

Language and Thought in Wittgenstein

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ABSTRACT

Language and Thought in Wittgenstein – is the theme of this preparation and aims to highlight the contributions of Ludwig Wittgenstein in the reflection on the philosophy of language. Wittgenstein discusses the problems of language in two important works, (*Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*) that comprise the phases of the development of his thought, that is, the First Wittgenstein and the Second Wittgenstein. In the *Tractatus*, language is analyzed outside the concrete circumstances in which it is used in the context of life, while in the *Philosophical Investigations* the emphasis is on stating that the meaning of linguistic statements is conferred by their use in the context of social practices. Wittgensteinian thought in its first phase speaks of language as a logical mirror of reality, fixed through elementary propositions that have their foundation in the theory of figuration. The second Wittgenstein conceives language based on its different uses, abandoning the essence of language and, therefore, its limits imposed by the logical world. For Wittgenstein, language fulfills a representative function, because through it people can represent their experiences in different ways, moreover, language is a social practice connected to a form of action in the world. Finally, given the influence of the environment on language, it is no longer separated from human life in its essence of creating, recreating and expressing thought. To carry out this study, the method of bibliographical review was preferred, which allowed us to conclude that the First Wittgenstein (*Tractatus*) constitutes a way of adapting language to the desire for metaphysical knowledge of reality and, with the Second Wittgenstein (*Philosophical Investigations*), the Language reveals the complex nature of man's being and his intellectual superiority.

Keywords: Language, Thought, Representation, Environment, Public.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in the philosophy of language is not recent, and is not simply a reflection of the development of the human sciences and the paradigmatic role attributed to linguistics, but belongs to the process of deepening an internal problem of philosophy. However, from the 19th century onwards, the philosophy of language experienced a development and importance in the field of Philosophy that has never waned since [i]. The philosophy of language delimits a crucial field within contemporary philosophy, so much so that it can even be considered that first philosophy is no longer the investigation of the nature or essence of things or entities, nor even the reflection on the representations or concepts of consciousness or reason, but rather

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the reflection on the meaning or sense of linguistic expressions. According to Costa [ii], the philosophy of language reached its peak in the first half of the 20th century, when philosophers such as Gottlob Frege, Gretrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein developed important philosophical reflections on language.

For many scholars, language² is an innate function that allows an individual to symbolize his or her thoughts and decode the thoughts of others. It facilitates the exchange of experiences and knowledge, interfering in the perception of reality.

The origin of language is the result of a process of socialization of human beings, which is stimulated by the environment in which they live, in which their adaptation and transformation occur, providing associations of the different sensitive, perceptive and motor areas.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, this study is divided into four (4) points, namely:

1. Relevant aspects of the philosophy of language in Wittgenstein;
2. Language and representation;
3. Public character of language and
4. Influence of the environment on language.

RELEVANT ASPECTS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE IN WITTGENSTEIN

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) grew up in an environment conducive to intellectual and artistic development. His life seems to have been dominated by an obsession with moral and philosophical perfection [iii]. His father, Karl Wittgenstein, was an art collector and patron of musicians and painters. He financially supported several avant-garde artists; his mother was exceptionally musical and made a point of providing her children with an excellent musical education.

Ludwig Wittgenstein discusses the problems of language in two important works (*Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*) that encompass the phases of the development of his thought, that is, the First Wittgenstein and the Second Wittgenstein.

The *Tractatus* is a book of suggestive and ambiguous aphorisms, which makes understanding the work almost impossible without greater familiarity with the context in which they were formulated [iv]. These aphorisms address problems related to the logical analysis of language, with the metaphysical purpose of offering a general explanation of our possibilities for understanding the universe [v].

The core of Wittgenstein's philosophy is language, which reflects the sobriety of his way of thinking. The linguistic theory of the *Tractatus*, although not applicable to everyday language, drove the development of modern scientific theory and had an influence on linguistics, particularly in the field of semantics [vi].

² Language is the mode of thought; it is simultaneously the only mode of being of thought, its reality and its realization. cf. Nunes, V. A. G (2020). The importance of language development in nursery schools. Higher Institute of Education and Sciences. Lisbon.
file:///C:/Users/DIRECTOR/Downloads/Vanessa%20Nunes%20(1).pdf

The Tractatus seeks to explain the nature of representative or factual language; the truth proposed in the Tractatus lies in the fact that a thought is true if it corresponds to the fact it represents [vii].

Philosophical Investigations, in this writing Wittgenstein deals with language, with greater practicality, exploring more what is feasible in a natural abandonment of metaphysics, however, the author continues to refer to metaphysics to, in a logical way, explain the phenomena that are hidden by the misuse of language.

