



# The Relationship Between Language And Reality After Early Wittgenstein: A Brief Analysis.

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## Abstract:

Language is an attractive area of study in philosophy and an extremely important topic for philosophers. But question is that why is language important to philosophy? There are different ways in answering the above question. Most important, however, is that language is important to philosophy because language expresses reality or ontology for us. However, we witness there a divergence of opinions about the nature of language and reality. Linguistic philosophers over the years have engaged in a serious philosophical debate about the nature of language and the nature of reality. Language, for them, may be either ordinary language or artificial language. The language that Wittgenstein expected in his *Tractatus* is known as the propositional language or logical language. So, for him, language is the totality of propositions. In the contrary, according early Wittgenstein, reality is the totality of facts. Language is the model of reality. Language expresses reality due to having isomorphism relation between language and reality. However, in this paper, I have wanted to show that the relationship between language and reality by following Wittgenstein's first book *Tractatus logico-Philosophicus*.

**Key words:** ontology, pictorial form, logical picture, Isomorphism, logical space.

## Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are mentioned in bellow in this way:

- 1) Here my prime objective is to highlight the relationship between language and reality by following early Wittgenstein's book *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*.
- 2) To define the semantic approach about language and reality according to early Works of Wittgenstein.
- 3) To explore importance and significant of language and reality in philosophy.

- 4) To find out essence of language in Wittgenstein's early philosophy.

## Methodology:

The methodology that applied in this article is analytical and conceptual. Some articles, different thesis, and some books are the supporting documents for this article. Several regional libraries were visited and gathered relevant information, helps from some erudite teachers, experts, renowned scholars are also taken. A number of other relevant primary and secondary sources of information on the selected topic are also used here.

## Introduction:

Philosophical thinking about language and reality is deeply rooted in the history of philosophy. All major philosophers have had some doctrine about the relationship between the mind and language, language and reality, Language and communication, language and philosophy and so on. Philosophy is a discipline that studies the nature and meaning of the universe and human life. In philosophy there was a group of philosophers named linguistic philosophers who have engaged over the years in a serious philosophical debate about the nature of language and the nature of reality. Based on this subject matter, Linguistics philosophers are divided into two broad groups, philosophically known as ideal language philosophers and ordinary language philosophers. Philosophers of ordinary language advocate natural language. They declared that natural or ordinary language is sufficient for doing philosophy and that one can use ordinary language as a philosophical method. In contrast, those who advocated ideal or logical language would argue that ordinary language is by its very nature ambiguous and vague. As a result, ordinary language cannot be understood as an authentic or authoritative method of linguistic philosophy. In the contrary, the nature of reality again finds different interpretations among the different linguistic philosophers. Such as, according to Locke, reality is the totality of experience;<sup>1</sup> for early Wittgenstein reality is the totality of facts<sup>2</sup>. From a broader perspective we can classify reality into two categories named empirical reality and metaphysical reality. According to some linguistic philosophers, especially those belonging to semantics, language is not relevant to know metaphysical reality as for them language in the true sense would be incapable to reach the metaphysical reality. Thus, language is important in philosophy because language reveals empirical reality for us. The other important observation is that those who limit themselves to empirical reality would consider language and reality as independent entities. For them language is a medium of communication and reality has its own

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<sup>1</sup> Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (ed.) P. Nidditch, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975: III, ii, I.

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. E. Pears & B.F. McGuinness, London and New York, 1995, p.5.

existence without language. However, in this paper, I have wanted to show that the relationship between language and reality by following Wittgenstein's first book *Tractatus logico-Philosophicus*.

## Analysis of the study:

Ludwig Wittgenstein was one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, because he gave a new direction to philosophy and philosophical problems. In his two books, namely *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, the main subject matter of philosophy is language, though his view of language has changed from his early to later period. Early Wittgenstein stated that language pictures the reality, whereas later Wittgenstein held that language performs a multiplicity of functions.

