UNIT 2 WITTGENSTEIN

Contents

2.0   OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Unit is to introduce Ludwig Wittgenstein, the leading figure of twentieth century analytic and linguistic philosophy. By the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic knowledge of the life and works of Wittgenstein;

- to have a critical view of his earlier philosophy as propounded in the *Tractatus*;

- to understand the key concepts as given in the *Philosophical Investigations*;

- to have a critical understanding of his earlier and later thoughts on philosophy and philosophizing.

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Western Philosophy is characterised by a logical and linguistic turn and Ludwig Wittgenstein played a significant role in the development of various contemporary philosophical traditions like Analytic Philosophy, Logical Positivism, and Ordinary Language Philosophy. He continues to influence the Hermeneutic

and Postmodern trends in philosophy today. His works are immensely challenging, and he raises fundamental questions about the nature of philosophy and philosophizing. He has had, and continues to have, a pervasive influence on philosophical thought.

In this unit, after a brief sketch of his life and works, his earlier and later thoughts will be critically analysed showing the originality of Wittgenstein and the continued influence of his philosophy in the contemporary thought. Wittgenstein's first book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, published in 1921, had a major impact on the philosophical world. By showing the application of modern logic to metaphysics, via language, he provided new insights into the relations between world, thought and language and thereby into the nature of philosophy. His later philosophy, epitomized in the *Philosophical Investigations* and published posthumously in 1953, is critical of his earlier views and would change the character of philosophy since then.

In the Preface to *Investigations*, Wittgenstein states that his new thoughts would be better understood by contrast with and against the background of his old thoughts, those in the *Tractatus*. Most of Part I of *Investigations* is essentially critical of the *Tractatus* way of philosophical thinking. The *Tractatus* used an a priori, logical method with the assumption that language must be purified and analysed to conform to the logician's ideals. In contrast, the *Investigations* uses a descriptive method: 'One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that' (*PI* 340). According to the *Tractatus* philosophical problems arise because 'the logic of our language is misunderstood' (*T* Preface). We have these problems, according to the *Investigations,* because 'we do not command a clear view of the use of our words' (*PI* 122). Though in both works he was concerned to find the limits of language and thought, in the *Investigations*, he moves from the realm of logic and form to that of ordinary language and actual use as the centre of the philosopher's attention and from an emphasis on definition and analysis to description of 'language-games', 'family resemblance' and 'stream of life'.

2.2   LIFE AND WORKS

Wittgenstein was born on April 26, 1889 in Vienna, Austria, to a wealthy industrial family. After his schooling at home, in Linze and later in Berlin, in 1908 he began his studies in aeronautical engineering at Manchester University where his interest in the foundations of mathematics led him to Gottlob Frege. Upon Frege's advice, in 1911 he went to Cambridge to study under Bertrand Russell. During his years in Cambridge, from 1911 to 1913, Wittgenstein worked on the foundations of logic and nature of philosophy under the direction of Russell and Moore and was expected to succeed and carry on the analytic philosophical tradition to greater clarity and success. He retreated to isolation in Norway in order to work out their solutions. In 1913 he returned to Austria and in 1914, at the start of World War I (1914-1918), joined the Austrian army. He was taken captive in 1917. It was during the war that he wrote the notes and drafts of his work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In 1920 Wittgenstein, having, to his mind, solved all philosophical problems in essentials, in the *Tractatus*, engaged himself as gardener, teacher, and architect in and around Vienna. He returned to Cambridge in 1929 to resume his philosophical vocation, after having been drawn to discussions on

the philosophy of mathematics and science with members of the Vienna Circle. In the 1930s and 1940s Wittgenstein lectured and conducted seminars at Cambridge, developing most of his ideas in the *Philosophical Investigations*. He resigned his Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge, but continued his philosophical work vigorously and travelled to the United States and Ireland, and returned to Cambridge, where he was diagnosed with cancer and died in 1951.