The movement that the second Wittgenstein proposes, has as its backdrop everything that he thought before, because, only in this way, was it possible for him to recognize what he had left without due analysis or had done in a way that did not contemplate what he truly intended.

According to Sombra [viii], a fundamental difference is that in the later Wittgenstein there is a “primacy of practice”. Language begins to be constituted based on forms of life and is signified by its use. There is no longer a logical-ontological foundation that constitutes it. With this change, Wittgenstein inserts himself, in a more incisive way, in the context of the crisis of foundations that characterized a significant part of contemporary philosophy and society.

Wittgenstein's concern is the issue of the functionality of language, which is why he defends the existence of language games to explain other phenomena, such as forms of life. The shift that Wittgenstein makes in his mature phase begins when the idea of totality, as the basis of the discussions in the Tractatus, ceases to exist and language begins to be guided by rules that are socially established.

As a consequence, contemplativity, timelessness and immutability are left aside, that is, in the Investigations there is no totality in itself, but rather several ways of conceiving reality. Thus, the idea of the notion of “Language Games” emerges, understood by Wittgenstein [ix] as the totality formed by language and the activities with which it is intertwined. Senses and meanings, which are attributions given to the status of thought, cease to be an individual activity and become constituted by socially determined rules.

For Wittgensteinian thought in its first phase, language is the logical mirror of reality, fixed by means of elementary propositions that have their foundation in the theory of figuration. The second Wittgenstein conceives language based on its different uses, abandoning the essence of language and, consequently, its limits imposed by the logical world. For Castro & Caldeira [x]:

the characteristic feature of semantics is pushed towards the conditions of use, and not just of meaning, as these become inseparable in the process of understanding. The expressive condition of language emerges as a therapeutic activity against the enchantment of the pseudo-concepts of our discourse.

According to Castro & Caldeira [xi], the denotative view of language, the senses and meanings that were attributed to reality, take on another form that takes into account socially established rules and criteria. For this reason, language does not act only in a crystalline and pure way and there is no single form between language and reality, but an infinity of concepts and ways of seeing and conceiving them.

In the *Tractatus*, language is analyzed outside the concrete circumstances in which it is used in the context of life, while in the *Philosophical Investigations* the emphasis is on affirming that the meaning of linguistic statements is conferred by their use in the context of social practices. AA.VV [xii], states that there is no specifically human thought without language. One can have a thought with other languages, such as, for example, pictorial language, in which the subject of language is a social formation with all its contradictions.

Wittgenstein's originality expresses an intellectual and personal experience that entered into a profound dialogue with the specific questions of a given historical context.

LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION

Language is the first and most important product of reason, its necessary instrument; language and reason, in Greek, are indicated with the same terms - *lógos*³.

According to Barboza [xiii], with the help of language, reason brings about important achievements, such as the concordant action of many individuals, the planned cooperation of thousands of people, civilization, the State, science, the maintenance of previous experiences, the summary vision of common things in a single concept, the communication of truth, thought and fiction, but also the propagation of error, dogmas and superstitions.

People can represent⁴ their experiences in the world in different ways through language. It is also considered that by sharing the world of objects, events or ideas with others, in order to understand, manage or face it, representations are created that are constructed and conveyed by words, are conveyed in messages and media images and circulate in discourses [xiv].

According to Jodelet [xv], representation corresponds to an act of thought through which the subject refers to an object, presenting it, replacing it, taking its place. Representation makes it possible to make the object present when it is distant or absent, that is, it symbolically restores it.

One of the functions of language is to represent external and internal experiences. However, there is a difference between what is experienced by acting in the world around us and what is experienced by acting in the world of consciousness, including perception, emotion and imagination [xvi].

Picoli [xvii] considers that language is the means by which human beings communicate their thoughts, which are nothing more than judgments composed of abstract representations,

³ Since the pre-Socratics, many Greek thinkers have equated language and reason: to be a rational animal meant, to a large extent, to be a being capable of speaking and, in speaking, reflecting the universe. In this way, the universe could speak, so to speak, of itself, through man. Language was equivalent to the intelligible structure of reality. From the beginnings of the philosophy of language, it has been clear to what extent the question of language and the question of reality as reality are closely linked. Despite the differences between Heraclitus and Parmenides, both agreed, at least, in considering language as an aspect of reality: the speaking reality, cf. Mora, J. F. (1978). *Dictionary of Philosophy*. Dom Quixote. Lisbon.

⁴ For Wittgenstein, at the basis of language there is a form of life, which determines representation. The relationship between language and form of life seems biunivocal: the latter determines the representation of the former, but also the influences of language in some way determine the representation of forms of life, Isa (2019).

which, in turn, are based on intuitive representations. In Schopenhauer's view⁵, every concept or abstract representation must have as its ultimate foundation experience, that is, something that exists or has existed; in other words, every concept must be based on empirical intuition. Working with words, propositions and concepts in an effort to understand the world and communicate with others is an activity that is as necessary as it is problematic: the risk of mistakes, misunderstandings and ambiguity is always lurking [^{xviii}].

