CHAPTER-V
CHAPTER: V

LANGUAGE, THOUGHT AND REALITY

"However strong your rope, you cannot hang anything on it unless it is attached at the other end."

:Schopenhauer

In the concluding chapter we would like to discuss earlier Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language with special reference to its relation with thought and reality, which is the final and focal point of our thesis. It will include detailed exposition of his ‘picture theory of language’ and ‘truth-function theory’. The chief source of our discussions will be *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. After the exposition and interpretation of his main ideas, we would like to approach the different aspects of his theory from a critical point of view. Our whole project will be guided with a historical and political line of inquiry. That means, placing the ideas under discussion, within the socio-political reality and analysing the conditions of their generation and their historical Limitations.

As it is discussed in the second chapter, Wittgenstein, being especially a writer with a unique style of writing, requires a methodological approach, which will help us break the ‘stylistic barriers’ and read between
the lines. Hence we will be guided, specially in this chapter, by a predominantly hermeneutic methodology to lay bare the implications of Wittgensteinian statements. Naturally, then, the approach will be critical and analytical. First we would like to have an exposition of the picture theory of language and its implications on his ontological and epistemological stand in *Tractatus* and then a critical assessment of this expository analysis. Wittgenstein’s own later criticism and rejection of this theory will be taken into account for its better understanding and critical appraisal.

After discussing in the third chapter about Wittgenstein’s conception of language and philosophy, a background is given on which his picture theory of language is founded. An attempt has been made there to understand Wittgenstein’s answer to the questions—‘What is the function of language?’ and ‘What is the structure of language?’ The greater part of the book, *Tractatus* is concerned with the nature of language and its relation to the world. It was Wittgenstein’s major philosophical concern throughout his life. He assumes that the structure of language is revealed by logic and that the essential function of language is to depict or to describe the world.
In the previous chapter, we discussed Wittgenstein’s distinction between what is said in language and what is shown by language. This distinction in *Tractatus* emerges from Wittgenstein’s picture theory of language. Wittgenstein tried in *Tractatus*, to spell out precisely what a logically constructed language can and cannot be used to say. Briefly stated, its seven basic propositions simply state that language, thought, and reality share a common structure, fully expressible in logical terms. In Wittgenstein's view, the world consists entirely of facts. Human beings are aware of the facts by virtue of mental representations or thoughts, which are most fruitfully understood as picturing the way things are. These thoughts are, in turn, expressed in propositions, whose form indicates the position of these facts within the nature of reality as a whole and whose content presents the truth-conditions under which they correspond to that reality. Everything that is true—that is, all the facts that constitute the world—can in principle be expressed by atomic sentences. He writes, a comprehensive list of all the true sentences would picture all of the facts there are, and this would be an adequate representation of the world as a whole.

---

2 TLP, 2.1
3 TLP, 4
Philosophy, as practised in the *Tractatus*, has one overarching goal—to render an account of the essence of the world. This can be done by giving an analysis of the essence of all description, for our knowledge of the world is expressed in our description of it. And whatever is essential to our description must, so Wittgenstein thought, essential to reality in general.

"To give the essence of all description is to give the essence of a proposition"\(^4\)

"To give the essence of a proposition means to give the essence of all description, and thus the essence of the world."\(^5\)

So, the overarching goal is pursued by searching for the essential nature of the proposition. Once this is revealed, all lesser philosophical problems will solve themselves. The key to the search is the notion of depiction.\(^6\) The picture theory of proposition contains Wittgenstein’s answer.

Wittgenstein’s theory of language in the *Tractatus* has two components: the ‘picture theory’ and the ‘truth function theory’. These two theories are designed to answer the questions. How are propositions

\(^4\) TLP, 5.471
\(^5\) TLP, 5.4711
\(^6\) TLP, 4.016
related to the world? and How are propositions related to one another? He writes in Notebook, 'My whole task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition'. Wittgenstein assumes that if we can use language to talk about the world there must be some propositions directly connected with the world, so that their truth or falsity are not determined by other propositions but by the world. These he called 'elementary propositions'. They are the end product of analysis. The truth or falsity of non-elementary propositions are determined by elementary ones. Wittgenstein's answer to the questions asked above goes as: elementary propositions are 'logical pictures' of atomic facts — the basic kind of facts which cannot be further analysed; and all complex propositions are 'truth-functions' of the elementary ones.

"Truth-possibilities of elementary propositions are the conditions of the truth and falsity of propositions."\(^8\)

"A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself)"\(^9\)

Here it is notable the way Wittgenstein arrives at the notions of elementary proposition and atomic fact. Character of his method is \(a\ priori\). An elementary proposition is simply one that cannot be analysed into any further, more basic propositions. Although he was not able to carry out in practice a complete analysis and couldn't offer a single


\(^8\) TLP, 4.41

\(^9\) TLP, 5
example of elementary propositions, but he was sure *a priori* that there must be elementary propositions. He writes in *Notebook*,

"In all the propositions that occur to me there occur names, which, however, must disappear on further analysis. I know that such further analysis is possible, but am unable to carry it out completely. In spite of this I certainly seem to know that if the analysis were completely carried out, its result would have to be a proposition which once more contained names, relations, etc."

Further, he says, these elementary propositions consist of names in immediate combination. Ordinary names such as 'Cow', 'Square' and 'Plato' do not qualify as 'names' in the special sense Wittgenstein is using it, since they can be further analysed. 'A name cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition: it is a primitive sign.' It follows from this that a name must refer to something simple—something without parts. But again he is unable to give any example of 'names'. He says, 'that which a name refers to is called an ‘object’ ‘Objects’ are simple'.

