

The Later Wittgenstein's Wise Maturity. The Philosophical Quarantine. Forbidden Metaphysical Uses of the Words

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Abstract: Ludwig Wittgenstein is one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, author of fundamental contributions to the development of modern logic and philosophy of language. He revolutionized the history of thought in two ways, as a result, two periods are clearly distinguished in his philosophy: the one that corresponds to the descriptive theory of meaning and the other that supports the practical aspect of language and revolves around the maxim "the meaning of a word lies in its use". The greatest achievement of the second period is *Philosophical Investigations*, a work that lasted twenty years and was published posthumously in 1951. If his only work published during his lifetime, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is listed as one of the most difficult philosophical works and reflects The Early Wittgenstein thought, *Philosophical Investigation* is considered to be his most important one and put in the light The Later Wittgenstein's wise maturity. Moving away from the metaphysical uses of words by specific procedures such as language games, the ability to see clearly the word's image, without deluding ourselves in enigmatic interpretations but, only by resorting to the simple process of description make possible Wittgensteinian philosophy conceptually based on the idea of life form shared between members of a community at a given time.

Keywords: *Wittgenstein, philosophy, metaphysics, language-game, words, concrete, pragmatic, use, quarantine.*

Motto:

*If something is good, it is also divine.
Strange as it may sound, that's my whole ethic.*

Avant-propos

Ludwig Wittgenstein is one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, author of fundamental contributions to the development of modern logic and philosophy of language. He revolutionized the history of thought in two ways, as a result, two periods are clearly distinguished in his

philosophy: the one that corresponds to the descriptive theory of meaning and the other that supports the practical aspect of language and revolves around the maxim “the meaning of a word lies in its use”.

The first period corresponds to the work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, one of the most difficult philosophical works and the only one published during the author's lifetime, which reflects influences of Arthur Schopenhauer thinking, his professor Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege. Descriptive theory of meaning establishes a correspondence between the form of language and the form of the world, a correspondence that logic would be able to express, to demonstrate, thanks to its tautological (McGuinness 2008: 58) sentences, which say nothing about the world, but only describe it. Through the theses presented in this paper, Wittgenstein claimed to solve all the major problems of philosophy, a goal evaluated with a high degree of appreciation by the anti-metaphysical followers of logical positivism¹.

The honesty of his philosophical ideas was so great that, in the second period, he did not hesitate to destroy his monumental work, although, as mentioned above, many worshiped it and the author himself understood it as the final point of philosophy.

The greatest achievement of the second period is *Philosophical Investigations*, a work that lasted twenty years and was published posthumously in 1951. In the pages of this study, he demolishes the idea that the meaning of a word is an immutable thing that would accompany him forever. The meaning of a word therefore lies in its use in a given linguistic context.

Thus, philosophy recorded him through the ambivalence of his ideas, delimiting his writing topic in two major currents: the *Early Wittgensteinian work* and the *Late Wittgensteinian work*. This article approaches the philosophical ideas world within the boundaries of the second Wittgenstein, ideas that we have gathered, synthesized and metaphorically entitled: *The Wittgensteinian wise maturity*.

Biographical landmarks embedded in the history, thought and culture of his time

In order to understand an author's philosophy in all its nuances, it is indispensable to analyze his life, as well as the historical social context in which he developed his ideas.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, born in the modern era, on April 26, 1889, just a few days after Adolf Hitler, in Vienna, in the heart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was named by one of his exegetes as *a charismatic enigma*².

¹ *Neopositivism* or *logical positivism* emerged in the early twentieth century; the foundations of this philosophical current were laid by the Viennese Circle of Logical Empiricism based on the theories of Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein in which they intended to give philosophy a rigorous, pragmatic and exact character, eliminating what they called arbitrary speculation and replacing it with the logic of science. These theories have influenced many physicists and logicians, among the most important representatives being: Rudolf Carnap, Moritz Schlick, Otto Neurath, Philipp Frank, Alfred Ayer and others.

² J. Richeter Duncan, Virginia Military Institute, U.S.A.