The *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* was the only book published during his lifetime. Throughout his life Wittgenstein wrote down his thoughts in notebooks, returning to the same topics repeatedly for conceptual clarity. The *Notebooks* are preliminary versions of ideas which was later crystallised in the *Tractatus*. He was never fully content with any of the arrangements of the remarks and thoughts in the notebooks and left to his literary editors to publish from his manuscripts. *Philosophical Remarks* contains his thoughts in 1930 also showing considerable philosophical affinities with the thoughts expressed in the *Tractatus. Philosophical Grammar*, a collection of his remarks from 1932-34, contains some of the early expressions of the central themes of his later philosophy. The *Blue and Brown Books* were prepared so as to help his students in 1932 and 1933. From 1936 onwards he worked on various versions of what we now know as the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), which he hoped would provide a definitive presentation of his thought. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1956) contain ideas he worked on from 1937 to 1944 and which he intended at that time to form the second part of the *Investigations* (rather than the psychological topics we now have). From 1944 onwards he worked mainly on philosophical psychology: *Zettel*, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* I and II and *Last Writings on Philosophical Psychology* I and II are from these years. From 1950 to 1951 we also have *On Certainty* and *Remarks on Colour*. Another source for his views is records of his conversations and lectures taken by friends and pupils.

2.3 EARLY WITTGENSTEIN

Coming out of the *Notebooks*, written in 1914-16, and showing Schopenhauerian and other cultural influences, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a continuation of and reaction to Frege and Russell's conceptions of logic and language. Despite their differences in style and content, they share the goals of (1) repudiating traditional metaphysics, (2) reducing language to a series of elementary propositions that would represent facts, and (3) developing a theory of language that would establish the boundaries of meaning. Running less than eighty pages in length, *Tractatus* consists of a series of short, numbered statements and its structure purports to show its internal essence. It is constructed around seven basic propositions, numbered by the natural numbers 1-7, with the rest of the text numbered by decimal figures as numbers of separate propositions indicating the logical importance of the propositions. For example, 1.1 is a comment on proposition 1, 1.22 is a comment on 1.2, and so on. The last part of the book is characterised by oracular and mystical utterances. Wittgenstein was setting the limits of thought and language, in this work. He holds that whatever can be thought can be spoken, and the limits of thought can be set out by determining the limits of language which in turn gives us the limits of what can be said with sense. The book can be summed up, in his words: 'What can be said at all can

be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent' (*T* Preface).

2.4   PICTURE THEORY OF MEANING

The *Tractatus* addresses the problems of philosophy dealing with the relation between the world, thought and language, and presents a logical solution. The world, thought, and proposition share the same logical form and hence the world is represented by thought, which is expressed in proposition. The world consists of facts and not of things (*T* 1.1). Facts are existent states of affairs (*T* 2), which are combinations of objects. Objects have various properties and combine with one another according to their internal properties. The states of affairs are complex by nature which can be analysed into constituent simple objects. The states of affairs are contingent and could have been otherwise. The totality of the actual and possible states of affairs makes up the whole of reality and the world is totality of the actual states of affairs. The thought and the proposition serve as pictures of the facts.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein presents a picture theory of thought and language. Pictures are models of reality (*T* 2.12) and are made up of elements that represent objects, and the combination of objects in the picture represents the combination of objects in the state of affairs. The logical structure of the picture, whether in thought or in language, is isomorphic with the logical structure of the state of affairs which it pictures. The possibility of this structure being shared by the picture (the thought, the proposition) and the state of affairs is the pictorial form. 'That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it' (*T* 2.1511). The picture can picture the world but cannot picture its own pictorial form. According to the *Tractatus*, to have meaning the structure of the proposition must conform with the constraints of logical form, and the elements of the proposition must have reference. The function of language is to represent states of affairs in the world. 'A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it' (*T* 4.01). Obviously, a proposition does not give us a spatial and empirical representation of a situation; it is not an empirical picture but a logical picture of the states of affairs. The logical relationships among the elements of a proposition represent the logical relationships among the objects in the world. A proposition has a sense if it describes a possible state of affairs; otherwise, it is meaningless. Thus, the only meaningful language is the fact-stating language of the natural sciences. 'The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science' (*T* 4.11).

