CONCLUSION

This research has been an attempt to comprehend the concept of thought in the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and relate it to his views on the thinking self. I have not been able to incorporate each and everything concerned, yet this effort I hope, will augment the basis of future research on the subject. In the preceding chapters an attempt to trace the development and analyse Wittgenstein’s concept of thought has been made. Wittgenstein represented a watershed phase in the history of analytic philosophy. By virtue of his insight into the philosophy of language, he has offered an analysis that records the transition from hidden psychologism to an exclusively non-psychological interpretation of thought which is all pervasive with nothing hidden. The early Wittgenstein was profoundly influenced by both Frege and Russell and believed that language disguises thought. Instead of revealing the logic or syntax that underlies it, language camouflages and masks it. And the author believed that problems in Philosophy are due to our failure to understand this logic of language. The Tractatus intends to give an account of the essential nature of world, thought and language. But the author admits that in this quest, one is transcending the boundaries of sense because it is an attempt to say what cannot be said. The Tractatus and the Prototractatus are similar in their presentation of the concept of thought with only negligible differences. The Notebooks, on the other hand offer a more invasive picture of the notion of thought with certain remarks which occur neither in the Prototractatus nor in the Tractatus.
Apparently the Tractarian thought contradicts the general notion of thoughts which regard them as psychic or abstract entities inhabiting minds. The Tractarian thought is not a psychic entity but a propositional sign projected onto reality. It is a sentence-in-use. Wittgenstein identified thought and language in the sphere of the sensible and so there cannot be thoughts without expressions. The thought of *TLP* 3 is the same as that of *TLP* 4 because thought as a logical picture of facts is identified with sign language. As far as the *Tractatus* is concerned the constituents of thought are unknown. The *Tractatus* mentions 'objects' of thought only once at *TLP* 3.2. It is not clear whether these 'objects' are the constituents of thought or that to which thought is directed. The author only writes that a thought can be expressed in such a way that the elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of the thought. It may be recalled that in the letter to Russell (1919), Wittgenstein had explicitly said that a thought (*Gedanke*) consists of psychical elements which correspond to the words of language and are related to reality as words. Nothing more has been said about the constituents of thought. In the isomorphic picture it is necessary that thought must have constituents which have a one-to-one correspondence with the elements of language and reality. The elements of thought are psychic in nature which Wittgenstein considers to be irrelevant to elaborate and inquire.

Analysis shows that neither *TLP* 3 nor *TLP* 4 support the psychological interpretation of thought. In my opinion there is essentially one and only one Tractarian thought (*Gedanke*) which is shown from two perspectives, once in relation to the world and at other times in relation to language. But both the definitions are at bottom the same because thought and or proposition are shown to depict the world. The depiction is by
means of a method of projection. TLP 3.11 and 3.5 may be interpreted as suggestive of a tacit underlying psychologism. This undercurrent can hardly be ignored. It speaks of a method of projection by means of which the thought reaches right out to reality. At the same time this method of projection establishes a one-to-one relation between the constituents. By virtue of its very nature this relation may be said to be a logical one. But how the method of projection is to be effected probably signifies a psychological relation. It this twofold manner in which the term 'method of projection' may be used that renders the ambiguity in the Tractarian concept of thought. Wittgenstein does not choose to elaborate on this since he probably considers it the psychologist's enquiry. Yet probably he could not also ignore it and so mentions it in his letter to Russell.

Apart from this, apparently the Tractatus implies that the realms of thought and language coincide. Further consider two remarks from the Tractatus. TLP 3.001 states that a state of affairs is thinkable means that we can picture it to ourselves and TLP 3.03 which states that thoughts cannot be illogical because if it were then we should have to think illogically. These two propositions imply that it is 'we' who do the thinking. Thus thought as a model of facts originates in 'us'. Thoughts must always represent a possible state of affairs and so we cannot describe an illogical world or say what it would be like (PT 3.031). And finally it may be pointed out that Wittgenstein poses the question without answering clearly whether thought is a kind of experience and goes on to say that experience is world without the need of a subject (NB 9.11.1916). Assuming the answer is affirmative, we can say thought is world and does not require a subject. It may be pointed out that Wittgenstein's interpretation and elucidation shows that the 'T' or the thinking subject is
redundant. It is not even necessary to retain it and in fact does not exist in
the isomorphic picture of the relation between thought, language and
reality. The 'T' does not exist as an object in the world. In the book 'The
world as I found it', the 'T' cannot come in; the 'T' cannot be conceived as
any kind of object, neither as a mental nor as a material substance. I
objectively confront every object but not the 'T'.

