Ludwig Wittgenstein's Contribution to the Philosophical Discourse on Language

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1.0. Introduction

The one unquestionable task of philosophy is search for the truth. In philosophy, we struggle to discern ourselves and the universe, reality and existence, knowledge and beliefs, reason and reasoning, meaning and value of actions and objects. In all of these quests, truth is being sought, tirelessly too. In this activity, we strive to come in contact with reality on one hand, and on the other hand to present it the way it is, with minimal adulteration. Different epochs of philosophical thoughts can be characterised by peculiar prevalent methods of arriving at this curious quest. The modern period can boast of its peculiar methods such as rationalism, empiricism, idealism, scientism and the likes.[1] These methods all cannot be right at the same time. Surely not!

More pressing to the later modern philosophers[2] was the claims of idealism that posits a seamless harmony between thought and object. For the idealist, reality consists in thought and object bound in a stringent coherent unity. What idealism claims as knowledge was for the more materialistic modern thinkers, a misrepresentation of reality, because what the idealists affirm is merely the content of the mind rather than the content of the world. Beginning with Bertrand Russell and G. E Moore, attempts were made to correct this purported erroneous pattern of thought, which culminated in the founding of the Analytic School. Language was the key to clearing the cobwebs of philosophical issues. The disingenuous character of language was the true cause of philosophical disputes. If language can be penetrated to reveal its content, then

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[1] Cf. Scotus Roger, *The Short History of Modern Philosophy* (London: Routledge Press, 1981), p. 21-23

[2] I use the term late modern philosophers to mean philosophers who lived within the 18th and 19th centuries.

philosophy would have one less problem. This gave birth to the discipline of philosophy of language.

This essay shall explore Wittgenstein's approach to solving the perennial problem of philosophy in two of his works: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations.* We will attempt a retrieval of the thoughts of Wittgenstein in his most famous work. Prior to this, we shall take a cursory look at the historical events that influenced of his works and finally highlight his contribution to the next generation of philosophers.

2.0. Wittgenstein's Background

Wittgenstein Ludwig Josef Johann, the Austrian-British philosopher, was born in Vienna in 1889, the youngest of a family of 10. A descent of a Jewish father and a Roman Catholic mother, Wittgenstein was educated at home until his fourteenth birthday, during this period he developed interest in engineering. He moved on to study mechanical engineering at the *Technische Hochschule* at Charlottenburg in Berlin for two years, and later at the University of Manchester.[3]

Wittgenstein's interest began to shift from engineering to pure mathematics and then to philosophical foundation of mathematics when he was had stumbled upon the book of Bertrand Russell- *Principles of mathematics*.[4] In this book Russell, while grappling with the problem of language, tries to prove that the foundation of every language is rooted in mathematics, and so a quest in the understanding language required that the philosopher investigate into the principles of mathematics. In 1912, he enrolled in Trinity College to study philosophy under Russell, but in 1913, Wittgenstein went into seclusion in Norway. When the First World War broke out, Wittgenstein enlisted as a volunteer in the Austrian Army. During these years, he committed himself to putting down his perplexing thought. They are what have come down to us as the *Tractatus Logico Philisophicus*.

3.0. The *Tractatus Logico Philisophicus* (Early Wittgenstein)

The Tractatus is a short, cryptic and enigmatic work of extreme originality. It is constructed around seven foundational propositions numbered 1-7, with all other paragraphs numbered by

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[3] Cf. Kenny Anthony, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, Vol. 4. (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2007), p. 72
[4] Norman Malcolm "Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Ed. Donald M. Borchert, 1967 p. 800

decimal expansions of each foundational proposition. The seven statements capture everything that he wishes to say, but since they are quite abstract, other propositions shed light on them.

1. The world is all that is the case.

2. What is the case (a fact) is the existence of atomic facts.

3.   A logical picture of the facts is the thought.

4   The thought is the significant proposition.

5   A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth function itself.)

6   The general form of a truth-function is [p, E, N (E)]. This is the general form of a proposition.

7   Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silence.