According to the *Tractatus*, philosophy does not give us any information about reality; it just clarifies our thought and language by removing misunderstandings. 'Philosophy', according to Wittgenstein, therefore, 'is not a body of doctrine but an activity. . . . Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions' (*T* 4.112), which is done through a logical analysis. As we have seen, 'every statement about complexes can be analyzed into a statement about their constituent parts, and into those propositions which completely describe the complexes' (*T* 2.0201). This linguistic and logical analysis is hoped to provide the clarity, the goal of philosophy. Logic is based on the idea that every proposition is either true or false. This bi-polarity of propositions enables the composition of more complex propositions from atomic ones by using

truth-functional operators (*T* 5). Wittgenstein supplies, in the *Tractatus*, the first presentation of Frege's logic in the form of what has become known as 'truth-tables'. This provides the means to analyze all propositions into their atomic parts. He also provides the general form of a proposition (*T* 6), showing that any proposition is the result of successive applications of logical operations to elementary propositions.

2.5   WITTGENSTEIN'S SILENCE

Having developed a picture theory of world-thought-language, and relying on the one general form of the proposition, Wittgenstein asserts that all meaningful propositions are of equal value. According to him, 'Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only establish that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language' (*T* 4.003).   He ends the journey with the admonition concerning what can (or cannot), and what should (or should not) be said (*T* 7), leaving outside the realm of the sayable the propositions of ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics. Wittgenstein's views on values are radically different from that of logical atomism and logical positivism. According to the *Tractatus*, there are only propositions of science within the boundary of meaningful language. For the positivists there is nothing to be silent about. Wittgenstein, however, believed that 'There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical' (*T* 6.522). The propositions of the *Tractatus* themselves are also to be included in the class of the inexpressible. As we have seen, a proposition is meaningful only if it can be analyzed down into one or more elementary propositions each of which refer to an atomic fact. *Tractatus* does not make a claim about some particular fact in the world but describes the relationship between propositions and facts. They make claims about the relationship between language and the world. Wittgenstein acknowledged that his propositions are outside the domain of meaningful language; they are not propositions of science. 'My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me finally recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them— as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up it)' (*T* 6.54). They are attempts to show the unsayable.

Ethical and spiritual values also are in the realm of the mystical. Wittgenstein says we will not find values among the facts of the world, for everything is what it is (*T* 6.41). Therefore, the sense of the world, what constitutes its value, must lie outside the world. It cannot be one more fact among the scientifically observable facts in the world. Consequently he held that 'ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental' (*T* 6.421). '*How* things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world' (*T* 6.432). Wittgenstein closes his discussion of the mystical and ends the *Tractatus* with his final, oracular statement: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' (*T* 7). The *Tractatus*, on this reading, is part of the ineffable, and should be recognized as such.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

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1) What is philosophy according to *Tractatus*?

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2) How does Wittgenstein interpret ethical and spiritual values?

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2.6 LATER WITTGENSTEIN

The complex edifice of the *Tractatus* is built on the assumption that the task of logical analysis was to discover the elementary propositions, whose form was not yet known. What is 'hidden' in our ordinary language could be 'completely clarified' by a final 'analysis' into 'a single completely resolved form of every expression', which would bring to the goal of 'complete exactness'. Wittgenstein recognizes this as an illusion in the *Investigations*. Rejecting this dogmatism, he moves from the realm of logic to that of ordinary language as the centre of the philosopher's attention; from an emphasis on definition and analysis to 'family resemblance' and 'language-games'; and from systematic philosophical writing to a collection of interrelated remarks. He rejects the former conceptions such as: a proposition has one and only one complete analysis; every proposition has a definite sense; reality and language are composed of simple elements; there is an essence of language, of propositions, of thought; and there is an a priori order of the world. With the rejection of the assumption that all representations must share a common logical form, the conception of the unsayable disappeared; what remains are language-games of conversation and collaboration in the stream of life. 'What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use' (*PI* 116). The meaning of a word is not determined by the object it represents, but by the way it is used in language games. The same word can be used in many different language games, and this variability means that the meaning of words are not fixed with necessary sufficient conditions, but the various uses forma family in the stream of life. The picture theory of meaning is replaced by a tool-use model of language.