Early Wittgenstein is regarded as leading proponent of ideal language philosophers like many other proponents of ideal language, in fact, Wittgenstein advocated proper symbolism because the language he envisioned was logical in nature. Symbolism is that it always portrays something definite without exception. While describing Wittgenstein's position about logical perfect language, Russell says, "A logical perfect language has rules of syntax which prevents non-sense and has single symbol which always have a definite and unique meaning"<sup>3</sup>. Wittgenstein believed that ordinary language fails to convey the meaning of language. He claims that proper or ideal language would be one that adequately addresses meaning. In this regard, he claims that the essential aspect of language is to assert or deny facts. Thus when Wittgenstein talks about language, he emphasizes authenticity of language. Language always refers to something. But the reference or picturing or mapping or representing or hooking must be authentic. Natural language is rejected by early Wittgenstein because like others philosophers belonging to semantic tradition he assumes that ordinary language can never be authoritative of giving us meaning because of its ambiguity. In this regard, early Wittgenstein was influenced by Russell's concept of logical proper name. Logical proper name is a kind of proper name which is uttered by demonstrative pronoun, also referred as logical proper name. 'This', 'that', 'those', 'it' etc. are demonstrative pronouns. In case of logical proper name there does not arise any confusions. This is called knowledge by acquaintance. For Russell logical proper name can be defined only ostensively, not by description. Like logical atomism of Russell, Wittgenstein wants to show that elementary propositions are the last residue of analysis, which cannot be further analyzed. In this respect, both Russell and Wittgenstein, abandon the ordinary language analysis, which cannot bring out clear and precise sense of proposition.

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<sup>3</sup> Russell, Bertrand, Introduction: Wittgenstein *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, London and New York, p.x.

## The concept of language:

The language that Wittgenstein expected in his *Tractatus* is known as the propositional language. What then is the nature of proposition? Why Wittgenstein prefers propositional language instead to other language? The term proposition is again highly questionable concept because many philosophers in the past have engaged to equate proposition with thought or judgment or the meaning of sentence. However, Wittgenstein understood language in terms of proposition on the logical sense. It is known to us that logic deals with proposition. In this regard one can start with propositional or truth functional logic. Although Frege is regarded as modern elementary logic as propositional and predicate logic, Wittgenstein offered us blueprint for truth functional logic in his famous book *Tractatus*. The term proposition has been interpreted in at least three different contexts among philosophers. Ordinary people do not find serious gap between sentence and proposition in ordinary sense. Hence they use these two terms inter-changeable. However, in the true propositional sense proposition is understood as meaning of sentence. If the proposition is called the meaning of sentence, then in one sense the sentence will be differ from proposition. Sentence will be physical because they can be written on the blackboard, but the meaning of sentence, i.e., proposition cannot be written on the blackboard because proposition is non-physical. Proposition is mental. One might compare proposition to Frege's understanding of thought or to Immanuel Kant's long deprecated judgment. However, Wittgenstein's interpretation of proposition is logical. A logical proposition must be either true or false. Every proposition has two sense, the positive and negative, i.e., true or false. The term of positive sense of proposition is "to be the case" and the form of negative sense of proposition is 'not to be the case'. Thus, Wittgenstein by language understood the totality of propositions. That is why; Wittgenstein explicates the language in terms of proposition.

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- "What is the function of language?" and "What is the structure of language?" Instead of "language", we may use "the totality of propositions" (TLP 4-001). The function of language is to represents something in the world like a picture and it can do so because both language and the world have a structure and each level of structure in language corresponds to a level of structure in the world. Ordinary language propositions are of complex structure and need analysis to evacuate their logical structure is to be laid bare. Through the logical analysis of complex proposition, we get elementary propositions whose names really stand directly for objects in the world. Accordingly, the two questions above take the following forms: "How are elementary propositions linked with the world?" and "How are complex propositions related to elementary ones?" Philosophers like Max Black, K. T. Fann say that Wittgenstein's answer will be: "Elementary propositions are 'logical pictures' of

atomic facts-basic kind of further unanalysable facts and all complex propositions are 'truth-functions' of the elementary ones."<sup>4</sup>

## The concept of reality:

Wittgenstein, at the very outset of his book *Tractatus- Logico-Philosophicus*, says: "The world is all that is the case"<sup>5</sup> (PI). Wittgenstein's this remark makes him a distinctive thinker. It reflects that Wittgenstein understands reality in terms of the phrase 'that is the case'. But the question is: What is the case? Immediately in replying to this question Wittgenstein says, "The world is the totality of facts, not of things."<sup>6</sup>(TLP 1.1). These two remarks of Wittgenstein actually draw the limits of the world or the limits of the reality. Here he intends to say that anything other than fact cannot be the part of reality. Anything can be a part of reality if it is expressed either in the form of 'to be the case' or 'not to be the case'. We have already stated that every proposition has two senses, either the proposition would be true (to be the case) or the proposition would be false (not to be the case). Thus, the concept of fact and the two senses of propositions are the hallmark of reality to be understood. The question then is: Why does Wittgenstein claim that the world is the totality of facts, not of things? Why does not he think that the world is the totality of things? Does it make sense to assume that Wittgenstein was not concerned about things? There is no question of doubting that by adopting the view that the world is the totality of facts, but not things, Wittgenstein actually has deviated himself from the general perception regarding the concept of the world (reality). Our common sense view is that the world is the totality of things. Even Locke claimed that "the world is the totality of experience"<sup>7</sup>. We equally sense a familiar view in Strawson. Strawson in his *Individuals* claims that "the world is the totality of particulars"<sup>8</sup> and he, in fact, understands particulars in terms of objects. Thus, Wittgenstein by claiming the world (reality) as the totality of facts takes a different standpoint which does not go along with other linguistic philosophers as well as with the common sense view. Why does then, Wittgenstein claim that the world is totality of facts? We think that Wittgenstein does not fail to realize the commonsensical position that the world (reality) is the totality of things. Wittgenstein prefers to know the