What exactly led to the shaping of this beautiful aphorism, we will understand from the way in which the author's world left his mark on his soul, on his mind and all his exalted existence. In the year of his birth, the heir to the crown and the only son of Emperor Franz Joseph I, Prince Rudolf, died at the age of thirty, along with his mistress, leaving the empire without a direct successor. The fate of such a gesture was a severe blow to the emperor, who had already suffered because of his brother Maximilian, shot by Mexican liberals, and who was soon to face the assassination of his wife, Empress Elisabeth, his beloved Sissi, stabbed in the heart by an Italian anarchist during a trip to Genoa. The reign of Emperor Franz Joseph I of Habsburg, which began with the Austrian revolution of 1848 and culminated in World War I, spanned a 68-year period of placid conservatism. The monarchy was very present in Viennese social life, although as if it were almost a mythical reality. In practice, the bigoted values of the bourgeoisie were those that actually supported Viennese society.

In Vienna, only the stability of the whole and formal appearances was important. Order, a rigid, completely frozen hierarchy, and sobriety in the sense of the lack of tumult have for many years been a tacit and indisputable creed. The empire shone in the midst of the deepest suffering. It was impossible to reconcile the fervent intellectual life of Viennese cafes, crammed with readers of international newspapers with the housing crisis faced by refugees and which brought the empire to its knees. Hunger, prostitution, syphilis, coercion of any form of modernism, politicians who encouraged anti-Semitism, the rise of Nazism and Zionism in opposition to the liberal proposal of centralism, secularization and rationalism that embodied the modern scientific spirit, these are the circumstances of a world which will live its own end at the the Great War. More than telling in exposing the cruel reality of this world is the extraordinary novel *The Man Without Qualities* that Robert Musil worked on until the last days of his life. Man without qualities is an embodiment of the idea that man has not any characteristic, but qualities actually sit on individuals like butterflies (Carmona 2020: 15-22).

Wittgenstein's preoccupation with moral perfection determined him in a moment of deep emotional sensitivity and complete suppression of the ego vanity, to insist on confessing to various people several sins he would have committed throughout his life, even associated with the permission to allow them the trivialization of its Jewish origins. Her father's parents were born Jewish and later converted to Protestantism, and her mother, Leopoldine, was a Catholic of Jewish descent by her father's lineage. Wittgenstein was both baptized and buried Catholic, but, in his entire life he was neither a practitioner nor a believer of this religion.

His large and wealthy family, was among the richest in the empire, his father, Karl Wittgenstein leading the local steel industry. Due to his mother's musical talent, their house attracted many people of culture, the composer Johannes Brahms being considered a family friend. The Wittgenstein's patronage was not limited to music. Wittgenstein's father, on the advice of his daughter Hermine, gathered a considerable collection of paintings and sculptures.

Moreover, he financed the construction of the Secession Palace, from the Austrian modernist movement led by Gustav Klimt, the author of the wedding portrait of Margaret, the sister with whom Wittgenstein had a very intense intellectual relationship. The artistic inclinations of the older brothers, Hans for music and Rudolf for theater, led them to flee, one to America and the other to Berlin, as their father, who had inherited their grandfather's authoritarian character, planned a future for his children which excluded the possibility of an artistic journey.

Wittgenstein kept the memory of his brother absorbed in music all his life, singing as if he were possessed by genius; at the age of four he composed operas and a little later, he mastered the violin and the piano. Both Hans and Rudolf and Kurt too, in the war army, took their lives against the background of social and political decline represented by the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the suicidal act seen not only as the expression of an individual's temperament, but rather the direct connection with the moral condition of a society.

These desolate circumstances made his father less intransigent with younger children, including Ludwig. Wittgenstein, who did not share the artistic talent of his brothers, driven by the desire to please his father, chose a path of technical researches, studying engineering in Berlin and later in 1908 aeronautics in Manchester (Monk 1990: 27), while trying to diminish the growing interest all the more obvious for philosophy, which had taken deep roots in him during his high school years in Linz.

This context reflects Wittgenstein's veneration for music and why he occasionally used it to illustrate rather difficult aspects of how he understood knowledge or why his manuscripts abound in musical references. In addition, the artistic environment in which he grew up explains why he sought models for philosophy in art and aesthetics, as well as the almost manic precision he showed when he designed the house for Margarethe.