From the outset, Wittgenstein clearly states what his aim is which is to "*deal with the problem of philosophy and show...., that the reason why these problems are posed is that logic of our language is misunderstood.*"[5] Thus in addressing the central problem of philosophy as regards the world, thought and language, he posits that the solution to this dilemma lies in logic, and the nature of representation.

For Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy is and should be directed to "*the logical clarification of thought,*" [6] which makes it an activity rather than a discipline. Thoughts are contents of the mind and are built upon language. Language on its part has an underlying logical structure, so that an understanding of the relationship between these variables show the limit of what can clearly and meaningfully be said.[7] This was contrary to Russell's earlier position that mathematics carries us beyond what is human into the realm of absolute reality where all truth can be grasped, to which not only the actual world, but every possible world must conform.[8] Russels postulation implies that truth is to be built upon mathematical principles, which alone exposes or clarifies

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[5] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009. p. 2
[6] Cf. Ibid., 4.112
[7] Cf. Grayling A. C, *Wittgenstein*, *A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 18
[8] Copleston Vol VIII p. 438

proposition. Although both of them agreed to the basic problem of philosophy, Wittgenstein proved in the Tractatus that mathematical principles can be reducible to logic in the sense that the number theory (Arithmetic) can be reduced to propositions containing only logical concepts such as variables, predicates, constants and quantifiers.[9]Thus mathematical logic rather than mathematics is the perfect language for analysing language of ordinary discourse. For it captures reality formally without emotions, vagueness and ambiguities. This idea was adopted by Russell and Frege, but Wittgenstein was to take a step further by positing that the idea that logic is the essential framework to all the thought goes along with the idea that there is a perfect logical order in the propositions of ordinary language. This position does not merely have a theoretical status, but the status of prescription of how a language in which thoughts are expressed must be.[10]

3.1. Picture Theory of Meaning

The major theme of the *Tractatus* is the picture theory of meaning. When we communicate what we perceive to be true about the way the world is, we do this in a language. So there is a connection between our thought, language of communication and the world. This is what the picture theory of meaning seeks to establish. When we experience the world, it becomes part of our reservoir of consciousness. When we wish then to communicate this knowledge to others, we conceive this idea in thought, and thought is built upon language and conversely, language is composed of propositions which when spoken is understood by the hearer.

Wittgenstein claims that because every proposition carries a truth function (they can either be true or false[11]), language claims are logical. Thoughts are logical pictures of fact[12] and the world is a totality of facts.[13] Since thoughts are propositions that make sense, language consists of propositions which are perceptible expressions of thought and are thus a picture of reality[14]. When I hear or see a proposition expressed in a language, it is for me a perceptible expression of the thought of someone else. Its meaning however lies in its (the expression) ability to convey

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[9] Stroll Avrum, *Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) p. 11
[10] Cf. Mcginn Marie, *Elucidating the Tractatus* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 91
[11] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009. No. 4.06
[12] Ibid., 3.
[13] Ibid. 1.1
[14] Ibid. 4.01

the picture of reality in the speaker or writer's mind into mine not just as words, ideas or concepts but as pictures. This picture is either true or false depending on whether or not it is able to present the facts of the reality the way they are. This is the logical relationship of language thought, and the world.

Propositions are made in a language and each language is composed of words which are not merely jumbled-up, but must stand "*in a determinate relation to one another.*"[15] Words that make propositions correspond to objects in reality,[16] not by naming them, but acting as signs representing them.[17] Propositions picture reality in the sense that their elements (words) depict or identify that there are objects in the world, and the arrangement of the elements make perspicuous description of the state of affairs of these objects.[18]

Wittgenstein refers to the content of propositional sign as simple signs[19] or names.[20] And a name means an object. The object is its meaning. For instance 'A' is the same sign as 'A'. Again he conceives of objects as absolutely simple and not merely as simple relative to some system of annotation.[21] However, names do not seem to picture anything in reality except when they are combined to form a proposition which forms the picture of a state of affair.[22] The challenge for Wittgenstein now is to define what an object is. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein did not give an example of what objects are for it was quite a puzzle for him. He is recorded to have said that

> "*it seems that the idea of the simple is already to be found in that of the complex and in the idea of analysis, and in such a way that we come to this idea quite apart from examples of objects, or of propositions which mention them, and we realize the existence of the simple objects-a priori- as a logical necessity.*"[23]

The aura of ambiguity which Wittgenstein hangs on the notion of object has made some philosophers to ascribe a flavour of metaphysics to his work. Is it the case that names do not represent anything concrete in the world, or that we know objects represented by names *a priori*?