2.7 TOOL-USE MODEL OF LANGUAGE

The *Investigations* begins with a quote from Augustine's *Confessions* which gives 'a particular picture of the essence of human language,' based on the idea

that 'individual words in language name objects,' and that 'sentences are combinations of such names' (*PI* 1). This picture of language is at the base of the mainstream philosophy and Wittgenstein in *PI* replaces this name-reference picture with a tool-use model: 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (*PI* 43). The referential theories of meaning were intent on pointing to something outside of the language which could be located either in the world or in the mind or in the Platonic realm, as the reference. When investigating meaning, according to the later Wittgenstein, the philosopher must 'look and see' the variety of uses of the word in the language: 'Don't think but look!' (*PI* 66). We learn the meaning of words by learning how to use them, just as we learn to play chess, not by associating the pieces with objects, but by learning how they can be moved. We do not acquire new words that we use in the day to day life by learning formal, exact definitions, but by learning how to use them in various contexts.

A sign becomes a meaningful word not because it is associated with a reference, but because it has a function in the stream of life. One can elucidate the meaning of a word by describing how it is used in a variety of situations, showing the similarities and differences of the uses. Wittgenstein compares words to tools, each having distinctive functions: 'The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects' (*PI* §11). 'Pain' and 'pen' are both nouns and 'to speak' and 'to think' are both verbs; the difference between these words, however, are revealed by looking at their various uses as a hammer is distinguished by a chisel by the way it is used. One and the same word can have different meanings: To know the height of Mount Everest is different from knowing how a mango tastes. The former can be expressed in a proposition the latter is not susceptible for propostional knowledge (*PI* 78). This is because the word 'know' functions in different ways.

It has been objected that there are misuses and therefore we should be concerned not with how we use words, but with why we use them the way we do. By a description of what is the case, how a word is actually used, Wittgenstein is elucidating how a word can be used meaningfully in a particular language. A language is a rule governed normative practice and the use determines meaning not causally but logically. A description of what is the case shows also what ought to be the case, the rules governing the meaningful use of a word. It is not the intention of the speakers but the grammar determines the use of the word objectively. The meaning, however, is not fixed forever; there are variety of uses and similarities and differences in the meaning. Wittgenstein explains this dimension of language with the analogies of family resemblance and language-games.

2.8   LANGUAGE-GAMES

In order to address the variety of language uses, and their being 'part of an activity', Wittgenstein introduces an investigational tool, 'language-game'. Wittgenstein's choice of 'game' is based on the over-all analogy between language and game. As he was watching a game, he thought that in language we are playing with words. Wittgenstein asks the following question concerning games: 'What is common to them all?—Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games'—but look and see whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that' (*PI* 66). Similar

to the diversity of games, our multiple ways of language use do not conform to a single model. In contrast to the one-dimensional picture theory of name-object of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein gives a random list of language uses such as giving orders, and obeying them; describing the appearance of an object; speculating about an event; making a joke; translating from one language into another; asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying (*PI* 23). Just as we cannot give a definition of 'game', so we cannot find 'what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language' (*PI* 65).

A second reason why Wittgenstein compares the use of language to games is to emphasize that language use is an activity: " ... the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (*PI* 23). Words and deed as are interwoven in the stream of life: 'the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, [is] the language-game' (*PI* 7). The problem with the name-object theory of language is not only that there are other uses of language besides referring to objects, but also that the act of referring to objects plays no role unless it is an activity within the context of a particular language-game (*PI* 49). Suppose I point to an object and say 'pen'. That remains a mere noise unless it has a use in a language-game. For example, if I am teaching English, the pupils would repeat 'pen'. If I am teaching German, the pupils would respond with the correct German equivalent. If I am in my office, the secretary might respond to the word by bringing a pen to me. Apart from the linguistic responses and activities that make up such language-games, my saying 'pen' would make no sense. We don't simply speak; we use language to do things by means of speaking.

Wittgenstein used the notion of language-games also to illustrate that we run into confusions when we do not pay attention to the fact that the function of words vary from one language-game to another. Basketball and football, for example, have different set of rules. Rules of basketball are not applicable for football and vice versa; such illegitimate applications create confusions. With respect to language, the logical positivists treated scientific discourse as the only meaningful discourse and judged all other ways of speaking (aesthetic, religious and ethical discourses) to be meaningless. According to Wittgenstein, language-uses (like basketball and football) must be judged on their own terms, by their own standards. Not paying attention to the differences in the governing rules in different language games is the cause of many traditional philosophical problems. Wittgenstein thinks the proper role of the philosopher is not to propose new theories but to remove 'misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language' (*PI* 90).

