimension weaves itself through all of philosophy in the manner suggested above, and that the reach of the *aesthetic* in human affairs is very much greater than the far more restricted reach of the *artistic*; the world is densely packed with manifestations of the aesthetic sense or aesthetic interest, while the number of works of art is very much smaller.

By \"entirely misunderstood\", it emerges that he means both (1) that aesthetic questions are of a conceptual type *very* distinct from empirical questions and the kind of answer, or conceptual satisfaction, we want is very unlike what we might get from an experiment in empirical psychology, and (2) that the philosophically traditional method of essentialistic definition – determining the essence that all members of the class \"works of art\" exhibit and by virtue of which they are so classified – will conceal from our view more than it reveals.

Later, in his *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1958), he will go on to famously develop the analogy between tools and language as a way of breaking the hold of the conceptual picture that words work in one way (by naming things—including the naming of properties, as in the way we too-quickly think of the problem of beauty above), showing the diversity of *kind* and of *use* among the various things we find in the tool box (e.g. hammer, glue, chisel, matches). If we redirect our attention, away from the *idée fixe* of the puzzle concerning the common property named by the word \"beauty\" or the description \"beautiful\", and look to the actual use to which our aesthetic-critical vocabulary is put, we will see that it is not some intrinsic meaning carried internally by the linguistic sign (Wittgenstein 1958a) that makes the word in question function as an aesthetic or critical interjection or expression of approval.

He will go on to imply, if not quite to directly assert, that the parallel holds to the work of art: to see it within a larger frame of reference, to see it in comparison to other works of the artist in question and to see it juxtaposed with still other works from its cultural context, is to see what role itplayed in the dialogically unfolding artistic \"language-game\"[[**1**](http://http%3A//http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//notes.html#1\%22)] of its time and place. In using language, he says next in the lectures, in understanding each other—and in mastering a language initially—we do not start with a small set of words or a single word, but rather from specific occasions and activities. Our aesthetic engagements are occasions and activities of just this kind; thus aesthetics, as a field of conceptual inquiry, should start not from a presumption that the central task is to analyze the determinant properties that are named by aesthetic predicates, but rather with a full-blooded consideration of the *activities* of aesthetic life.

Wittgenstein plays with the idea of the possibility that a person could have a private language whose meaning was known only to the inventor. There are many avenues which support the idea on first glance. No one would deny that as an individual he or she has thoughts which are private and which do not manifest themselves in any public way. Yet this is not the sort of private language Wittgenstein envisioned. This is only the concept of having private thoughts in the sense that they are not thoughts the individual chooses to share publicly. They are not necessarily private meaning comprehensible to that individual only. So what about those images or nebulous flashes that are pre-linguistic? Surely most people have had the experience of having a thought that they cannot articulate. Is this private? Certainly it is and it is these pre-linguistic ideas that are the candidates for use in a truly private language.

# Chapter 8. Wittgenstein and the Rationality

Wittgenstein’s efforts were aimed at showing that there is nothing within human nature that defines what is perceived as rational, irrational, or non-rational, but that the differences are produced in human language and action. The necessity of such a transformative perspective on rationality, however, can only be adequately captured by recognizing the taxonomy of some of Wittgenstein’s best-known concepts.

# Chapter 9. Wittgenstein On Mathematics

Arguably, Wittgenstein does not adhere to any one of the main systematic positions within the philosophy of mathematics, logicism, intuitionism, and formalism, although his remarks are very much informed by his understanding of them. In some respects his contribution amounts to a challenge to those doctrines as well as to viewpoints that mathematicians commonly articulate themselves about the nature of, or elements of, their own subject.

In the Tractatus and for most of his career Wittgenstein maintains that mathematical assertions are pseudo-propositions and that what is understood as mathematical truth is non-referential and syntactical in its nature. In what may roughly be classified as a \"middle period\" (of Philosophical Remarks and Philosophical Grammar) there is development towards what some have labelled \"finitistic constructivism\" which is subject to subsequent modification (in the Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics).