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[15] Ibid., 3.14
[16] Ibid., 2.13
[17] Ibid., 3.221
[18] Ibid., 4.023; 2.01
[19] Ibid., 3.201
[20] Ibid., 3.202
[21] Ibid., 2.021
[22] Ibid., 4.031
[23] *Wittgenstein's Notebooks* p. 60, In Norman Malcolm "Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Ed. Donald M. Borchert, 1967 p. 805.

All pictures must have in common with reality the same logical form in order to be able to picture reality at all. This form is what he call "form of reality."[24] As a result, propositions of thought since they picture reality have the same form as the reality they picture. For instance take the sentence "the computer is to the left of the book." This means quite different from another sentence contains exactly the same words "the book is to the left of my computer." Hence the spatial relationship between words in the sentences acts as a picture to depicting the spatial relationship between objects in reality. Picture forms or forms of reality are rules of picturing that are exhibited in the meaningful propositions that correctly capture reality.[25]

Although a picture can picture reality, it cannot depict its own from of representation. We make assertions using propositions that act as picture, but we cannot describe how our proposition succeeds in representing reality.[26] We can neither say how language represents the world nor describe the logical form of language.[27] We can only identify the words in a sentence and make meaning out of them, i.e. infer state of affair which a sentence describes, but we cannot explain what the combination of words in a sentence mean in themselves. Yet if the logical structure of a sentence is incorrect, we can identify it, but we cannot explain why it is so, or how we were able to identify the flaws, because" *what can be shown cannot be said.*"[28]

3.2. Propositions

A combination of genuine names connected in a particular pattern make u an elementary proposition which is unanalyzable.[29] Each elementary statement asserts the existence or subsistence of a state of affair. What Wittgenstein genuinely refers to as a proposition seems to be a co-joining of elementary statements, because he says that "*it is obvious that the analysis of propositions must bring us to elementary propositions which consists of names in immediate*

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[24] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009. No.2.18

[25] Cf. . Mcginn Marie, *Elucidating the Tractatus* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 77

[26] Norman Malcolm "Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Ed. Donald M. Borchert, 1967 p. 804

[27] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing 2009). No.21

[28] Ibid., 4.1212

[29] Ibid., 4.22

combinations"[30] if an elementary proposition succeeds in describing a state of affair, it is considered true, it otherwise, it is false.

3.3. The Nature of Thought and Language

In the preface, Wittgenstein was clear about one of the objectives of the Tractatus, which is to "*draw a limit to thought or rather not to thought but to the expression of thought.*" It has been established that thoughts are sentences or propositions that are sensible, and sentences can only be in a language. Therefore, it implies that thinking is impossible without a language. Due to the between relationship thought and language, a limitation of language means a limitation of thought, and so understanding of thought (its nature, and veracity) is founded on understanding of language form that expresses thought.[31] Wittgenstein's interest in language and the world stems from the writings of Russell and Gotlobb Frege in the Theory of Description and Foundations of Logic. He observed that the use of language in ordinary discourse is laden with misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the world. Ordinary language presents to us adulterated state of affair. For instance:

1. Bola is dark
2. Laziness is a repulsive character.

Both sentences are grammatically correct, in that we have subjects- Bola and laziness, and predicates that serve to describe the subjects-dark and repulsive character. It also has a copular joining the subject and predicate. Both of them make sense to an English user, but we cannot explain how this is so. However, Bola is a noun, a human being whereas 'laziness' is not a thing that can be encountered in the world, and so may not be really fit to be referred to as a subject. Thus there must be something about sentence (2) that is not explicit. How do we unravel the underlying presumptions in this sentence? From this is what prompts Wittgenstein to conclude that "*Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes*"[32] Russell found

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[30] Ibid., 4.221
[31] Grayling A. C, Wittgenstein, *A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 19
[32] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009.No. 4.022

the solution o this puzzle in logic (later Russell) and this makes up his Theory of Description. Using a hypothetical statement, I will try to explain how language disguises thought.