2.9 RULE-FOLLOWING

The analogy of language-game also points to the fact that both language and games are rule-governed activity. Like games, language has constitutive rules; they determine what is normative in a language/game. A rule is not an abstract entity, transcending all of its particular applications; knowing the rule is not grasping that abstract entity and thereby knowing how to use it. Wittgenstein begins his exposition with an example: '... we get [a] pupil to continue a series (say + 2) beyond 1000 — and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012' (*PI* 185). The teacher corrects his

mistakes explaining that he is not doing rightly. According to the pupil, however, he continued in the same way. The pupil exhibited how he grasped the rule, and what he wrote was in accord with his understanding. Wittgenstein proceeds further to clarify how rule following is fundamental to language game. His investigations free one from the bewitchment of Platonic, Augustinian and Cartesian picture of language use. He wants to show that we need not posit any sort of external or internal authority beyond the actual applications of the rule. These considerations lead to *PI* 201, often considered the climax of the issue: 'This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict.' Wittgenstein's formulation of the problem was wrongly interpreted as a sceptical problem concerning meaning, understanding and using of a language.

According to Wittgenstein, "Obeying a rule' is a practice' (*PI* 202) and involves objectivity, regularity and normativity. First of all, rule-following is something that an agent actually does, not merely something that seems so to the agent. It is only in the actual use of a rule, that is, in the actual practice, a rule is revealed, understood and followed. Secondly, rule-following is a repeatable procedure. It is repeatable over time and across persons. It can be taught and learned. Thirdly, there is normativity; meaning, regularity is subject to standards of correctness. The distinction between is and ought is kept; there is a correct way of following a rule. Rule-following actions are not just regularities of behaviour but regularities that have normative force, ways one ought to act. 'Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so; we react to an order in a particular way' (*PI* 206). As a practice there is no gap between a rule and an action following a rule; they are distinct but inseparable.

2.10   PRIVATE LANGUAGE

The rule-following remarks are followed by the so called "the private-language argument", one of the most discussed among the Wittgensteinian themes. A private-language is something in which 'individual words … are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations' (*PI* 243). He considers the idea that I simply associate a sign, 'S', with a sensation by concentrating my attention on the sensation and saying 'S' to myself (the private analogue of ostensive definition), and clarifies that if this is to be a genuine definition it must establish a persisting connection between sign 'S' and that sensation: "'I impress [the connection] on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connection right in the future (*PI* 258)'. In the future, however, I cannot experience the same sensation; it is a fresh sensation and naming will be at best a fresh ostensive definition. Besides to make an ostensive definition of 'S', a technique for the use of 'S' must be established, one which leads to my using 'S' in the same way as before. There can be such definitions only where there is an objective, regular, and normative practice. Just pointing and making noises does not establish a connection between object, word and meaning, even in the public world. As a private linguist I cannot even do that; at best I can only concentrate my attention. The fact that I have had a sensation and simultaneously inwardly muttered 'S' is not enough to make 'S' the name of that sensation. And if one thinks a private linguist could remember the meaning of

'S' by remembering rightly the past correlation of 'S' with a certain kind of sensation, one presupposes what needs establishing: that there was such an independent correlation to be remembered. Fallibility of memory, even of memory of meaning, is neither here nor there: there has to be the right sort of occurrence in the first place to be a candidate for being remembered; and if there is not, no memory is going to create it. If, alternatively, we do not suppose that there is something to be remembered which is independent of the memory, then 'what seems right to me is right', that is, there is nothing right or wrong about it. It is impossible, thus, for a private linguist to establish and maintain a rule for the use of an expression. Only operating in a world independent of one's impressions of it, in which one's operations are in principle available for normative criteria, can there be correlations of signs with objects and consistency in the usage of those signs. The nature of mental phenomena is grasped not by introspection but by examining 'language and the actions into which it is woven', an objective and normative practice of using words: with pain, this involves crying, complaining, comforting, administering analgesics and so on (*PI* 7).