Wittgenstein, adopting Frege's distinction between 'sense' and 'reference' maintains in *Tractatus* that, meaning of a name is the object it

10 NB, p. 61.
11 TLP, 4.221
12 TLP, 3.26
13 TLP, 2.02
14 TLP, 2.02
denotes. If objects do not exist, the elementary propositions would consist of terms without reference and would thus be senseless. But since the sense of all propositions depends ultimately on that of the elementary ones, no proposition would have any sense, which is patently false. Hence, there must be objects. However the difference in Frege's and Wittgenstein's notion lies in that, while Frege made the distinction with regard to sentences, Wittgenstein contends that sentences can only have 'sense' and words or names have 'reference'.

Now coming to the structure of the World, he says, it is made up of objects which hang together in a determinate way to form 'atomic facts', which in turn, make up 'facts' of whatever complexity. It is obvious that each of these, object, atomic fact, and fact, has its linguistic counterpart: name, elementary proposition and proposition. 'The configuration of objects produces atomic facts.'\(^{15}\) In an atomic fact objects fit into one another like the links of a chain\(^{16}\) The linguistic counterpart of the atomic fact, the elementary proposition, 'asserts the existence of the atomic fact'.\(^{17}\) To assert the existence of the atomic fact is to describe the configuration of objects. Hence the general form of propositions is: 'This is how things are.'

\(^{15}\) TLP, 2.0272  
\(^{16}\) TLP, 2.03  
\(^{17}\) TLP, 4.21
After seeing in a Paris traffic-court a reconstruction of a road accident, by means of dolls and toys, Wittgenstein got the idea of a picturing relation between language and the world. He writes, “a proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it.” Similarly a picture represents or misrepresents a situation by virtue of the arrangements of words in language. ‘In a picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of ‘objects.’ There must be one-to-one correspondence between the elements of a proposition and those of the situations it describes. This requirement, however, can only be met by elementary propositions, which alone consist entirely of names, each referring directly to an object. Like a picture, ‘a proposition shows its sense. It shows how things stand if it is true.’ Hence, to understand a proposition means to know, what is the case if it is true.

To summarise, then Wittgenstein’s picture theory can be put like this: Language consists of propositions. All propositions can be analysed into elementary propositions and are truth-functions of elementary propositions. The elementary propositions are immediate combinations of names, which directly refer to objects; and elementary propositions are logical pictures of atomic facts, which are immediate combinations of

19 TLP. 4.01
20 TLP. 2.131
21 4.022
objects. Atomic facts combine to form facts of whatever complexity, which constitute the world. Thus language is truth-functionally structured and its essential function is to describe the world.

To complete Wittgenstein's picture theory of propositions it is needed to add his one further doctrine: the doctrine of Truth-Functional composition. This consists of two essential theses: First, the logical connectives are not names. Secondly, all propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions. Wittgenstein maintains in *Tractatus* that the truth-value of a compound proposition is completely determined by the truth-value of its components; once the truth-value of its components are given, the truth-value of the compound proposition can be calculated. He claims that all propositions are related to elementary propositions truth-functionally.

Thus, an elementary proposition can be true or false depending on whether it matches up with the world or not. Given all elementary propositions, if we know which were true and which false, the world would have been completely described, because the truth-value of any other

---

22 TLP, 4.0312, 5.4
23 TLP, 5.3
A proposition is entirely determined by the truth-values of its component
elementary propositions.24

Wittgenstein's main concern in the *Tractatus* lay in finding out the
philosophical implications of the new logical systems of Frege and Russell
in regard to our logical understanding of the world. Logic and language
provide the method of understanding the world, i.e. the forms of
representation of the world. Based on it is the 'picture theory', which uses
the principle of representation to explain how sentences acquire and keep
their sense. According to this theory, the logical forms of language reflect
the forms of the world, and thus the intelligibility of the world is ultimately
determined by logic. He writes,

“A proposition constructs a world with the help of a
logical scaffolding, so that one can actually see from
the proposition how everything stands logically if it
is true.”25

The most essential logical condition of the possibility of language,
for Wittgenstein, is its representational or pictorial relation with reality. He
says, “all we want is, to investigate the principles of representation as
such.”26 These principles, he says, are the essential principles of all
symbolism. Language is thoroughly representational, since its very
possibility presupposes the fact that propositions are pictures of facts, i.e.
of the world. Language therefore has sense only as a representation of the
world. He writes,

24 TLP, 4.26
25 TLP. 4.023
26 NB. P 23.
"A proposition communicates a situation to us, and so it must be essentially connected with the situation. And the connexion is precisely that it is its logical picture. A proposition states something only in so far as it is a picture." 27

That is to say, the proposition is logically related to a situation for its being able to state something either truly or falsely. It is in this context that Wittgenstein says that a proposition is a picture, i.e. a representation of a fact. A proposition as a picture is essentially a logical picture. "A picture depicts reality by representing a possibility of existence and non-existence of states of affairs." 28

As we saw, to understand Wittgenstein’s solution to the problems of language and the world, it is important to realise that his method of analysis was necessitated a priori. Wittgenstein was preoccupied with the perennial problem of the connection between thought, language, and the world. That there must be ‘an a priori order in the world’ was a conviction the early Wittgenstein never questioned. He says,

"The great problem round which everything that I write turns is: Is there an order in the world a priori, and if so what does it consist in?" 29

"The world has a fixed structure" 30
The reasoning behind Wittgenstein’s method probably is that there must be something common between language and the world so as to think and talk about the world. The common element must lie in their structures. The structure of one can be known if the structure of the other is known. Since logic reveals the structure of language it must also reveal the structure of the world. Therefore it become clear that Wittgenstein’s order of investigation is from the nature of logic to the nature of language and then to the nature of the world. He writes in his Notebooks: ‘My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world.’ More or less Frege and Russell also adopted the same procedure. Russell set himself the problem of determining ‘whether anything, and if so, what, can be inferred from the structure of language as to the structure of the world.’