Once the exact sciences are deepened, the interest in mathematics is outlined, which it irremediably links to philosophical issues. It is the moment when the ferments of his thinking begin to be seen, which is why he arrives in Cambridge (O'Connor & Robertson 2003; Monk 2005: 5) in 1911, to study with Bertrand Russell, on the advice of one of the greatest logicians in history, Gottlob Frege; according to his exegetes, we cannot understand his work without a rigorous knowledge of Russell and Frege thinking that is felt in the Wittgenstein's work.

On the death of his father in 1913, Wittgenstein inherited a considerable fortune (Monk 1990: 96) which he later gets rid of it in a very short time. The following year, at the outbreak of the Great War, he voluntarily enlisted in the Austrian army where he obtained several medals (Monk 1990: 137) for the acts of courage he showed. In the front line, throughout the Great War, he continued his philosophical work, writing almost entirely his valuable work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Bartley 1999: 33-39, 45), published in English with the help of Russell in 1922; this is the only work in all his philosophical activity that saw the pattern light during the author's lifetime.

After the terrible experience of the war, the loss of the comrades, the suicide of his brother Kurt, the nine-month captivity in Italy after the defeat of the Austrian forces, he returns home completely demoralized and contaminated by suicidal thoughts. In September 1919, after obtaining the title of teacher at the Normal School in Vienna, he leaves the country and taught as an elementary school teacher in several villages in southern Austria.

His sister, Hermine commented plastically in her characteristic style about these absurd actions of her brother that she considered extremely intelligent, as if you were using a precision tool to open crates. Taking into account the tragedies in the family and the immediate post-war period with all the disaster installed in Austrian society, the loved ones of the house decided not to intervene in Wittgenstein's decisions (Monk 1990: 169). In 1926 he returned to Vienna disappointed by this experience, and in 1929 he received his doctorate (Wood 1957: 156) at Cambridge with the work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, opportunity to remain in England and teach as a professor at Trinity College.

In the middle of the next decade, he returned to Norway for a short time and wrote the first 188 paragraphs of *Philosophical Investigation*. In 1939, amid the outbreak of World War II, he obtained English citizenship (Klagge 2001: 231) and was appointed full professor at Cambridge. He volunteered during the war in a hospital in London and then as a laboratory officer at the Research Unit in Newcastle. After the war he returned to the University, but soon gave up the position of professor to devote himself entirely to his work. In 1949, after typing *Philosophical Investigation*, he traveled to Russia. Although he returns seriously ill and diagnosed with prostate cancer, he begins working *On Certainty*. He dies in Cambridge, at his doctor's house, with his last memorable words: "Tell them I've had a wonderful life!"

Philosophical Investigation

The *Philosophical Investigation* work (PI 1986) is published posthumously, totals two decades of study and is structured in two parts, which is reflected in both their form and content. The first consists of short paragraphs that try to clarify the nature of language and expose deeply misleading philosophical images, as they are processed and archived in Wittgensteinian thought, while the extension in the second part brings true chapters focused on the philosophy of psychology and its special analysis of both illusory and dangerous images. As Wittgenstein left this world before completing his work, and although elements of the two sides' ideas interfere, he did not get to create a bond of stability between of them.

He begins writing his Researches with an excerpt from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine of Hippo (I. 8.) in which the philosopher tries to explain how he began to speak. Wittgenstein explains that behind the seemingly innocent and impartial description of St. Augustine, lies a whole conception of language, describing it as an image, and precisely this image mirrored the idea he had set out to dismantle, according to which every word it has a meaning, that the meaning is in correlation with the word and that, it is the object that the word

represents; he firmly believed that the demolition of the pre-philosophical image that have blind the view of philosophers, including his own, would have allowed him to put an end to all subsequent philosophical misunderstandings.

Once the image in question was dismantled, it would have been enough to introduce a new metaphor, a healthy image that would not disturb thinking. Thus, the objective presented in the paragraphs of *Philosophical Investigation* was outlined: identifying and eliminating the cause of obscurity in language, communication by dissolving false images that hold us captive and adopting a methodology by introducing healthy metaphors.