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<sup>4</sup> K. T.Fann, *Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1969, p. 8 and also Max Black, *A Companion To Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein,L, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F.Pears and B.F.McGuinness, Routledge& Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1961,P.5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

<sup>7</sup> Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (ed.) P. Nidditch, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975: III, ii, I.

<sup>8</sup> Strawson, P.F. *Individuals: an Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, London, Methuen, 1959, p.20.

world (reality) as the totality of facts simply for the sake of clarity of the world (reality). Wittgenstein actually, as a firm believer of atomism, tries to interpret reality (world) meaningfully. He conceived the term meaningful with the background of truth-functional logic. Accordingly, the term meaningfulness is conceived by Wittgenstein truth-functionally, i.e., in terms of truth and falsity. According to Wittgenstein, what is a fact? A fact is something which makes a proposition as either true or false. That means language, i.e., proposition pictures a fact (an item of reality) and a fact, in turn, makes the proposition as either true or false. As Wittgenstein understands language in terms of proposition and reality for Wittgenstein is something known by proposition, the representative of proposition, i.e., reality must be a fact. Precisely, we can say that in order to conceive reality i.e., the world truth-functionally, Wittgenstein prefers to say that the world is the totality of facts; but not things.

### **The relationship between language and reality**

From the above discussion about the nature of language as well as the nature of reality, it is clear to us that Wittgenstein clearly specified the limits of language and the limits of reality or world. Anything beyond the language limit cannot be shown and it is recommended to pass in silence. His understanding of the nature of language as well as the nature of reality is atomic in nature. We observe that Wittgenstein understands language in terms as proposition that can be further anatomized down to names. Names are assumed to be the minimum vocabularies of language. Thus, his understanding of language in terms of name is atomic in nature. Similarly, he understands reality in terms of facts and facts can further be analyzed down to objects which are the atomic elements of fact. Thus, from the point of view of language names are immutable form of language. Same way, from the point of view of reality objects are immutable or unalterable form of reality. Thus his interpretation of language and reality are atomic in nature.

Now, the question that arises here: how the relationship between language and reality is possible? Let us examine the relationship between language and reality following early Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein drew a relationship between language and reality through his famous picture theory of meaning or proposition. According to Wittgenstein, a proposition depicts a fact. Proposition stands as a representative of reality. Wittgenstein uses the concept of picture in a broader sense. To Wittgenstein, a picture is a model of reality, because a proposition depicts a fact and fact turns out to make the proposition as either true or false. For something to be a model of reality it must be a reality first and then secondly, it should be a model of it. A picture is related to reality because there picture elements associated with objects in the world. In this regard Wittgenstein says, "What constitutes a picture is that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way."<sup>9</sup>(TLP.2.14) it is because of the structure it determines that a picture appears as a model of reality. The elements of the picture, i.e., elements of the proposition are related to each other in a certain way

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<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, op.cit., p.6.

representing that the things are related to each other in the same way. In this context, Wittgenstein spoke of graphic or pictorial relationship.

But how does a proposition picture a fact? How does a proposition become a real picture? What are the conditions of making successful picturing? When a proposition pictures? Where does it picture? These are very important questions that need serious attention. A proposition has a true picture in its logical space. But what does Wittgenstein mean by logical space. In what sense a logical space is empirically different from an empirical space? According to Wittgenstein, logical space is a completely different type of space where truth functional logic can be applied. The domain of truth functional logic implies that it is the domain of logical space. Logical space covers empirical space and simultaneously goes beyond the empirical space. Hence, it is said that what is empirically impossible is logically possible. Moreover, Logical space is a space beyond which nothing can be imagined. Logical space in this sense is a conceivable space in which one can draw mental picture or image.