Wittgenstein has, thus, shown that if sensations are metaphysically (only I can have it) and epistemologically (only I know it) private, one cannot have a language about sensations. A language in principle unintelligible to anyone but its user would necessarily be unintelligible to the user also, because no meanings could be established for its signs. The proposed language is not a useful language; for words can only be correctly or incorrectly applied if there are objective criteria for using them correctly. Rules of grammar determine whether a particular language use is correct or not. Private linguist cannot build up grammar for a private language. The signs in language can only function when there is a possibility of judging the correctness of their use, 'so the use of [a] word stands in need of a justification which everybody understands' (*PI* 261). Even apparently the most self-guaranteeing of all sensations, pain, derives its identity only from a sharable practice of expression, reaction and use of language. Agreement in human behaviour is fundamental to language use. The common behaviour of human beings and the very general facts of nature make particular concepts and customs, including those about sensations, possible and useful. Like any practice, language use must have objective and normative standards.

2.11   FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

To illustrate the relationship of language-games to one another, Wittgenstein uses the concept of 'family resemblances' (*PI* 67). The members of a family share many similar features, such as eye colour, temperament, hair, facial structure, and build. However, there will be no one particular feature that they all share in common. A son may have his father's eyes, mother's hair, and uncle's smile. With this analogy, Wittgenstein is attacking the theory of essentialism, which is the Platonic thesis that for things to be classed together they must share some essence. Wittgenstein's point, however, is that while our modes of discourse are all examples of language, the fact that they belong to the same category does not imply there is a single essence they all possess. Instead, the different language-games 'are related to one another in many different ways' (*PI* 65). Instead of general explanations, and definitions based on sufficient and necessary conditions, there are 'family resemblance' among the various uses of a word and among various language games. The meaning of a word is located in the logical form which is

common to all uses of that word, but in the 'complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing' (*PI* 66). 'The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' (*PI* 67).

From a Wittgensteinian point of view, the concept of rule-following is better understood as a family resemblance concept: 'This and similar things are called rules and this is how we follow rules actually in our lives'. We typically point to rule-following practices to teach and learn particular rules and the concept of rule-following. Wittgenstein is not saying that the language-games have clear-cut, hard-and-fast rules, fixed forever. Rules are drawn for special purposes, and they may vary depending on our purposes (*PI* 499). The general purpose of the language-games metaphor was not to catalogue linguistic usages but to remove confusions. Wittgenstein says that the language-games serve as 'objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the acts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities.' (*PI* 130) The mistake of the *Tractatus* was to impose on language the standards of 'the crystalline purity of logic' as though human language were some sort of calculus (*PI* 107). Family resemblance, thus, serves to exhibit the variety as well as vagueness that characterize different uses of the same concept. It is neither Platonic Idea nor Aristotelian form, or the logical form of the *Tractatus* that govern the various uses of words. Language games are interwoven in the web of life.

2.12   STREAM OF LIFE

According to the *Tractatus* language is an autonomous, abstract system of symbols in which the role of the human subject is insignificant. In striking contrast, for later Wittgenstein, language is something living and growing. Language use is an activity that takes place within the stream of life. The notion of 'form/web/stream of life' captures this insight: 'To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life' (*PI* 19). Wittgenstein introduced the term 'language-game' 'to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life' (*PI* 23). What enables language to function and therefore must be accepted as "given" is precisely forms of life. Our ways of speaking are not bound by logically necessary structure but are intimately tied into the common human practices, the hurly-burly of our everyday actual life. He is emphatic: 'Only in the stream of life words have meaning'.

Philosophers often held that a philosophical justification had to be given for every belief we have. This is, however, a hopeless and useless task. There is simply a point where justifications come to an end: 'If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what 1 do.' (*PI* 217) 'What has to be accepted, the given is—so one could say—forms of life.' (*PI* p. 226). There can be no justification for our most basic concepts and ways of viewing the world because 'what people accept as a justification—is shewn by how they think and live' (*PI* 325). In Wittgenstein's terms, agreement is required 'not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments' (*PI* 242), and this is 'not agreement in opinions but in form of life' (*PI* 241). Forms of life can be understood as changing and contingent, dependent on culture, context, history, etc. It is also the form of life, "the common behaviour of mankind" which is "the system of reference by means of which we

interpret an unknown language" (PI 206), giving a certain shape and continuity to the stream of life.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

  b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What do you understand by 'language-game'?