It may be pointed out that the early transitional years treat the
concept of thought from linguistic considerations and any reference to its
psychological aspect is exclusively avoided. Wittgenstein's dealing with
the concept of the soul also shows continuity in his rejection of the 'T' as
the owner or possessor of thoughts. Apart from a re-affirmation of the
Tractarian viewpoint that thought and language are the same in structure
and there is no subject as the owner of thoughts, certain modifications are
also noted. The ontological reference of thought is not alluded to in this
period. This is perhaps primarily due to the abandonment of the atomic
theory of meaning which is replaced by the verifiability criterion of
meaning.\footnote{Norman Malcolm points out that the following Tractarian viewpoints are rejected later by
Wittgenstein: that simple objects constitute the substratum of thought and language; thoughts
having psychical constituents underly the sentences of language; that a thought is a picture of a
particular state of affairs.} To understand a proposition, according to Wittgenstein, now is
to know how it is verified or falsified, i.e., which phenomena would verify
or falsify it. So we may choose to infer that thought is also verifiable
through phenomena. It is here that the ontological reference of thought
comes in, albeit in a new garb. There is no longer a one-to-one
correspondence between the elements of language, thought and reality but
rather thought/language verify or falsify phenomena. Analysis is no
longer necessary but experience of sense-data is the paradigm in the
determination about the world. Wittgenstein is very clear in his thesis that
thinking is not a mental process (i.e., as a mental phenomena it is not the subject matter of philosophy). Thought is nothing but the words themselves, i.e., language and any other process is extraneous and redundant. So there are not two processes, one the mental process thought and the other the expression of thought in words.

The pervading influence of the early period regarding the view that there is no thinking, representing subject (denkende, vorstellende) also envelops the transitional phase. Wittgenstein shows that in describing immediate sense-data the personal pronoun can be done away with; it is not necessary. Wittgenstein says instead of “I think” we can say “It thinks” (WL 1930-33, p.309). The way the term “I” is used makes us think that the self as a thinking cogitating subject has a separate existence. So we find Wittgenstein adhering to his Tractarian viewpoint of the no-agent view of thinking. The subject as the owner of thoughts cannot be encountered and Wittgenstein is keen to deny its existence. It may be pointed out that the psychical element of the TLP is spotted in the transitional phase at least in an indirect manner. Wittgenstein says the I in ‘I am in pain’ or ‘I have a toothache’ has a special privileged status. This I does not admit of referential failure, it is immune from doubt nor can it mischaracterize that which the speaker is speaking. The verification for “I have a toothache” and “He has a toothache” is different. In the latter case it makes sense to ask “How do you know that you have a toothache?” But such a question would be absurd to ask in the former case. The former is verified by my simply having the toothache (WL 1930-33; WL 1932-35). Moreover, it is logically impossible for anybody else to have what I have when I have a pain, since no one else could have a pain which I would encounter. So here the psychological element can be spotted. Wittgenstein however goes
on to say that ‘I’ becomes redundant and instead of ‘I think’, we can say ‘It
thinks’ as in ‘It rains’ (WL 1930-33). This privileged status of the ‘I’
indicates something special that cannot be expressed in language, a kind
of feeling. The ‘I’ may be said to have the privileged status because only in
the case of ‘I have a toothache’, the ‘I’ can be replaced by ‘There is a
toothache’ which cannot be done in the case of ‘A has a toothache’. So
does not this indicate speechless thought, i.e., the possibility of thinking
without speaking? Thus we may take the liberty to deduce that traces of
the psychological element alluded to in the TLP are exhibited in terms of
privacy, i.e., of the ‘I’ enjoying special status, which is non-expressible in
language.

As Waismann writes:

How far am I the maker of my thoughts, and how far do they
occur to me? And if they just ‘occur’, what is there I-ish about
them? On the other hand, if there is nothing I-ish about them,
why do they choose just me for their rendezvous?2

Generally speaking the problem arises because thinking implies a thinker
who is implied to have a mysterious identity. And the solution to the
problem lies in clarifying the manner in which our language operates. So
philosophical problems lie rooted in language and therefore language is
the concern of Wittgenstein. Primarily, therefore the Tractarian link can be
deciphered in this stage regarding thought and the thinking self, although
a slight oscillatory disposition is also noticeable. He is bringing in his new
ideas but also confirming to his older views. It is to be seen whether this
bordering also persists post 1932.

Wittgenstein, after the early phase replaces sense with meaning. He declares language and thought as being autonomous free from the reins of the world. Obviously this is an outcome of his dismantling of the name-object conception of meaning. He seems to project forward, especially in the transition stage that all thinking is in terms of language. This sometimes wrongly gives the assumption that the transitional Wittgenstein is saying that thinking and language are identical. But though thinking is using language or may be done in terms of language, thoughts do not necessarily exist prior to being translated into words or imagery. This feature of thought has been strongly emphasized by Wittgenstein in the ultimate stages of his philosophy. One persistent view of Wittgenstein was his opinion about the fact that philosophical enquiry should be disengaged from psychological ones. And to prove this point Wittgenstein ultimately comes to a position where he shows that thinking is a common concept, a widely branching system, which envelops human activities. It is not a distinct process, which is mystical, hidden and does not show or point towards anything beyond itself.