In *Tractatus*, this order of investigation is presented in a reversed order. The book contains seven main points. The first is dealt with very briefly. The second takes about five pages, the third about ten pages, the fourth, fifth and sixth fifteen to twenty-five each, while the seventh consists of one sentence. Those dealt with most fully largely concern matters of symbolic logic. The shorter expositions concern the relation of logical language to reality. The opening thesis of the book presents Wittgenstein’s theory of the world, his ‘ontology’—

---

31 NB, p. 79
'The world is all that is the case.'

'The world is the totality of facts, not of things.'

Though these statements stand at the beginning, they can be best regarded as conclusions from what follows. The account of the nature of the world is given first because it anticipates and is required by the theory of language, which comes later. The meaning of these metaphysical statements cannot be fully appreciated until his account of the nature of language is understood.

At this point, however some commentators raise a question. When Wittgenstein talks of the 'world', is he in fact talking of ontological reality or is he rather talking of the language world? Are not these opening theses to be taken as recommendations for using certain terms, like 'world' and 'fact', in a certain way? The point of these questions is to suggest not that Wittgenstein might not be presenting an ontology but that he wants to set problems of ontology and epistemology immediately in the context of logic. Thus quite early in Tractatus he uses the expression 'logical space' - "The facts in logical space are the world." His ontology prepares the way for his analysis of the logical structure of language which is very visible in Tractatus. He makes following assertions:

'The world is the totality of facts, not of things.' (1.1)

'We picture facts to ourselves.' (2.1)
'A logical picture of facts is a thought.' (3)
'In a proposition a thought finds an expression that
can be perceived by the senses.' (3.1)
'The totality of propositions is language.' (4.001)

The first thesis (1.1) is almost isomorphic with the last, linguistic thesis (4.001) and forms its ontological counterpart. The gulf between language, thought and reality is bridged by the intermediate steps, which deal with proposition, thought and logical picture, picture in general and facts. These theses refer to one structure: there is one logical space for what can be called 'the world', 'thought' and 'language'. According to him, one can never adopt a position outside logical space and then speak about the structure, about language as a whole or about the correspondence between language and the world. 'The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.'\textsuperscript{36} and 'Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits'\textsuperscript{37} Because of this the problems of ontology, as we mentioned earlier, are placed at the outset in the context of logic. The questions raised in the classical theory of knowledge as to the link between knowledge and reality, the operation of the world on consciousness are ruled out.

\textsuperscript{36} TLP. 5.6
\textsuperscript{37} TLP. 5.61
We can say that, the ontological theses in the *Tractatus*, those that deal with 'the world' and 'facts', are so much part of the whole logical structure, so determined by it, that they directly entail the correspondence between language, thought and the world (reality).

Wittgenstein's entire early philosophy can be characterised by his statement that philosophy "consists of logic and metaphysics, the former its basis."38 There he was mainly concerned with the foundations of logic and with the nature of reality. According to him, as we have noted in the previous chapters, his general philosophical enquiry has extended from the foundations of logic and language to the "nature of the world."39 It means logic is the basis of metaphysics, i.e. logic supplies the ground of the metaphysical enquiry into the nature of reality. This can be said to be the recurrence of the Russell's view that language and logic are inalienably related to the world, and that the structure of language has a discoverable relation with that of the world. As Russell writes: "the properties of language may help us to understand the structure of the world"40

38 NB, p. 93.
39 NB, P.79.
Philosophy, being only a "critique of language"\textsuperscript{41} in \textit{Tractatus}, is concerned according to Wittgenstein, with reality only insofar as it is represented in language. That is to say, we can study reality only insofar as it is accessible through language and logic. This is one of the main theses of Wittgenstein’s early philosophy that language in its logical structure represents the logical structure of the world. Therefore it can be concluded through it that here world is apprehended \textit{a priori} through language, i.e. in its logical forms. Accordingly it can be said, that the world, i.e. the reality which we can philosophically study is the world as it is caught in the network of our symbolism.

As discussed, Wittgenstein’s early philosophical enquiry is concerned with finding out the ‘\textit{a priori} order of the world and so of our language and thought.’\textsuperscript{42} However the \textit{a priori} order of the world so called is discoverable only in language, since the language already represents the world in its own structure. Therefore, Wittgenstein’s question so raised as to the \textit{a priori} order of the world comes down to the question of such an order in our language and thought. The relevance of the question as to the discovery of the logical order of language and thought can be judged from the fact that our apprehension of reality is a fact in our language and thought. So there cannot be an extralinguistic representation of reality. Reality so presented in language is also thought thereby. Thus both thought and reality are linguistic facts in the ultimate analysis. As Max Black points out,

\textsuperscript{41} TLP, 4.0031
\textsuperscript{42} NB, p. 9.
"It was one of Wittgenstein’s distinctive innovations to consider thought only as embodied in what he calls the ‘significant propositions’ and so to transform the question of the relation of thought and reality... into the more promising question of the relation of language and reality."\(^{43}\)

The problem of relation of thought to reality is assimilated into the larger problem; of the relation of language to reality, it is not abolished. Language embodies our forms of thought through which we comprehend reality. Therefore, language encompasses all our significant forms of comprehension of reality.