The original fact of language is constituted by forms of life and not by concepts extrapolated from reality and hypostatized with the abstract procedures so dear to metaphysics.

As Condé [^{xix}] states, the Tractatus states that what occurs in the world can be expressed through language due to the existence of a logical form in common between reality and language, which allows us to say that the logical structure of the world is understood through the analysis of the logical structure of language.

This essentialist conception is criticized by Wittgenstein himself in his later writings. Thus, it is through logic that language reflects reality, and it can be seen that, for the early Wittgenstein, the primary function of language is to represent the world as faithfully as possible. In other words, language must describe and analyze exactly how things are in reality.

Assuming that the function of language is to represent the world, Wittgenstein problematizes reality, noting the overlap and close connection between language and the world, even going so far as to consider language as a mirror of the world, similar to the Cartesian essentialist proposition of the idea of the mind as a mirror⁶, reflecting reality. The essentialist view seeks a logical and direct correspondence with reality, and the task of philosophy, according to Marcondes [^{xx}], is to elucidate propositions that function as facts.

PUBLIC CHARACTER OF LANGUAGE

In the work *Philosophical Investigations*, the understanding of reality through language ceases to be fixed by the theory of figuration and, independent of logical structures, begins to have a public character. The notions of rule, forms of life and family resemblance also help in this understanding, which allow us to understand that there is no essence of language.

The view based on the existence of a supposed universal certainty loses strength. For this new conception, it is not necessary to rely on a uniform language, but to understand it as a two-way action that involves the dynamism of the structure of its functioning and a complex web of meanings constituted by the use of language games in daily activities.

⁵ In reason there is nothing that has not been extracted from understanding, that is, it is in intuitive representation that abstract representation finds its foundation, Salviano, J. O. S. (2009). The epistemological foundation of Arthur Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will. *trans/form/ação*, São Paulo, 32(2): 101-118.

⁶ Descartes' and other modern philosophers' conception of the human mind is a specular conception, that is, they conceive of the human mind as a kind of mirror, capable of reflecting extra mental reality, things outside the mind, and of representing them with relative fidelity. Human knowledge is, from the Cartesian perspective, a question of mental representations and psychological events that occur in the mind, and which, in principle, enable us to internally copy objects, cf. Descartes' Rationalism, https://cesad.ufs.br/ORBI/public/uploadCatalogo/11580810112015Teoria_do_conhecimento_I_-_Aula_04.pdf

Philosophy ceases to consider language merely as a framework of reality and as correspondence between the object and what the word given to it represents. The ways in which language helps to identify elements or even reality itself, definitions and concepts, cease to exist indistinguishably from thought. This, in turn, by structuring the perception of reality, is no longer understood as a symbolic convention, but begins to be apprehended and expressed by the dynamics of language. The second Wittgenstein speaks of the relationship between language and reality, a relationship that is no longer linked to the truth conditions of the proposition and, furthermore, ontological realism is no longer accepted as the sole criterion for elaborating truths.

According to Gunter [xxi], Wittgenstein's paths from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* can be estimated by considering his notion of knowledge and by the fact that his two philosophies are based on the principle that knowing the world is not a solely individual activity. To reflect on the things of the world, it is necessary to be within it and, from there, think collectively about how and what to seek to know and how to act upon it.

The constructivist perspective of reality maintains that, contrary to the objectivist view, there is no reality independent of language: reality is always signified and produced by language, through social practices; it is the fruit of a linguistic construction. Paraphrasing Veyne [xxii], the object is nothing but the correlate of practice; it does not exist before it, each practice engenders the object that corresponds to it; there are no natural objects or things; things, objects, are nothing but the correlates of practices.

Wittgenstein initially adopts the traditional method of logical empiricism, characterized by scientific knowledge acquired through the cause and effect relationship, by the belief in reality-in-itself, by the search for universal truths, and by the understanding of language as a copy of reality. However, it can be observed that in the second phase, the philosopher tries to undermine the foundations of Cartesian thought, demonstrating that language is no longer understood as a form of representation of reality, but merely as action. In other words, taking the pragmatic view as a basis, language no longer represents reality, but simply constitutes it. In the pragmatic view, language begins to be seen as a social practice, as a form of action in the world [xxiii].

Contrary to the representational view, in the pragmatic conception of language, there is no longer the reification of universal concepts, nor the notion of absolute truth. The pragmatic view seeks to investigate the various uses of language, adopting a historical and contextualized position. In Veyne's opinion [xxiv], what is done, the object, is explained by what was done at each moment in history; it is a mistake to think that doing, the practice, is explained by what was done.