The fact that Wittgenstein began his *Philosophical Investigation* with a text from the Saint Augustine's *Confessions* allows to be interpreted in a deeper way. He was convinced that a respectable philosophical journey should begin with a confession, an authentic exercise in introspection, and its subsequent exteriorization; an extreme way to disarm your own pride and to assume the possible misinterpretations of the interlocutors formed under the auspices of a society that was very attached to refined social conventions. The path that had to be taken to be a virtuous person was analogous to that which led to the writing of a quality philosophy. The immersion in the depths of the being armed with the humblest sincerity also raised you to the highest peaks of perfection. From this point of view, the quotation of St. Augustine was a sign of recognition, not a simple critique of his conception of language.

“The meaning of a word lies in its use”

The maxim above is the foundation on which the author, eccentric by nature and by moral attitude, reorganizes the second part of his work. Like his times, where change is taking place everywhere, Wittgenstein liked to identify himself with the man who set fire to the library in Alexandria. The determination with which he attacked his first theories in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* reminds us of the martyrdom of the eternal fire. In his desire to ruin the terrible fantasies of metaphysics, he was willing to take his flaming torch wherever he needed to, considering this task a moral obligation. It is impossible to ignore the association by attitude with the controversial German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche when he declares that he is “pure dynamite!”, as an effect of his contribution on philosophical thinking.

Plastically, in the light of his engineering training, Wittgenstein considered that language treats words as it treats a toolkit with the elements inside it; language relates to words in an identical way, but, just as the levers in a train cab, for example, do not seem to make any difference, they still have distinct functions and do not act in the same way. To elucidate the idea, if we take from the vocabulary of a language the words “time” and “fly” we can construct with them almost identical phrases, such as “time flies” and “fly flies”, although the flight of the fly has nothing to do with the flight of time, the meanings being so distant each other; hence the comparison of words with tools, because they acquire meaning when they are used and, at the same time allow different uses.

Another example to which Wittgenstein refers is the word “brick”, which, in a general sense, is literally the object to which it refers; in another context, we can imagine a classroom in which rude students tell the teacher that it is a “brick”, as an affront to the intelligence or inflexibility of his thinking; also, the author proposes us to reflect on a context in the space of a construction site, and the foreman shouts “Brick!” And immediately a worker complies and gives him a brick. We can deduce here, in the third situation, that this word brick means “Give me a brick” or “I need a brick”, which illustrates Wittgenstein’s maxim that the meaning of a word is rooted in the way it is used in a determined linguistic context.

Language – games and family resemblance

Philosophical research abounds in references to *minilanguages* of this type, a fundamental concept in the late Wittgensteinian work, intitled a *linguistic game* (PI 1986: 2) and which consists of a small language, on a small scale, with clearly defined limits. Wittgenstein believes that understanding how a minimalist part of language works could clarify language as a whole. His linguistic games serve as terms of comparison which, through similarities and differences, as in the brick example, illustrate multiple mechanisms of language. It is very important to add that Wittgenstein does not try to extract the “essence” of language from the study of language games, considering the concept of “essence” as one of those oppressive images that have had several undesirable consequences on human history. Through his language games he wanted to show that language is used in a vast set of ways, absolutely closed, which is why he talks about games and not about the game (Carmona 2020: 85-86).

To better understand this idea of how language games work, Wittgenstein, through his practical and effective approach, says about the interconnection of these games that they are like the kinship of members of a large family (PI 1986: 65). If we leave the language games for the moment and focus on understanding, by analogy, the society games, the author points out that between them there would be a kind of kinship, between card games another, and at least partially, the common features of society games will be different from the ones that card games have in common. It goes without saying that, like the examples in language games, the relationship between a society game and a card game will not be as close as between two games of the same kind (PI 1986: 66).

Another idea that the author insists on in his later work is *the ability to focus on seeing and not thinking* (PI 1986: 11). When we begin to think, we process what we see according to images that we have previously internalized and cemented in the darkness of the subconscious. “Don’t think, look!” (PI 1986: 66) the philosopher kept repeating and recommended all the time; we have to focus on *describing* what we see using the example and the comparison. To help with this consideration, Wittgenstein presents us the following images: what do football and a child who shoot the ball have in common? Do they both mean victory or defeat? Or, how to win at games: in chess do you need luck like at backgammon? The philosopher’s advice, as I have said before, is not to

answer these questions; we clearly see a complicated network of overlapping and intersecting similarities. When we think, our minds are blurred by the fact that something must be in a certain way, even if we do not see it that way, a terrible source of emotional instability with consequences in our lives. The description leads to the dissipation of philosophical problems, through a different presentation of the issue and adapted to what we see. Thus, the description of language transforms words from their metaphysical to pragmatic use. Traditional philosophy uses words such as work or knowledge in a different way from everyday language. The philosopher asks: "What is the thing?" or "What is the thing itself?" while the mother says to her daughter: "Look (that thing) for me!" or "What (thing) do you want for your birthday?"