The nature of the question about thought, according to Wittgenstein, is not psychological, as it is not concerned with the psychological processes. It is concerned with the logical thought as it is embodied in our language. He writes,

"Psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science.

Theory of knowledge is the philosophy of psychology.

Does not my study of sign-language correspond to the study of thought-processes, which philosophers

Thought, for Wittgenstein, is the “logical picture of facts” as it represents the logical structure of the world. In the sense he writes, “the totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world” which we have as our representation of the world. Thus Wittgenstein here comes to realise that thought of the world is our representation of it, i.e., our knowledge of it. Therefore thought is the logical representation of the world. Wittgenstein expresses it by saying,

“A state of affairs is thinkable’: what this means is that we can picture it to ourselves.”

What Wittgenstein means here by ‘picturing’ to ourselves of the world, is our logical construction of the world-situation in language. Thus thought in Wittgenstein’s sense does not refer to how any individual knows the word in his mind but to how it is known in language as such. That is, it raises the problem as to how thought is logically formulated in language.

According to Wittgenstein, logic governs our thought and the laws of logic are also the laws of our thought. For we cannot think anything, which defy the logical laws. That is why he writes, “Thought can never be

---

44 TLP, 4.1121
45 TLP, 3
46 TLP, 3.01
47 TLP, 3.001
of anything illogical, since, if it were, we should have to think illogically.\textsuperscript{48} Thus in depicting the nature of thought, Wittgenstein comes down to the logical forms which characterise our language.

Language is a logical picture, i.e., a logical model of reality for Wittgenstein. By this he means that language represents the logical structure of the world. The fundamental thesis of the picture theory is that language and the world have a common logical form, and that ‘language displays the logical form of reality’\textsuperscript{49} in its own form. The picture theory demonstrates not the actual identity of language and the world, but only the logical conditions of the representation of the world in language. Wittgenstein seems to mean that we picture facts to ourselves only by being able to think and reconstruct the facts in language. Thus in the ultimate analysis, Wittgenstein’s picture theory lays down the form of our thought of the world and the logical conditions which make this thought possible. However, the thought-possibility is not determined here by the factual conditions, occurring in the world, but by the linguistic conditions. Therefore our language and its logical forms condition our thought of the world.

\textsuperscript{48} TLP, 3.03
\textsuperscript{49} TLP, 4.121
Now two questions can be posed here. How do we know reality? And what is the nature of reality? Wittgenstein's answer to the first question will be, we know reality as we can think it in language, i.e. as we can 'picture' it in language. This has a wider implication as to the answer to the second question about the nature of reality as it is represented in language. The second question presupposes that we can logically think and represent the world. Therefore, reality known has the first characteristic of being logically thinkable and representable.

The world, which is represented in language, is one which is logically thought, i.e. which has not defied the rules of logic. Wittgenstein ruled out the possibility of an illogical world. "We could not say what an 'illogical' world would look like."50 Besides, our logical thought of the world itself guarantees the logical possibility of the world and the logic-governedness of the possible world. Wittgenstein writes,

"A thought contains the possibility of the situation of which it is the thought. What is thinkable is possible too."51

"Thought can never be of anything illogical, since, if it were, we should have to think illogically."52

It means, the world, which we think and represent, is a logically possible world. But this only reveals the logical features of the world and

50 TLP, 3.031
51 TLP, 3.02
52 TLP, 3.03
not its actual situation. Here we come to one of the fundamental tenets of Wittgenstein’s philosophy wherein he mentions that we can know by means of language only the logical possibilities of the world and not its contingent features which are beyond the control of logic. He writes,

“The exploration of logic means the exploration of everything that is subject to law. And outside logic everything is accidental.”

The factuality of our world is preconditioned by the universal logical features. These logical possibilities explain the universal logical conditions, which any factual world must fulfil. However the specification of these logical conditions does not do away with the importance of the factual conditions; it only mentions the logical grounds on which any form of world-possibility must be based. Wittgenstein here discovers the a priori world-order, which he promised earlier. As he writes in *Philosophical Investigations,*

“This thought is surrounded by a halo. Its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the a priori order of the world; that is, the order of possibilities, which must be common to both world and thought... It is prior to all experience, must run through all experience; no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it.”

This logically determinable world, according to Wittgenstein, is a world constituted of existing states of affairs i.e. the facts. The world

---

53 TLP. 6.3
consisting of the facts contains the logical possibility of there being ‘objects’ which constitute the substance of the world. “Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite.”55 The objects constitute the unalterable form of the world and contain the logical grounds of all possible worlds. “Objects are just what constitute this unalterable form.”56 For Wittgenstein, any possible world must have these simple logical objects; the factual world is only a factual configuration of these objects in the states of affairs. ‘The configuration of objects produces states of affairs.”57 Wittgenstein’s distinction between our actual world and any possible world rests on the point that the factual world is an actualisation of the logical possibilities which constitute the ground of any possible world. The possible world is a purely logical world, which rests on a time-dimension for its actualisation. But the common ground of both worlds is the logical base supplied by the a priori logical conditions.

This is the outline of the world, according to Wittgenstein, we know and think of by means of our language. This contains the conditions of the logically possible world and thereby, in a way, determines the forms of our actual world. This leads us to the Wittgenstein’s answer to the question: what is the exact relation of language and reality? This question gives rise to another two important sub-questions: whether there can be logic-free

55 TLP, 2.021
56 TLP, 2.023
57 TLP, 2.0272
world? And if not, what is the role of logic in the restructuring of the world in language?

