

# World and Forms of Life in Wittgensteinian Philosophy

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**Abstract:** “How the world can be described?” is still in constant debate. Wittgenstein gave two views regarding the world. Wittgenstein as a linguistic philosopher tried to describe the world in terms of language. In his early philosophy, he advocated “picture theory” to describe the world. However, in his later philosophy, his view was more practical. He regarded the world to be our everyday world. He regarded the world to be forms of life.

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## 1.Introduction

Ludwig Wittgenstein dominates the history of twentieth century analytic philosophy. There are two important philosophical masterpieces written by him, which are completely different from each other. They are *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*. Both these books were written by him in different stages of life. In the early stage which was reflected in *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein tried to solve all the major problems of philosophy. It was based on the idea the philosophical problem arise from misunderstanding the logic of our language. He also believed that the language has a logical structure which is identical with the structure of the world. In other words he believed that language mirrors world. However, in *Philosophical Investigations* which is regarded to be the later stage of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, he had quite a different view from that of *Tractatus*. In *Philosophical Investigations*, though he believed that language and world are somehow related to each other but he abandons his earlier view that there is an isomorphism between the structure of language and the structure of the world. Here, he adopts a more practical view. He regarded language to be a part of “form of life”.

### World in *Tractatus*

In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein holds that the structure of world or reality can only be understood through the linguistic analysis. He tries to develop a metaphysical system from the consideration of language and meaning. The very first stanza of *Tractatus* states that, “The world is everything that is the case”.<sup>1</sup> He attempted to develop a conception of the world which is logically possible. He used different concepts through which he tried to build up the conception of the world. He regarded the world to be composed of facts not of things. He states that “The world is totality of fact not of things”.<sup>2</sup> He believed that the complete description of the world cannot be found in the complete catalogue of things rather the complete description of the world is to be found in the complete catalogue of all facts that hold of it. With these thoughts in mind, he arrived at the “picture theory of meaning”. According to this theory, the structure of language pictures the structure of world. Language consists of

atomic propositions, they are the ultimate building blocks of language, and they are simple and contain names of objects. To every atomic proposition within language, there must be a corresponding object out in the world. Moreover, according to Wittgenstein, the world is composed of facts which consist of states of affairs. State of affairs consists of objects which correspond to the names in the atomic propositions in language. Meaning of a name is the object it denotes. This is how, he believed, language pictures the world Thus, this was the view of world which we found in *Tractatus*.

### World in *Philosophical Investigations*

The world in *Philosophical Investigations* is different from that of *Tractatus*. Here, Wittgenstein has rejected his earlier views and even criticized them. The fundamental aim of *Investigations* was to show that his earlier views were not correct. Later, he realized that “picturing” is just one aspect of language. It is not the only way language functions or language represents the world. Jaakko Hintikka, in his book, “*Investigating Wittgenstein*”, stated that, “In the *Tractatus*, language was assumed as language of immediate experience. But, in the turning point of Wittgenstein’s philosophical development, which took place in 1929, there was the replacement of phenomenological language by an everyday physicalistic language or everyday public language as his operating language.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, Wittgenstein has discarded his earlier views and here the approach is more practical than phenomenal. Thus, the relation between language and world is depended on the usage of this “everyday language.” He believed language to be more realistic rather than representation. He regarded language to be a part of forms of life.

### Forms of Life

The idea of “forms of life” is the most difficult view found in *Philosophical Investigations*. It appears only five times in the whole book. Nowhere in the book, Wittgenstein gave any detailed account on this idea. However, it is one of the important views in Wittgenstein’s philosophy because it reflects what Wittgenstein tries to explain about the world in *Philosophical Investigations*, he regarded forms of life as a way of living. Here Wittgenstein idea of

the world is more practical than metaphysical. J. F. M Hunter, in his article, "Forms of Life in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*" has given four interpretations of forms of life. They are;