According to Wittgenstein, philosophical uses of words should be quarantined. The main argument for such a measure was to question the metaphysical uses of words in the sense that they find their identical correspondent in another language; the obvious negative answer raises another question: why should we deal with the problems that uses an illegitimate use? Wittgenstein's philosophy is intended to be a reliable watchdog in ensuring the pragmatic use of language, in order to get it out of the whirlpools in which it ended up enchanted by the siren song of language, away from philosophical enigmas (Carmona 2020: 93). Once the confusions are removed, the superiority of the ethical view will be outlined, amazed by the simple existence of the world.

As in the case with language games, the meanings of a word create a family. To develop an opinion about a word, we must consider all members of its family, therefore we will have to observe and take note of all uses of the word, otherwise, moving away from this principle, our opinion is guilty the sin of simplicity and instead of enlightening us will eclipse our knowledge. Thus, Wittgenstein believes, the best way to really learn words is implemented. A conclusive example in this regard is the meaning of the word "good".

Wittgenstein challenges us to ask ourselves by what examples and by what linguistic game we could sum up the meanings of this word: "Rice is good", "Picasso is good" or the difference between the expressions "My sister is good" and "Everything is good for my sister". If the possibility of not finding solution in exhausting all the meanings generated by the multiple uses of the word bothers us, the author's advice is to learn the concept of language in concrete language games, for example the concept of aesthetic value when attending an art history class or the to cook in the family home. Throughout life, in all contexts, we are trained in the use of language and its rules. And the one who instructs us is the language itself passed through the grammar filter (PI 1986: 371, 373).

Since words are deep in concrete language games, Wittgenstein advises us to ask questions about their nature, just as we ask ourselves about chess pieces, for example. The obvious and somewhat frivolous question it suggests to us: do we pay attention to the physical properties of the pieces? His answer appears in indisputable clarity, namely that they are defined by the rules according to which we move them. Therefore, in Wittgensteinian thought, the question should not be "What are words?" but "how do words work in this concrete game?" This change of perspective presupposes an understanding of

the word as a communication tool inseparable from its use in a given context. The play of language is therefore the primary element, the one that gives meaning to words, the one that gives refuge and form to human feelings and experiences. Language games are miniature realities and the feelings can be truly understood as interpretations of them.

Returning to the example of the chess game in a deeper approach, the author emphasizes the belief that the chess piece is for the chess game what the word is for a concrete language game. Its significance goes beyond the symbol stage by the shape it takes, horse, tower or something else, and it should not be a symbol for anything else as his master Gottlob Frege thought. The symbols, like the pieces, are used according to the rules of the game, there is no other logic than that of the human game, which is the basis of all language games, human practices being paramount in this regard.

All these things builds the late Wittgensteinian philosophy conceptually based on the idea of the *form of life*, an exhaustive and inclusive understanding of the whole reality shared between the members of a community at a given time. It encompasses all the practices of a community of language users, and in order to understand any of these practices we will need to understand the form of life it supports.

And so, Wittgenstein reaches the revealing point where he challenges the whole philosophy of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* arguing the incompatibility of the life form with the artificial language of logic, which aspires to self-sufficiency and believes itself absolved by human conflicts. In the author's mind, this perfect language in theory only imposes a boundary between it and the set of practices circumscribed to a life form. The schism once produced is irreversible, and the only possible foundation is the anthropological one.

Ludwig Wittgenstein remains one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. The postmodernism current named him one of its major representatives. Paradoxically, postmodernism starts from the bankruptcy of the modernist renewal project, which claimed to include either art and culture, or thinking and social life. So how does one explain that such a work identifies with one of the main exponents of modern thought, with someone who, more precisely, had set out to renew the whole history of thought through the critique of language? Precisely because Wittgenstein is one of the great destroyers of idols, in the footsteps of Friederich Nietzsche, the first postmodernist according to the ideologies of this movement.

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