Wittgenstein is very clear about what thinking is not (i) Thinking is not imagery, i.e., does not involve images and pictures; (ii) Thinking is not an incorporeal process; (iii) Thinking may not be speaking, whether out loud or silently to oneself; (iv) Thinking is not a process that accompanies speaking; (v) Thinking is not the accompaniment of any activity; (vi) Thinking is not an experience that one might have. So what is thinking? Thinking is a widely ramified concept, says Wittgenstein and its phenomena is widely scattered. He continues that thinking cannot be separated from the activity a person does, for “thinking is not an

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3 Z.110.
accompaniment of the work, any more than of thoughtful speech.”
Earlier in the *PI*, Wittgenstein says: “While we sometimes call it ‘thinking’ to accompany a sentence by a mental process, that accompaniment is not what we mean by a “thought”.

The later Wittgenstein is more vociferous in his attack against the psychological conception of thought. He rebuts the prevalent view of considering thought processes as something mysterious occurring in the mental medium called mind. This was the ‘moving against the tide’. Thinking is shown to be a widely branching system where the question what is ‘thinking’ ultimately depends on how we are using the word ‘thinking’ and in what context. And the fact remains that it cannot be zeroed in on one phenomenon. The thinking self is also shown as not being absolutely necessary. Moreover, the sphere of the nonsense as something which cannot be expressed in language is done away with in this phase. There is nothing like this. So the psychological element that was present originally in the early period (letter to Russell, 1919) is lost in the later Wittgenstein. One may deduce that Wittgenstein was committed to the task of demonstrating a non-existent thinking subject and this was his prime concern. In line with this, the non-psychological depiction of thought in the sphere of the sensible is in complete conformity. So in the final analysis we do notice continuities as well as deviations.

The budding Wittgenstein had drawn an alluring picture of thought in the young days of his philosophy. A thought, for him, then was a logical picture of facts whose pictorial form is its logical form. It was a proposition with a sense; a thought as expressed in a proposition can be

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5 *PI* §332.
perceived by the senses. It is a propositional sign projected onto reality. The other side shows thought as a psychic entity that have the same sort of relation to reality as words. So thought has an isomorphic but not identical relationship with language and reality. And we infer that in its projective relation to the world, the connection is established psychologically. From the isomorphism follows that all thoughts are at least capable of being expressed in language. Against this backdrop the subsequent Wittgenstein moves to draw a panorama of the concept of thought by focussing primarily on language. The mature Wittgenstein’s cardinal point is that thought cannot be classified as any one single process, neither as a process that accompanies language nor as a mental process in itself. It could be just the utterance itself or any activity or act that one might perform or the thinking without the utterance. It is a widely divergent system and the underlying point is that thinking is not an accompanying process to any act or utterance, i.e., it is not a double process. Although it is true that we often do have images, such accompanying processes are redundant. Thinking cannot be narrowed down to any particular process, whether in consciousness or in language or in our actions. The following points may be deduced from the eventual conception of thought.

1) Any image or no image can occur in thinking. So, imagery is not a necessary accompaniment for thought and any that may happen is redundant.

2) Silent inward speech is not necessary for thinking. It may or may not happen.

3) I for example can think in speaking or without speaking. But the point is that in thinking speech, i.e., meaningful speech, the thinking
does not necessarily occur as a separate process independent from and to the speaking.

4) When I for example, think a thought \( P \), nothing needs to run through my consciousness as proof of the fact that I am thinking or that I have a thought. Thinking is not a state of consciousness or any experience. Hence, it is not a private process occurring in the mental depths. I do not describe an inner process when I answer the question “what are you thinking”?

5) When I think that \( p \), I simply happen to have the thought that \( p \).

6) Thinking then can be any and every activity. For example, my decision to make a certain dish for dinner, the preparation that goes into it, the activity of cooking or even the activity of holding the ladle in a particular manner can all be called thinking. I may at the same time perform all these activities while thinking of the TV program that will be aired at dinner time. I could flit to the performers of the show and think when I last read about the heroine in some magazine. By this time my cooking could be ready and I could be wondering why my husband has not returned home as yet. Without a thought I could rush over to the telephone and try to get through him. On hearing that he is just at the front door, I could rush down the staircase to open the door and seeing him inquire his late arrival. All these are thinking activities, even the one I performed without a thought. So, thinking is every one of our activities in our life. Thinking cannot be constricted only to the use of psychological verbs like “think”, “know”, “imagine”, “understand”, “expect”, “wish”, etc. It could even constitute non-psychological ones like “cook”, “walk”, “run”, “talk”, etc. So it could be said to include the whole range of human activities. For
Wittgenstein language of course includes all human activities. So may we conjecture that thinking and linguistic activities are overlapping?