In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein has so far argued that the world is a logically determinable world. If that is so then we must admit that logic draws the limits of the world *a priori*. In that sense, the limits of logic must coincide with those of the world, Wittgenstein expresses this, when he writes, "Logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits."\(^{58}\) Therefore, in a significant sense, the limits of logic, thought and the world are co-determinable as they share the same logical limits. They stand in the same logical space. Same views are expressed in the *Investigations* also, when he writes,

"Thought, language now appear to us as the unique correlate, picture, of the world. These concepts: proposition, language, thought, world stand in one line one behind the other, each equivalent to each."\(^{59}\)

In view of this, now is it not possible to say that reality is independent of logic? And one cannot maintain a realism, which makes a tacit distinction between thought and reality. This point becomes crucial in understanding Wittgenstein.

Since Wittgenstein maintains the view that the world, i.e. reality is logically thinkable, so thought of reality is not just passive thinking of what there is. Thought is the thought of reality and in being thought, reality assumes the forms of thought. Therefore, we know reality as we think it,

\(^{58}\) TLP, 5.61
\(^{59}\) PI, n. 54, Sect. 96.
and our thought can be a thought of reality only in its own forms. It means, Wittgenstein admits that thought and reality have the same logical forms. So, if reality is thought at all, it must be thought in the forms which language imposes on it. We cannot think it except in these forms. That means, language and thought contribute these forms to reality. These forms are logical and themselves being a priori cannot be derived from reality itself. Also they explain the very logical possibility of reality and so cannot be contingently derived from the latter.

Here, some idealistic strains can be seen in the relation of language to reality, but it does not deny the realistic basis of the world, in Wittgenstein's view. The world, i.e. reality as something given, is certainly prior to thought and logic but so far as it is thought and represented, it is dependent on thought and language. Wittgenstein writes,

"Logic is prior to every experience – that something is so. It is prior to the question 'How'? not prior to the question 'What'?"  

Logic determines reality as thought and represented in language, but it does not determine the substance of the world, i.e. 'something is'. But it certainly determines that 'something is so'. That is to say, according to Wittgenstein, as Max Black writes, "logic determines the forms of the

---

60 TLP. 5.552
world i.e., the ‘How’ of it, not the existence of the world i.e. the ‘What’ of it.”

If this role of logic can be accepted, then logic can be called ‘transcendental’ in the Kantian sense, according to which the function of logic is to explore the a priori conditions of the possibility of the world of our thought and experience. Wittgenstein expresses this, when he writes,

“Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror-image of the world. Logic is transcendental.”

By this he means that logic represents the a priori conditions of the possibility of the world independently of experience. That is, it represents a priorithe necessary and universal conditions of all that is possible in the world. As G.E.M. Anscombe points out, “by calling logic transcendental, Wittgenstein does not mean that logical propositions state transcendental truth, but only that they state something that pervades all that is sayable and thinkable.” That is, they state the logical conditions of all that is thinkable and representable in language.

So, here, it can be concluded that, Wittgenstein has presented a transcendental framework of the Tractatus according to the Kantian spirit. For him language determines the logical conditions of all that is

61 Max Black, n. 43. p.303.
62 TLP,6.13
theoretically possible, and therefore, according to him, 'every-thing that is represented in language is theoretically possible'\textsuperscript{64}. Referring to this transcendental outlook in the \textit{Tractatus}, Erik Stenius writes,

"It is essential to Wittgenstein's outlook that logical analysis of language as he conceives of it is a kind of 'transcendental deduction' in Kant's sense, the aim of which is to indicate the a priori form of experience which is 'shown' by all meaningful language and therefore, cannot be 'said'. From this point of view the Tractatus could be called a 'Critique of Pure Language'"\textsuperscript{65}

Thus the philosophy of \textit{Tractatus} can be called "Transcendental Lingualism or Linguistic Idealism"\textsuperscript{66} in the words of Stenius. This is only to mean that Wittgenstein's philosophy aims at finding out the transcendental presuppositions of the representation of the world in our language and ultimately, in our transcendental subjectivity.

Wittgenstein believes that there is a transcendental subject, or what he calls 'metaphysical subject', which does not belong to the world but is its limits. He writes,

\textsuperscript{64} W. Stegmüller, \textit{Main Currents in Contemporary German, British and American Philosophy} (Dordrecht-Holland, D.Reidel Publishing Company), p. 420.


\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
"The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world."\(^{67}\)

"Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye.

*And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.*\(^{68}\)

Language and the world of experience, ultimately, belong to this transcendental subject. This transcendental subject determines the limits of the world through language. It is in this sense that he says, "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world."\(^{69}\) Here ‘my world’ refers to the world of the transcendental subject and ‘my language’ to its language.\(^{70}\)

It shows that Wittgenstein has a full-fledged transcendental doctrine in the *Tractatus* with an emphasis on the transcendental subject and its language. This is a form of idealism. In the words of Alexander Maslow, "In any interpretation of the *Tractatus* the basic philosophy underlying it has become a kind of Kantian Phenomenalism, with the forms of language playing a role similar to Kant’s transcendental apparatus."\(^{71}\)

---

\(^{67}\) TLP, 5.632

\(^{68}\) TLP, 5.633

\(^{69}\) TLP, 5.6

\(^{70}\) Eric Stenius, n. 65, p. 221.