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2) How does Wittgenstein interpret 'family resemblance'?

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2.13   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have seen briefly the biography of Wittgenstein, the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century in the English speaking world who had contributed significantly to the logical and linguistic turn in the analytic philosophy. The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a classic in the analytic tradition which sought to reveal the logical structure of an Ideal Language, which could serve to solve all philosophical problems. The *Philosophical Investigations* proposes therapeutic methods in philosophy to dissolve philosophical problems, by presenting a perspicuous view of ordinary language uses. His picture theory of meaning in the *Tractatus* and the tool-use model of language in the *Investigations* made significant contributions in the philosophical thought of the twentieth century. His analogies of language games, family resemblance and form/stream of life has shown new ways of doing philosophical therapy and the remarks on rule-following and private language have initiated philosophical discussions and debates in many branches of philosophy.

2.14   KEY WORDS

Analytic Philosophy : It is a division of philosophy where by the application of modern logic to metaphysics, via language, one tries to provid new insights into the relations between world, thought and language and thereby into the nature of philosophy.

Picture Theory of Meaning : Pictures are models of reality and are made up of elements that represent objects, and

the combination of objects in the picture represents the combination of objects in the state of affairs. The logical structure of the picture, whether in thought or in language, is isomorphic with the logical structure of the state of affairs which it pictures.

Language-games : Similar to the diversity of games, our multiple ways of language use do not conform to a single model and just as we cannot give a definition of 'game', so we cannot find 'what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language'. So herein the usages of language are compared with a game.

2.15 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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2.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1) According to the *Tractatus*, philosophy does not give us any information about reality; it just clarifies our thought and language by removing misunderstandings. 'Philosophy', according to Wittgenstein, therefore, 'is not a body of doctrine but an activity. . . . Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions' (*T* 4.112), which is done through a logical analysis. As we have seen, 'every statement about complexes can be analyzed into a statement about their constituent parts, and into those propositions which completely describe the complexes' (*T* 2.0201).

2) Ethical and spiritual values also are in the realm of the mystical. Wittgenstein says we will not find values among the facts of the world, for everything is what it is (*T* 6.41). Therefore, the sense of the world, what constitutes its value, must lie outside the world. It cannot be one more fact among the scientifically observable facts in the world. Consequently he held that 'ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental' (*T* 6.421). '*How* things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world' (*T* 6.432). Wittgenstein closes his

discussion of the mystical and ends the *Tractatus* with his final, oracular statement: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' (*T* 7). The *Tractatus*, on this reading, is part of the ineffable, and should be recognized as such.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1) In order to address the variety of language uses, and their being 'part of an activity', Wittgenstein introduces an investigational tool, 'language-game'. Wittgenstein's choice of 'game' is based on the over-all analogy between language and game. As he was watching a game, he thought that in language we are playing with words. Wittgenstein asks the following question concerning games: 'What is common to them all?—Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games'"—but look and see whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that' (*PI* 66). Similar to the diversity of games, our multiple ways of language use do not conform to a single model. In contrast to the one-dimensional picture theory of name-object of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein gives a random list of language uses such as giving orders, and obeying them; describing the appearance of an object; speculating about an event; making a joke; translating from one language into another; asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying (*PI* 23). Just as we cannot give a definition of 'game', so we cannot find 'what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language' (*PI* 65).

2) To illustrate the relationship of language-games to one another, Wittgenstein uses the concept of 'family resemblances' (*PI* 67). The members of a family share many similar features, such as eye colour, temperament, hair, facial structure, and build. However, there will be no one particular feature that they all share in common. A son may have his father's eyes, mother's hair, and uncle's smile. With this analogy, Wittgenstein is attacking the theory of essentialism, which is the Platonic thesis that for things to be classed together they must share some essence. Wittgenstein's point, however, is that while our modes of discourse are all examples of language, the fact that they belong to the same category does not imply there is a single essence they all possess. Instead, the different language-games 'are related to one another in many different ways' (*PI* 65). Instead of general explanations, and definitions based on sufficient and necessary conditions, there are 'family resemblance' among the various uses of a word and among various language games. The meaning of a word is located in the logical form which is common to all uses of that word, but in the 'complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing' (*PI* 66). 'The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' (*PI* 67).