# Chapter 10. Mathematics in the Tractatus

**Although the Tractatus is a very demanding work its stance links directly to the perspective of many educated people who understand there to be a difference between empirical generalisations requiring supporting evidence and mathematical statements requiring proof; and who also sense that the relation between mathematics and logic is particularly intimate.**[**Wittgenstein (1922)**](http://http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//%5C%5C%22http%3A//#ref23\\%22\%22) proceeds through a contrast between contingent propositions and mathematical equations: \\\"If the elementary proposition is true, the atomic fact exists; if it is false the atomic fact does not exist\\\" (1922: 4.25). \\\"The propositions of mathematics are equations, and therefore pseudo-propositions\\\" (6.2). \\\"And… that the propositions of mathematics can be proved means nothing else than that their correctness can be seen without our having to compare what they express with the facts as regards correctness\\\" (6.2321). Wittgenstein understands cardinal numbers to be generated by successive applications of the operation of adding one after commencing with zero (5.2523; 6.03).

Wittgenstein seems to approach this position when strikingly he asserts: \"Mathematics is a method of logic\" (6.234). \"The logic of the world which the propositions of logic show in tautologies, mathematics shows in equations\" (6.22). Not surprisingly, therefore, some have interpreted his view as a variant of logicism but in the last analysis, this is perhaps not justified, for instance, because he does not define numbers \"logically\" in either Frege’s or Russell’s way [**(Rodych, 2018)**](http://http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//#ref16\%22). He seems not to regard mathematics as reducible to logic in the manner of Whitehead and Russell in their work Principia Mathematica [**(Black, 1964: p. 340)**](http://http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//#ref5\%22) and he rejects Frege’s view that numbers are objects; he also firmly maintains the position that arithmetical equations are not tautologies. Furthermore, as reported by [**Waismann (1979, 1986)**](http://http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//#ref21\%22), Wittgenstein around this time affirmed that logical operations are performed with propositions, arithmetical ones with numbers.

Regarding significant omission in the treatment of mathematics in the Tractatus, particularly telling is the point made by Frank [**Ramsey (1986: p. 43)**](http://http%3A//%5C%22http%3A//#ref15\%22) in his review of that work to the effect that the author fails to situate and deal with the role of inequalities in mathematics, as opposed to equalities. Ramsey has in mind such relations between numerical quantities or algebraic expressions as \"is less than or equal to\" and \"is greater than\" and not simply \"is not equal to\". One can hint at the difficulties here in the following way. Confronted with an arithmetical or algebraic equation it is very easy in language or thought to slip between the use of the words \"equals\" and \"is\", as though they were equivalents. Thus one might say \"two times two equals four\" or \"two times two is four\". The latter resembles in form such an empirically and contingently related proposition as \"this patch of colour is blue\". This may lead on—it may be suggested—to the philosopher of mathematics who is focusing on equations to think that the job to be performed is at least primarily to analyse the difference in the meaning and syntax (or \"grammar\" in Wittgenstein’s sense) of types of affirmative propositions (or pseudo-propositions) across mathematics, logic and the contingent empirical sphere—at least some of which would be identities. However, it remains to be seen whether and in what way that type of analysis would bear adequately upon inequalities and the role they play in mathematics; Ramsey’s probably justified presumption is that it would not.

In the interests of completeness, it is worth adding that mathematical propositions are not exhausted by equations and inequalities. What is clear from examination of mathematical works is that the subject consists substantially of sentences and figures but there is a variety of each. Consider, for instance, the following three sentences, no one of which is an equation. If a prime p divides a product ab, then p must divide a or b. The diagonal of a square is incommensurable with its side. If C is a fixed point with coordinates x = a, y = b, then the locus of all points P having a given distance r from C is a circle with C as centre and radius r. It is clear that the subject is characterised by provision of proof, but it is inaccurate to say that its results and theorems simply consist of a series of equations and inequalities. Importantly, too, where an equation appears it is often embedded in a sentence containing additional words and phrases (e.g. \"if… then\"; \"must\", as above) which are essential to the argument. Certainly, it could be the case that, were all the elements in a particular theorem that do not take the form of equations to be struck out, the residue might be meaningless. Furthermore, it may well be that a consideration of the structure of mathematical reasoning as a whole—with all its various elements—would lead one back in the direction of a logicist account.