Since, in *Tractatus*, emphasis is there on the metaphysical subject and not the empirical self, its idealism has a transcendental connotation. In that sense, it can be said that the world is significantly subjective, as it is our language that determines the limits of the world. Here Jaakko Hintikka points out,

"Having identified the metaphysical subject with the totality of one's language and the limits of language with the limits of the world, he could say that the limits of the (metaphysical) subject are the limits of the world."\(^{72}\)

In a narrow sense of the term one may say that there is no solipsism in *Tractatus*, but it is wrong to deny the stains of solipsism in *Tractatus*. As Suman Gupta puts it,

"The self or the subject, in Wittgenstein's view, is conceived as some kind of a mental abstract which passively comes in contact with the object. This conception results from the failure to see that the social man not only actively interacts with the objects but also changes them through his social practice and in the process also changes himself."\(^{73}\)

Our assumption is that Wittgenstein comprehended the self in the Kantian sense in this respect seems to be correct because he compared the

---


relation of the self with the object as similar to the relation of the eye with
the field of vision.

Solipsism (Latin: *Solus*, alone; *ipse*, self) which is a subjective
idealist theory holds that only man and his consciousness exist. According
to solipsism the objective world, including people, exist only in the mind of
the individual. It is precisely this view which is manifested in the
*Tractatus* when Wittgenstein writes, “I am my world (the microcosm).”74
This becomes further clear when he stated, “What the solipsist means is
quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest.”75 But
Wittgenstein, maintaining his realistic position, tries to get rid of this
solipsistic tag by saying,

> “Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its
> implications are followed out strictly, coincides with
> pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a
> point without extension, and there remains the
> reality co-ordinated with it.”76

When the problem of the relation of language to the world is taken
in the sense of a semantical concept, i.e., a concept referring to the
representational relation of language to the world, then experiencing the
world is a grammatically articulated cognitive relation to the world, since it
is presented to us in the moulds of our language. As Arthur C. Danto
points out, “the relation of language to the world and our experiencing the

---

74 TLP, 5.63
75 TLP, 5.62
76 TLP, 5.64
world are not within the world itself but lie within an extra-worldly space." Philosophy can delineate and analyse this extra-worldly space. Accordingly this extra-worldly space becomes the semantic gap between the world and our representation of it in language. This gap ultimately cannot be dissolved, since its dissolution will bring an end to philosophy as a logical analysis.

This semantic gap is tacitly maintained in the *Tractatus*, throughout his analysis of the relation of language and the world. This gap, according to Wittgenstein, ensures philosophical analysis as a conceptual activity against the onslaught of the scientifically minded philosopher who equates philosophical activity with naturalistic description of experience. For Wittgenstein, this semantic gap is the subject-matter of logic and not of science. It is because of this that Wittgenstein has always been suspicious of science and of scientific analysis as a philosophical method.

This also explains why Wittgenstein had gone, in the *Tractatus*, to the extent of denying epistemology a place in the semantic space. Because he believes that epistemology is a philosophy of psychology.

"Psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science.

Theory of knowledge is the philosophy of psychology.

Does not my study of sign language correspond to the study of thought-processes, which philosophers used to consider so essential to the philosophy of logic? Only in most cases they got entangled in unessential psychological investigations, and with my method too there is an analogous risk.”

He believed that epistemology is concerned only with the study of the psychological process, i.e., the process of our experiencing the world through mental mechanism. In that sense he denies epistemology a place in the *Tractatus* in view of the fact that in the latter he is concerned only with the logical possibility of the world. Wittgenstein has not accepted epistemology in the above sense even in his later philosophy where he has rejected the psychological process as irrelevant to philosophical analysis of language and meaning.

However, epistemology does not necessarily mean the study of the psychology of knowledge, and may very well mean logical analysis of knowledge. In that sense, it can be said that Wittgenstein does not reject epistemology. As P.M.S. Hacker puts it, ‘Wittgenstein seems to have accepted epistemology in the sense of logical analysis of language and

---

78 TLP, 4.1121
79 Pl. n. 54, p.218.
reinstated it in the semantic space in the form of logical analysis of
cognitive claims. That is, in Wittgenstein's sense, epistemology can
only be a semantical analysis of the conditions of the epistemic claims as
they can be recorded in language. However, whatever his specific attitude
to epistemology, Wittgenstein's central concern, in both of his
philosophies, is rather with language and along with it, only with the
logical conditions of the world, in so far as it is found in language.

In the Tractatus the relation of language to the world is neither
psychological nor empirical. So it will be contrary to the spirit of
Tractatus to suppose, as P.M.S. Hacker does, that 'there is a deep
underlying psychologism in the system of the Tractatus as provided the
links between language and the world.' Besides, as some interpreters
conclude this relation to be empirical. They characterise the elementary
propositions to be empirical observation. As Karl R. Popper says, "the
elementary propositions in the Tractatus are descriptive of observational
situations." Since the whole import in Tractatus, is logical rather than
empirical, this view of Popper does not go with the spirit of Tractatus.
Wittgenstein's fundamental concern here is with the logical analysis of
language and its relation to the world. Therefore the elementary
propositions have been the result of logical analysis and not of empirical
observation, as he writes,

"If we know on purely logical grounds that there
must be elementary propositions, then everyone who

81 Ibid., p. 45
82 Quoted in G.E.M.Anscombe, n. 63, p. 25.
That is it is a matter of logical demand that there are elementary propositions consisting of simple names and that there are simple objects constituting elementary states of affairs. "The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate."84 Thus Wittgenstein’s analysis of the structure of language and of the world is logical and not empirical.