1. "A form of life is the same as a language game and calling a language game a form of life is saying that it is something formalized or standardized in our life; that is one of life's form."
2. "A form of life is a sort of package of mutually related tendencies to behave in various ways: to have certain facial expression, to make certain gestures, to do certain things like count apples or help people and to say certain things."
3. "To say that something is a form of life is to say that it is a way of life, or a mode, a manner, fashion or style of life: that it has something important to do with the class structure, the values, the religion, the type of industry and commerce and of recreation that characterize a group of people."
4. "... the sense I am suggesting is more like something typical of a living being: typical in the sense of being very the same class as the growth or nutrition of living organisms or as the organic complexity which enables them to propel themselves about, or to react in complicated ways to their environment."<sup>4</sup>

All these views of Wittgenstein are taken from *Philosophical Investigations* and hence, are very difficult to understand which can be said to be a style of writing of Wittgenstein. In all these instances, Wittgenstein has mentioned forms of life and language together. This shows how form of life is interwoven with language. Hunter points out that, what Wittgenstein meant by forms of life from the above paragraphs is that language apart from form of life cannot be imagined. If we imagine any occurrence of any sort of language game we have to imagine it in connections to some forms of life. In case of Wittgenstein's example of shopping for five red apples, for example, we have one meaningful activity or form of life carried out by means of three different languages games-in this case counting, identifying colors and picking out objects. The three games are unified into one meaningful pattern of action. It is easy to imagine the three games functioning in terms of other quite different forms of life; as for example, awarding five red apples, painting a picture of five red apples, teaching arithmetic by means of five red apples etc.

Moreover, Wittgenstein also regarded the forms of life as the actions which are established as belonging to a group and which has a common meaning shared in by the members of that group. Wittgenstein considers another example of a case where we would not be able to learn a language because we would not be able to see how it fitted into people activities. He imagines of visiting a strange country. He states, "Let us imagine that the people in that country carried on the usual human activities and in the course of them employed, apparently, an articulate language. If we watch their behavior, we find it intelligible, it seems 'logical.' but when we try to learn their language, we find it impossible to do so."<sup>5</sup> Here, it is imagined that the people "carried on the usual human

activities"-that is, they do things that look like our forms of life. But we do not know what these activities mean to them because we cannot figure out how what they say is connected with them and in addition we cannot even figure out what they are saying because we cannot; see what it has to do with what they are doing. Every group of people belonging to different community has their own forms of life. Even animals may have their own forms of life which cannot be understood by us. Wittgenstein stated that, "if lion could talk we cannot understand them."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the question of whether animal there are forms of life among animals runs head-on into the question of what point of the word understanding no longer applies. Thus, every form of living has their own forms of life. Every form of life is represented within language. Thus every way of living is represented within language.

## 2. Conclusion

The idea of forms of life is very much related to what Wittgenstein meant by an everyday world. It is the everyday practical public world which is reflected in Wittgenstein view of forms life. This idea of Wittgenstein is very different from the concept of world found in the *Tractatus*. Here, Wittgenstein has given language a broader platform than that of *Tractatus*. His views are more realistic and practical. It is not only theoretical but also involves practices unlike his earlier views. Thus, we can see actions and language are put together to describe the everyday world in *Philosophical Investigations*.

Wittgenstein's later philosophy has notably given up the logical syntax of the *Tractatus* and the logical method of understanding the world. However, the accent is still on language as the source of the intelligibility of the world of experience. But, as it is amply evidenced in Wittgenstein's later writings, language is not conceived of as a logical syntax, i. e. logical calculus but is now thought as a multitude of language game, i. e., forms of language in a form of life. As a consequence, the world is not conditioned by logic, but by the forms of language as occurring in actual practice. That is, the logical method of understanding the world has been transformed into method of understanding through grammar as embodying the forms and conditions of all language use. Thus, now the essence of the world is not determined by logic, but by the grammar of our language which is used in our everyday language in a form of life.

## References

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