3.   The king of Imo State is smart

But there is no current king of Imo State, so does it mean that the statement is false? Meinong tried to respond to this by positing that every expression with a referring or denoting function in a sentence does denote something, either an actually existing item or a subsisting item.[33] Thus a proposition, for Meinong, can refer to an encounterable object or a subsistent one. So statement (3) is true.

Russell did not assent to this explanation and so set out to finding the method of analysing the logical certainty of propositions. He came to the conclusion that every statement made in ordinary discourse is loaded with assumptions which are logically connected premises from which the statement follows. Thus statement (3) can be said to be made up of:

4.   There is a king of Imo State currently.
5.   There is only one thing in the universe who is the king of Imo State
6.   That thing is smart.

Statements 4, 5 and 6 are the ground upon which premise 3 was made. Proposition 3 is true if statements 4-6 are true. On the other hand, proposition 3 is false if statements 4 or 6 are false. In this same vein, we can say that proposition 2 is built on many assumptions such as:

7.   There is a character called laziness
8.   There is a thing in the universe that displays the character of laziness
9.   That thing is repulsive.

This analysis helps to dissipate the prejudice against the term 'laziness' as used as a subject. In its use, it represents or points to an actual encounterable object in reality i.e. someone who is lazy. Again its truth function depends on the truth or falsity of the individual premises that make up the chain of thought.

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[33] Grayling A. C, Wittgenstein, *A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 23

Wittgenstein develops upon Russell's theory of description using Frege's logic. To evaluate the credibility of a statement requires that each elementary statement be linked up with other elementary statements to form a complex proposition. This link is achieved by the use of truth functional connectives including "if, and, or, then, if and only if." The content of the statement under analysis are reduced to logical symbols in order to exclude ambiguity. Names are represented by single letters such as capital X, Y and Z; elementary propositions take the form of 'fx' or small case letters such as p,q, r,s. When each elementary statement is reduced, all the statements are now combined using the truth functional connectives.

3.4. Structure of the World

Since elements in a proposition describe objects in reality, Wittgenstein concludes that arrangement of elements that make up an elementary statement are a picture of arrangements of object in reality. Likewise, the logical connections between elementary statements that make-up a complex propositions are a picture of the logical connection between states of affair in reality. For he says "*in a state of affair, objects fit into one another like the links of a chain.*"[34] Because the existence and subsistence of states of affair is reality[35] and the sum total or reality is the world, therefore the limit of our thought is the limit of our world.[36] This is how Wittgenstein describes the nature of our thought in relation to the nature of the world.

According to the *Tractatus*, if a proposition is true for all the truth possibilities of the elementary statements, it is a tautology; if on the other hand, it is false for all the truth possibilities of the elementary statement, then it is a contradiction. Both contradiction and tautology say nothing about the world, so we do not need them except that the show the formal –logical- properties of language and the world.[37]

The implication of this conclusion in philosophy is immense. Valid propositions which are product of thought say only things that are, never things that will be. Tautologous statements on the other hand can predict state of affairs, but do not say anything about the world. Therefore, there is no necessity in the world, no essentials, no right or wrong ways of looking the world of

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[34] Cf. Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009. No. 2.03
[35] Ibid., 2.06
[36] Ibid., 5.63; 5.632
[37] Ibid., 6.12

acting. This position is hostile to the claims about God being the necessarily being. If this is flawed, then all propositions of religion and metaphysics are not to be considered.

Whether a propositions is false or true, it still remain part of reality by virtue of the accidental nature of state of affair. So nothing has value in itself if everything is accidental.[38]In philosophy, the two fields that deal with value are ethics and aesthetics. For Wittgenstein,

> "*it is impossible for there to be a proposition of ethics...... It is clear, however, that ethics has nothing to do with punishment and reward in the usual sense of the terms. So our question about the consequences of an action must be unimportant.--At least those consequences should not be events*"[39]

Nothing is objectively right or wrong because things are the way they are. In extension, a consensus method of analysing the beautiful is non-tenable because nothing is truly beautiful or ugly.