Since the formal system of language does not have an empirical relation with the world, but only a logical relation, there is no need of a psychological link between language and the world. Thus there is a point in Carnap’s formalistic interpretation of the Tractatus, according to which "Wittgenstein’s philosophical analysis centres round the syntax and the formal structure of language and not its empirical meaning."85 That is to say that Wittgenstein was concerned with defining the formal structure of language and also of the world. The concepts like ‘reality’, ‘fact’, ‘states of affairs’ and ‘objects’ are all logical concepts and are, therefore, subject to logical analysis in the Tractatus.

83 TLP, 5.5562
84 TLP, 3.23
Although Wittgenstein's real concern in *Tractatus* is with the relation between language and the world or reality, but he is aiming only at a logical analysis of this relation. He is not concerned with how the relation is empirically possible. So any formal or logical interpretation of the *Tractatus* has to accommodate the semantic dimension which is present therein. Therefore, even if we accept a semantic dimension in the *Tractatus*, it must ultimately be placed within the confines of logic. That is to say, the relation of language to the world will be only a logical relation. Logic alone can determine the semantical conditions of our language. Wittgenstein is concerned with defining the semantical condition of the sense of propositions, i.e. their truth-conditions. According to him, the sense of a proposition is independent of its actual truth and falsity, but is dependent on the truth-conditions\(^\text{86}\) which can only be logically defined. Thus the semantical analysis is concerned with specifying the logical conditions of sense or meaning of propositions and not with their actually being true or false which can only empirically be decided. The picture theory, which is interpreted to be an empiricist doctrine naively calling for representation of factual situations is really a logical doctrine aiming at the specification of the logical grounds of the sense of propositions. He writes,

\begin{quote}
A picture represents a possible situation in logical space.\(^\text{87}\)

A picture contains the possibility of the situation that it represents.\(^\text{88}\)

What a picture represents it represents independently of its truth or falsity, by means of its pictorial form.\(^\text{89}\)
\end{quote}

\(^{86}\) TLP, 2.222
\(^{87}\) TLP 2.202
\(^{88}\) TLP, 2.203
\(^{89}\) TLP, 2.22
Thus it is obvious that Wittgenstein, in *Tractatus*, is concerned with the relation between language and the world, only insofar as it is logically definable. Language as a pure syntax represents the logical structure of the world, and thus defines its limits of the possibility of the latter.

**Criticism**

Wittgenstein's intellectual life is divided much more definitely than most into two distinct major periods. The first is represented by *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and the second by *Philosophical Investigations*. The relation between these two periods is a matter of controversy. Some assert that the *Investigations*, as a whole, is a 'development' of the *Tractatus* while others claim that they are 'negations' of each other. Our assumption is that both interpretations are mistaken. To be sure, there is profound change in his philosophy but there is also profound continuity. Wittgenstein himself used to say later that the *Tractatus* was not completely wrong. To seek a clear understanding of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, it is needed to compare and contrast his earlier and later views. As Anscombe puts it, '*Tractatus* is not like a bag of junk professing to be a clock, but a clock that did not tell you the right time.'\(^{90}\) It is important to distinguish clearly the part of the *Tractatus*, which was repudiated from the part, which was not. Wittgenstein merely advises us to

\(^{90}\) G.E.M. Anscombe, n. 63, p. 78.
contrast his later work with his old method of philosophising. Wittgenstein himself wished to publish the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* together because, as he writes, "... the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking."\(^91\)

It is quite true that his early and later ways of philosophising are poles apart. The *Tractatus* follows the methods of traditional theoretic construction, even though, as K.T. Fann puts it, "to construct only a 'ladder' to be abandoned at the end."\(^92\) While *Investigations* employs what can best be described as the method of dialectic. However there is an important continuity in Wittgenstein's conception of the nature and tasks of philosophy. Many claims made in the *Tractatus* are retained in the later philosophy. Both the early and later stages of Wittgenstein's philosophy, have some commonalities like regarding linguistic analysis as the methodology to solve or dissolve 'philosophical problems', rejection of the possibility of utterance of metaphysical truths, considering philosophy as an activity of elucidation and clarification but not science, etc. Arguing about the commonalities, Anthony Kenny goes to the extent of saying that,

"the picture theory of meaning, though transformed, survives the abandonment of the atomism of the *Tractatus*, that one can isolate a 'logical aspect' of the picture theory which is never repudiated."\(^93\)

\(^{91}\) PI, n. 54, p. x
Taking methods into consideration, Wittgenstein's whole project in the *Philosophical Investigations* and in all other works of the later period like *Zettel, Philosophical Remarks, Philosophical Grammar, Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, On Certainty* etc., can be said, aimed at a demolition of the picture of language, propounded in the *Tractatus*. This process of demolition in the later philosophy can be summed up as following:

(1) Rejection of philosophical discourse as nonsense.

(2) Rejection of the idea that any discourse bears the privilege of being the true theory of reality.

(3) Dismissal of the 'mythology of mental process' associated with language.

(4) Denial of the notion that language functions only in one way and language represents something beyond itself.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, he opens his book with a quotation from St. Augustine's *Confessions* and then paraphrases the typical "picture of the essence of human language"94 contained in it. Then follows a critical note to the Augustinian picture of language. He takes this as the paradigm or the problematic, and critically elucidates the implication of

94 PI, n. 54, p.2
that picture of language. It is, according to the later Wittgenstein, a reduction of the manifold uses of language, to just a naming function. Thinking is accordingly limited to nouns, and the other words of action or attributes are of secondary importance and the “remaining kinds of words as something that will take care of itself.”  