According to Wittgenstein, a proposition pictures a fact under certain specific conditions. The structure of the proposition must match the structure of the fact. A relational term is used to create a proposition by names. The relational term makes the order of the elements of the proposition. So, there must be a systematic order of the elements of the proposition and in this regard the relational term plays an all important role. Similarly, a fact is formed by objects and objects of fact have a systematic order. Now, a proposition depicts only one fact if there is a one to one correspondence between each element of the proposition with each element of the fact. It is important to have a pictorial or graphical relationship between the elements of the proposition and the elements of the fact. In such a situation we can say that a proposition represents a fact after Wittgenstein. In this regard, Wittgenstein in his famous first book '*Tractatus*' says that "in a picture objects have the elements of the picture corresponding to them. In a picture the elements of the picture are the representative of objects"<sup>10</sup> (TLP 2.13)

It is very clear to us that every elements of the proposition is bound to represent an object of the fact. An element of a proposition is called a name and an element of fact is called an object. A name depicts objects. Thus, it is very clear to us that the element of the proposition, i.e., the name refers of element of the fact, i.e., an object in logical space. A picture is made possible because the elements of picture are arranged in relation to each other in certain way. That is why Wittgenstein claimed that "A picture is a fact"<sup>11</sup> (TLP2.141). As a defence, Wittgenstein immediately says that "The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.8 .

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.8 .

another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another on the same way”<sup>12</sup> (TLP2.15). In this context, Wittgenstein presents us with a pictorial form. Pictorial form is the probability that things like elements of the picture are related to each other in the same way. In this Wittgenstein gives the impression to reader that a picture is connected to reality. In this way a picture cannot but reach reality.

So, according to Wittgenstein, one has to put more emphasis on the pictorial relationship consists of the co-relations of the picture’s element with things because a relationship must be made between language and reality through the picture theory of meaning. These co-relations are sense of the element of picture, with which the picture completely touches reality. Thus with pictorial relationship we can say that there must have something identical in a picture and what it depicts. A picture must correspond to reality which Wittgenstein describes as pictorial form. In other words, in a picture must have similarity with reality what Wittgenstein describes as pictorial form. However Wittgenstein asserts that a picture cannot depict its self portrait or pictorial form but rather exhibits it. Thus, according to Wittgenstein, every picture must be representative of itself without which a picture cannot be realized. This representative form of picture can be called nothing but logical form, i.e., it is the form in reality. A picture whose pictorial form is logical form is called a logical picture. Indeed, we have repeatedly pointed out that Wittgenstein understands very well the relationship between language and reality in logical space with the background of logical picture. Thus by making a relation between language and reality for Wittgenstein one must have the idea that a logical picture can depict the world. A picture having logico-pictorial form is common with what it depicts. It is according to Wittgenstein that a picture agrees with reality or fails to agree with reality. It is precisely in this sense that a picture can be designated right or wrong, as true or false. It independently represents its truth and falsity through its pictorial form. Accordingly, what constitutes its truth and falsity is the agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality. To know whether a picture true or false, we need to compare it with reality. In this sense, there are no pictures that are true a priori.

Early Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* gives us an understanding of the ontological picture based on the internal structure between language and reality while developing the internal and atomic relationship between language and reality. A relationship can have both internal and external structure between language and reality. Wittgenstein not only advocated a descriptive picture theory but also an ontological picture theory in his *Tractatus*. In fact, both are interrelated.

From the above discussion it is clear to us that Wittgenstein conceives the relationship between language and reality within the limits of language and also within the limits of the world. Beyond of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.9

limits of language nothing can be shown. Of course, within the limits, Wittgenstein emphasizes on the structure of language and reality.

### Conclusion:

The main objective of this paper is to show the relationship between language and reality. There is no question of doubt that language reveals reality to us. In the conclusion I would like to deal with the questions like why this paper deserves worthy of philosophical consideration and why philosophical community would be interested to read this paper. I think that this paper is worthy of philosophical consideration on two important accounts. First, it engages in exploring essence of language and reality which I think has been boiled down by linguistic philosophers, especially early Wittgenstein. Secondly, it attempts to express language and reality as distinct entities. In one respect, this paper brings a different message to the linguistic philosophers who have engaged themselves in exploring the relationship between language and reality by conceiving both language and reality as separated entities. The other important aspect is that linguistic philosophers, especially early Wittgenstein has given importance on the external uses of language.