3.5. Tractatus and Logical Positivism

When Wittgenstein returned to Vienna, he was introduced to Moritz Schlick, one of the leaders and pioneer[40] of the Vienna Circle or Logical Positivist.[41] The Tractatus served the anti-metaphysical and empiricist agenda explored by this group. Their point of departure is captured in these words:

> "*The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science--i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy--and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person--he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy--this method would be the only strictly correct one.*"[42]

Wittgenstein's view that all propositions are truth-functions of 'elementary propositions' was juxtaposed with Carnap's constitution of scientific concepts from a basis of 'elementary experiences' so as to create a new, logically rigorous form of empiricism according to which all

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[38] Ibid., 6.41
[39] Ibid., 6.42; 6.422
[40] Others include Otto Neurath, Hans Hahn, Herbert Feigl, Friedrich Waismann, Olga Hahn, Victor Kraft, Philipp Frank, Kurt Reidemeister et al.
[41] Cf. Kenny Anthony, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, Vol. 4. (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2007) p. 58
[42] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009. No. 6.53

meaningful - scientific - propositions are reducible to propositions about immediately given experience.[43]

The Logical Positivists divided all statements into three classes. First were logical statements which are either true or false according to their structure of the elementary components. They can either be tautologies when they are true and contradictory when they are false, under all and every condition. They are not of interest to philosophers because they do not provide any new information. The second class of statements are metaphysical propositions which are nonsensical because either they do not obey the syntax rule of sentence formation or are altogether meaningless. The third class are the statements of matters of fact (from David Hume). These are of interest to philosophers because they bother on real life situations. Enquiry into their veracity is a veritable tool for development since it adds new information to our store of knowledge. It is pertinent to know that the 19th-century French mathematician and philosopher Auguste Comte who named this school "Positivist" choose it because of the reality and constructive tendency of its doctrines. His interest was in the reorganization of the society by scientific development. Science with its claim of knowledge of natural forces when explored could enhance the good of humanity because it create crevasses in nature to enable man manipulate nature.

They developed on Wittgenstein's work by proposing that all knowledge claims must have their foundation in experience, which will be the criterion of verification or falsification of a proposition. If a proposition cannot be empirically verified, and it is not, or is not reducible to a logical proposition, it is therefore useless. This is the basis of the Verification Principle, which is a pungent weapon of attack on metaphysics.[44] In addition, logical positivists reject the picture theory of meaning which is central to the *Tractatus*. Logic, the ideal language of philosophy was used to reduce statements to truth-functional elementary statements which have truth conditions. Ideal language was found not only to be able to articulate the ordinary sentences of natural languages but it also can reveal distinctions that such languages conceal.

Logical positivists were gradually tilting towards scientism where they met with obstacles. The point of argument was whether experience or general laws of science was the ideal tool of

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[43] Cf. Micheal Friedsman, "Logical Positivists", *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Version 1.0, London and New York: Routledge (1998)
[44] Cf. Kenny Anthony, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, Vol. 4. (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2007). p. 59

verification. If we say experience, one must consider that experience is private to each individual. Thus what Biodun considers as truth by experience, Chukwudi may consider as illusion by the same experience. Again in some cases, experiences are stripped of communicability. [45] If on the other hand, we insist that general laws are most appropriate, we run the risk of the shortcoming of scientific laws, that is, of being falsified and replaced by a more sophisticated one not by proving the falsity of the earlier law, but by what Thomas Kuhn calls "paradigm shift." There was a shift from verification theory to falsification principle. By this, a proposition is meaningful only if there are observations that would be relevant to its truth or falsity. Drawing from this postulations, all metaphysical, ethical and theological doctrines are meaningless, not because of any defect of logical thought, but because they are unverifiable.[46]