The later Wittgensteinian view of language categorically rejects psychologistic theories of meaning, and the concept of a static and universal structure over and above the actual utterance. For him language is an activity that is “part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.”  

In his later life, he explicitly rejects the ambitious search after a logical form hidden behind the structure of ordinary language for our common use. He says in *Philosophical Grammar*,

> “My notion in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is wrong: (1) because I was not clear about the sense of the words, “a logical product is hidden in a sentence” (and such like), (2) because I too thought that logical analysis had to bring to light what was hidden (as chemical and physical analysis does).”

In the later period Wittgenstein explicitly shirks off the influence of Frege and Russell and abandons the Russellean logical analysis. He says,

---

95 Ibid.
96 PI, n. 54, p. 12
“Formerly, I myself spoke of a ‘complete analysis’ and I used to believe that philosophy had to give a definitive dissection of propositions so as to set out clearly all their connections and remove all possibilities of misunderstanding... I vaguely had in mind some-thing like the definition that Russell had given for the definite article... At the root of all this there was a false and idealised picture of the use of language.”

Thus, in the second phase of his intellectual life he moved away from the idealised picture of language into the idealisation of all the uses of languages. The Fregean style of conceptual analysis sought to uncover the logical structure of language and Russellean inquiry after logical atoms were replaced by an examination of the diachronic aspects of language, i.e. the public features of the mode in which the speakers actually use sentences to carry on social intercourse.

The early period of Wittgenstein falls broadly within the parameters of the enlightenment project to find out the ‘ultimate structures’ of reality. That period, thus, shared certain basic assumptions of the modern European thinking, such as a self-reflecting subject and its confidence in reaching deep into the ‘hidden’ structure of the manifested reality. As James C. Edwards says,

\[98\] Ibid., p. 211.
"That picture came into flower in the European Enlightenment and which still provides the basis for a good deal of our self-reflection, emphasising the essential independence of the self from the material and social world it inhabits. The metaphysical self is self-given, self-transparent, autonomous in action, essentially self-creating."  

This picture of a self-righteous Cogito, first drawn by Descartes, is taken as the centre of philosophising. Subject is considered at the centre and a unified structure of reality is generally accepted. But in the later period of Wittgenstein, this self-righteous Cogito is no more the centre of philosophical discourse. Subject is de-centred and the idea of a unified structure of reality is given up for a more heterogeneous and plural universe. The essential difference between the early and the later stages of Wittgenstein is presented by Rorty in the following manner,

"The Tractatus has said:- there can be no genuine discursive discipline which deals with these matters called 'The problems of philosophy' for 'here' are the limits of language, and thus of discursive inquiry. The Philosophical Investigations said: There can be as much of a discipline as you care to develop..."  

The whole procedure of investigation in Tractatus, as we discussed, is a priori. Early Wittgenstein believes that analysis of ordinary

---


propositions must lead to elementary propositions. But the form of elementary propositions was given \textit{a priori}. This purely \textit{a priori} method of the \textit{Tractatus} is attacked by later Wittgenstein. Now he suggests that,

\begin{quote}
"we can only arrive at a correct analysis by what might be called the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves, i.e., in a certain sense \textit{a posteriori}, and not by conjecturing about a \textit{a priori} possibilities. One is often tempted to ask from an \textit{a priori} standpoint: What after all, can be the only forms of \{elementary\} propositions... An \{elementary\} form can not be foreseen. And it would be surprising if the actual phenomena had nothing more to teach us about their structure."
\end{quote}

This shift of methods is what constituted the break between the early and later Wittgenstein. The immediate circumstances of his shift from the \textit{Tractatus} to the \textit{Investigations}, however, was largely due to criticism by Frank Ramsey and Piero Sraffa, an Italian economist. Ramsey pointed out the lack of pragmatism in \textit{Tractatus}. He rightly points out, "Every thing that I have said is due to him, except the parts which have a pragmatist tendency, which seem to be needed in order to fill up a gap in his system."

---


His other criticism is regarding the scholastic strains in *Tractatus*, which he feels, is ‘the chief danger to philosophy’ in general. Giving the reasons he says, “the essence of scholasticism is treating what is vague as if it were precise and trying to fit it into an exact logical category. A typical piece of scholasticism is Wittgenstein’s view that all our everyday propositions are completely in order and that it is impossible to think illogically.”103 This criticism contributed to Wittgenstein’s later philosophical development.

Sraffa objected to the practical possibility of Wittgenstein’s view that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same ‘logical form’, and the same ‘logical multiplicity’. Questioning this view, Sraffa “made a gesture familiar to Neopolitians as meaning something like disgust or contempt, or brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the fingertips of one hand, and asked for its ‘logical form’, in language.” This appropriate and lucid criticism, “made Wittgenstein for the first time to feel that there was an absurdity in the insistence that a proposition and what it describes must have the same ‘logical form’. ”104

Taking clue from Ramsey and Sraffa, ahistoricity of Wittgenstein’s picture theory can be pointed out. The ontological equipment upon which the *Tractatus* itself is based can be said to be nothing else than pre-Kantian. Here, Reality is considered to be made up of irreducible facts, stands motionless before thought, which is the Aristotelian mirror of it; “the fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way”\(^{105}\) These statements of Wittgenstein make no reference to any notion of developments. The historico-social dimension is completely absent. The world of the *Tractatus* is a sort of immobile logical paradise, of which thought reflects the structures, so to speak once and for all, and without knowing why.

\(^{105}\) TLP. 2.15