While logical empiricism attempts to analyze the structure of language, pragmatism analyzes the uses of language. Thus, in this second Wittgensteinian phase, language remains the main theme of reflection. As Condé [xxv] points out, the second Wittgenstein notes that language emerges as an alternative explanation of the relationship with reality, as a relationship of meaning. This new perspective abandons a semantic position to introduce a predominantly pragmatic dimension.

INFLUENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON LANGUAGE

It is impossible to reflect on human language without separating it from sociocultural data. Language is not separate from human life, much less from its essence, which is the ability to create, recreate and, above all, express thought through language [xxvi].

Language is an efficient instrument of action and interaction in society, since every discursive form is a social interaction, a human practice given by the subject. Thus, social life is a set of acts of understanding and, consequently, of linguistic activity [xxvii].

The relationship between language and social organization is the object of study of sociolinguistic approaches. In fact, it is known that linguistic differences correspond to demographic differences, such as age, gender, education, place of birth, as well as to different communicative objectives and domains of knowledge. If we look more deeply, we see that the way speakers use language is linked to their culture and social organization, and reflects the system of knowledge, beliefs and worldview that underlies it [xxviii].

Variation is regularly linked to social factors, some of which are demographic, such as the age and gender of the speaker, others of a social nature, such as class, and others of a situational nature, associated with different styles or ways of speaking. It is clear that this correlation underlies change, that is, the fact that certain types of realization of a variable (phonological, morphosyntactic or lexical) prevail, as their frequency increases in correspondence with the younger generations [xxix].

Savoia [xxx] observed that in a non-literate culture the transmission of knowledge and cultural tradition is based exclusively on oral interaction, because language refers to meanings interpreted in relation to the situation and the specific knowledge of the interlocutors.

In linguistic communities, adherence to one's own linguistic variety is perceived as a sign of belonging to the social group and culture and as one of the main criteria for symbolic integration in the process of community self-recognition [xxxi].

If this interpretative scheme is applied to today's society, a complex and problematic picture emerges. Firstly, in many countries, there is a contrast between the official language, legally recognised or not, used in public life, in schools and in the media, and the languages of minority groups that correspond to different or multiple members of local minority communities. This situation currently includes not only the coexistence of a standard language and old local or regional minority varieties but also the new varieties of recent immigrant groups [xxxii].

Relationships between individuals within society depend on the reciprocal position of those who interact and reproduce norms, rules and values relating to different aspects of life in common, customs, beliefs, etc. These norms are internalised by the members of the group and contribute to forming what is called identity and, at least, some aspects of their personality [xxxiii].

Identification processes include both linguistic components and non-verbal symbolic means, which play a significant role in the processes of signification as pragmatic factors relevant to interpretation. These paralinguistic factors are subject to homogenisation phenomena in a

similar way to those that can affect languages. The role of language in establishing the identity of individuals is fundamental, insofar as it expresses and, at the same time, provides the means to create the link between individual and social identities [xxxiv].

The present era is marked by a dialectic of identity; and this contributes to the fact that economic development and globalization⁷ are leading people to rethink their identities in community terms.

National identity gives way to a more reassuring regional perspective, in which people seem to share a common tradition and common perspectives. At the same time, the same people with an increasingly local identity are opening up, also thanks to new technologies that support information and communication, to inhabitants of remote places with whom they feel they share a language, culture and religion.

Spoken language is of such a nature that, to a certain extent, it is constantly exposed to the deception of human thought [xxv]. All spoken language presents itself only as the word that is spoken to someone, as the unit of discourse that creates communication between people and builds solidarity.

CONCLUSION

Language and thought in Wittgenstein – this was the theme addressed in this study, which accurately explores the linguistic theories underlying the Tract and the Philosophical Investigations. The Tract, therefore, deals with the logical analysis of language with the metaphysical purpose of offering an explanation of the possibilities of understanding the universe, and the Philosophical Investigations, based on the metaphysical elements of the Tract, explain the phenomena that are hidden by the misuse of language. Given its public and social nature, the use of language allows us to represent human experiences, and allows us to share the world of objects, events and ideas. The way in which different communities and societies use language is linked to culture and social organization and reflects the system of knowledge, beliefs and the idea that we have of the world.

⁷ In terms of heritage, globalization has positive effects that consist of the emergence of a worldwide concern regarding intangible cultural assets and the capacity of international organizations to work together to protect heritage, cf. Blank, P. & Mauri, D. (2014). Rethinking (cultural) heritage: culture, identity and memory. *Legal Prism*, vol. 13, no. 1, Sao Paulo. DOI: 10.5585/PrismaJ.v13n1.4564.

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