Moreover, in case of speaking, we do not require to first think in terms of some inner symbolism and then convert it into speaking.

Our life, for Wittgenstein is enmeshed in language. The life we live and breathe is a life of language where all that we say and do, derive their meaning from the use that we give to language. We cannot give hard and fast rules for the use of words because they cannot be circumscribed in this manner. As in the BB, Wittgenstein says that to suppose that there must be real definitions of words is like supposing that children play according to strict rules when they play a game of ball.6

In conclusion it is pertinent to point out that the hidden and underlying psychologism of thought (Gedanke), which was subtly portrayed in the early period seems to have been obliterated in the Investigations. The distinction between the psychological and the non-psychological thought bordered on ambivalence in the Tractatus, a position which Wittgenstein clearly defined in his later works. It is to be noted that the later concept of thought does not embody any pure psychological element whatsoever but is embedded in human activities. As to the thinking self, Wittgenstein’s commitment to its non-existence is demonstrated all through. Wittgenstein’s initial position of stating that the thinking self was a mere illusion evolved in his later works where he analysed and evaluated why it was an illusion. In line with this the non-psychological depiction of thought is in complete conformity.

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6 BB. p.25.
Wittgenstein’s constant battling with the pre-established norms is what sets him apart. He resists treading the stock in philosophy of language. Yet, Wittgenstein does not give any arguments in the ordinary sense to prove his point. He, rather attempts to make a change about the commonly held views of meaning and thought. The bottom line is there cannot be one rule and accordingly Wittgenstein does not even attempt to lay down any. He proceeds by criticising the prevalent notions of meaning, thought and self by showing what they are not and in the course he shows how they cannot be brought under any hard and fast rules. They are open concepts, ‘fluid’ and flexible.

The upshot of Wittgenstein’s inquiry is that language is intricately bound up with human activities and linguistic phenomena cannot denote anything over and above the human activities. To give meaning to our everyday life, we are using language. Wittgenstein’s enquiry is “purely descriptive” as he says in the BB, and not explanatory.7 He felt the urge to get rid of unnecessary confusion and this is precisely what he does in his dealing with the concept of thought and thinking self. The seeming density and inaccessibility behind such concepts is dislodged. Wittgenstein liquidates the concepts of thought and thinking subject to connect them with everyday human activities.

It has already been observed (a) understanding a word means how it is used and being able to apply it (PG. p.47); (b) understanding is the ability to continue a series (PI §181); (c) understanding a language means to be master of a technique (PI §199); (d) understanding a sentence implies that we can replace or paraphrase it by another one and also where we cannot do so. In short understanding includes all of this. As Wittgenstein

7 BB. p.125.
says in the PI: "... I would rather say that these kinds of use of "understanding" make up its meaning, make up my concept of understanding. For I want to apply the word "understanding" to all this".\footnote{\textit{PI} §531} Now it may be questioned: what do we understand by the word "thought"? The answer to which may be, knowing how the word "thought" is used and being able to apply the word to various human activities. From this it emerges that thought or thinking does not signify any one unitary concept. Rather it could apply to varied and diverse human activities. It could imply all and none or some of these depending on the context we are using the word "thought". So the meaning of "thought" depends on its application, how and where we are using it. Thinking should not be, Wittgenstein implies, identified with certain experiences (\textit{Erlebnisse}). He writes: "No supposition seems to me more natural than that there is no process in the brain correlated with associating or with thinking; so that it would be impossible to read off thought-processes from brain processes".\footnote{Z. 608.} So it may be that nothing occurs in the brain corresponding to what we call thinking and even if it did that is not of interest to the philosopher.

In \textit{RPP}, Wittgenstein writes "Thinking cannot be called a phenomenon, but one can speak of ‘phenomena of thinking’, and everyone will know what kinds of phenomena are meant \textit{[was für Erscheinungen da gemeint sind]}.\footnote{\textit{RPP} II 31.} Here Wittgenstein is saying thinking does not refer to any phenomena at all. Yet he admits that there are varied and diverse phenomena of thinking.
Wittgenstein’s attempt to show that philosophical misconceptions have its roots in everyday language is the bottom-line of his inquest. He requests us to get out of the labyrinth of misleading forms of expressions. He assures us that only then can we embark upon a true philosophical journey. The *Tractatus* gave us the fixed and absolute order of the world; in it all was complete and steadily anchored. This gives way to show the uncongealed and malleability of language, yet fitting within the plethora of human activities. In this attempt to look at thought, language and the world lies the “dissolution of the problem of life”.