4.0. Philosophical Investigation (Later Wittgenstein)

After years of publishing the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein continued to contemplate on the problem of philosophy and his earlier work. In 1953, he published another work of great quality, *Philosophical Investigation,* which looked like a denouncement of the Tractatus. However, close study of the work shows that it was more of a transition. What marks this transition from early to later Wittgenstein can be summed up as the total rejection of dogmatism or intransigent obedience to rules; a move from realism of logic to that of ordinary language as the centre of philosophical attention; from an emphasis on definition and analysis to family resemblance and language game; and from systematic philosophical writing to an aphoristic style- all has to do with the transition towards anti-dogmatism.[47] It was also a refutation of Ideal Language philosophy developed by the Logical Positivists. The line of argument of the Investigations was later termed Ordinary Language Philosophy because it restored the place of natural language in solving philosophical problems.

4.1. Language

It is held in the *Tractatus* that any propositions presuppose the whole of language. In the *Investigations,* Wittgenstein rejects this idea by postulating that language is not something

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[45] Ibid., p. 59
[46] Ibid., p. 274
[47] Cf. Harry Prosch, *The Genesis of Twentieth Century Philosophy*. (New York: Double Day and Company, Inc., 1966). p. 176

complete and autonomous[48] but something that cannot be investigated independently of other considerations, for language is woven into all human activities and behaviour and accordingly our many different uses of it are given content and significance by our practical affairs, our occupations, and dealings with people and other components of the world.[49] To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life.[50]

In order to comprehend language and its relation to the world, we must not try to set up a systematic philosophical theory of language, but remove the misunderstanding that language has a definite structure. There is no unitary account of language and no unitary structure.[51] Rather there are different kinds of linguistic activities, necessitating that there be different ways in which grammar of language works.[52] Language is not one uniform thing, but a host of different activities. By activity, we mean its application. We use language to describe, report, inform, affirm, deny, speculate, give orders, ask questions, tell stories etc.[53] these are but a few ways of applying language in daily life, and Wittgenstein calls them Language-game. In each language-game, we have a peculiar language structure as opposed to *Tractatus* claim that all languages have a common underlying logical structure. There is also nothing common to these various language-games or linguistic usages. What makes all games 'game' is not that they have anything in common but that they are activities, and in this forms "*a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing; similarities in the large and small.*" [54]This overlapping similarity is what he calls 'Family Resemblance.' Thus to understand the working and meaning of language, one need to first recognize its variety and multiplicity instead of producing something common to all that we call language.

4.2. Propositions

The investigations flaws the denotative theory of meaning by which a word (name) points to some object in reality as presented in the *Tractatus*. Naming is not the basis of meaning, but is

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[48] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009.No. 2; 18
[49] Kenny Anthony, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, Vol. 4. (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2007). p.137
[50] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing) 2009.No. 19
[51] Ibid., 65
[52] Ibid., 33
[53] Ibid., 23
[54] Ibid., 66

part of a language-game is. Words have no meaning unless they are laid down within a language-game and understood by participants in the game. [55] He does not seem to deny the whole idea of a proposition picturing the world, but maintains that expressions cannot be restricted to one meaning, based on a preconceived idea of structure of language, but is dependent upon the language-game in which it is used.

He however denies that we always understand a proposition, even if it is a grammatically correct sentence whose words we understand.[56] Sentences have sense only in special circumstances, in other circumstances, we do not understand them, or we misunderstand them.[57] Therefore, the meaning of an expression is in its use, and this use is within a language-game in which the expression plays a part.[58]

Nevertheless, before one can find out what a name stands for, one must already have mastered the linguistic activities within the language game to which the word or name belong. In a nutshell, in a circumstance, making an expression of thought may mean asserting something. In another, the same expression may mean describing a thing, or asking a question. Therefore language does not have a uniform structure.

4.2. Rule, Form of Life, and Private Language

Considering the fact that language is an activity, Wittgenstein is of the view that it makes no sense for one to say that he/she has mastered the rules of a language by merely knowing the structure of two or three sentences within a language game. The possible questions that arise as a result of this claim are: How do we learn rules of language? How do we follow the rules? Are the rules in our minds or we know them by constant practices?[59] Rules for Wittgenstein do indeed guide and provide standard of correctness, but they do so because they are based on agreement.[60] To follow a rule correctly, is to conform to the established practices of the

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[55] Norman Malcolm "Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Ed. Donald M. Borchert, 1967 p. 810

[56] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2009) .No. 117

[57] Ibid., 514

[58] Norman Malcolm "Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Ed. Donald M. Borchert, 1967 p. 811

[59] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2009). No. 102;103

[60] Ibid., 234

community. Thus, rule following is a practice embedded in the customs of a community, a community who unanimously agrees to apply these rules to their language game. On this he says "*So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?"—It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but inform of life."*[61]

Is it possible for someone to have a language known to him/her alone? Can there be a so-called private language? Using pain (sense perception) as an analogy, Wittgenstein shows that one cannot privatise his sensation. You know your sensation because you know what your language describes it, and how people react towards it. The idea of a private language according to him a contradiction, because language require rules and rules implies a customary way of doing something.[62] To speak a language is to participate in the form of life of a people,[63] coming to share a form of life constitutes in being trained to share it; such training takes place in the public, otherwise it is not training in the sharing of a form of life. [64] Also, given that language is basically for communication, who will the one who claims to have a private language communicate with? As private stands in opposition to public, so does private language stand in opposition to public language, which makes private language nonexistent.[65]

4.4. Rules of Understanding Language

There is a natural tendency to believe that understanding language is a mental process geared towards its usage. That is, when we listen or read a text, there are neuronal activities. But Wittgenstein argues against this view by saying that "*But isn't that only because of our too slight acquaintance with what goes on in the brain and the nervous system? If we had a more accurate knowledge of these things, we would see what connections were established by the training.."*[66] He thus maintains that understanding a language is not a brain processes which derive the meaning of an expression by evaluating it against the uniform structure of language. It is rather

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[61] Ibid., 241
[62] Cf. Ibid., 304
[63] Kripke, Saul, *Wittgenstein on rules and Private Language*. (Massachusett: Harvard Uuniversity Prress, 1982). p. 96
[64] Cf. Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2009). No., 244, 257, 283.
[65] Grayling A. C, *Wittgenstein, A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 99
[66] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2009). No. 158

by training and practice that we come to understand and use a language. Since language cannot boast of a uniform structure, the rules of language are learnt and used by practice.

5.0. Conclusion

The novelty of Wittgenstein's works places him on an extraordinary pedestal. It would seem that his works contradicted each other, but as said earlier, the *Philosophical Investigations* is a transition, a development, or an evolution from the *Tractatus*. In both cases, he maintains that the job of the philosopher is purely descriptive and never prescriptive. This task of prescribing should be left to the natural sciences. He did not shift ground on the problem of philosophy which he identifies in both works as the problem of language, and were his major concern. The correct method of philosophy would be to say nothing except what can be said, and so *whatever we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence*.[67] Therefore the job of the philosopher is to clarify propositions. It is in propositions that people claim knowledge and truth, so a deep understanding of language will expose the truth or falsity of thought. Wittgenstein attributed the rejection of natural language as a proper agent of philosophic discourse to human prejudices and myopic understanding the relationship between language and different worldviews, rather than on the deficiency of language.

Wittgenstein's writings influenced analytic philosophers of the 19th century. His emphasis on linguistics and human behaviour, practices and customs in the *Investigations* make him a likely candidate for anti-realism. Others rather advocate for a realist position that will ultimately lead to scepticism. In his treatment of rules, what is true or false is what human in a particular time at a particular place consider true or false. If observational evidences can be explained by many mutually inconsistent theories (accruing from a consensus), how then can we come to the knowledge of what the world truly is. Thus his position leads to scepticism, non-objectivity of truth or subjectivity based on community beliefs, and relativism.

Conversely, Wittgenstein will not lay claim to any of these positions since he is vehemently opposed to theories and dogma (even though he has also setting forth a theory). Wittgenstein's ideas have become unfashionable today because of its anti-theoretical, anti-scientism positions. It

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[67] Wittgenstein Lugwig, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921). Tranl. By G. E. M. Anscombe. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing 2009), No. 7

is for the modern philosopher better left due to the problems associated with its being too difficult to interpret and too easy to misrepresent.

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