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Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy ?

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Keywords: *wittgenstein; philosophy; metaphysics.*

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Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy ?

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I. Introduction

Wittgenstein is known to be an unconventional philosopher. This becomes clear, e.g., from his general attitude towards traditional philosophy and philosophers. Only few numbered philosophers had his appraisal, such as Nietzsche and Kierkgaard; mostly his attitude was of deep criticism. For example, he has once said not to understand the reason why Socrates is regarded as a great philosopher[1] or even to have admitted proudly that he had not read a word of Aristotle[2].

The apparent reason for that was because Wittgenstein thought that the philosophy he practiced and advocated for was of a different kind of the philosophy conceived by traditional philosophers[3]. And, of course, he thought the latter to be wrong. Throughout Wittgenstein's work we can find three different arguments against the practice of philosophy as traditionally conceived: (1) Wittgenstein's critique in the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*[4] of philosophy's pretension to formulate "necessary propositions"; (2) Wittgenstein's discussion in *Philosophical Investigations* about the crave for real definitions and, finally, also in the *PI* (3) the discussion on the problem of dogmatism understood as a misunderstanding of the role of the ideal in investigations.

Although Wittgenstein underwent important processes of critical reassessment of his own philosophy, the metaphilosophical status of his conception of philosophy stayed the same. For him, from the period of the *TLP* to the period of the *PI*, philosophy was a negative enterprise. That is, it should be conceived of as a critical, analytical investigation on the logic – or, latter, grammar – of our linguistic and conceptual practices. For him, this conception was a natural outcome of (1), (2) and (3).

However, as we will try to show, Wittgenstein's conclusion is unwarranted. It does not follow from his arguments that the only alternative for philosophy is the kind of analytical investigation he conceived. We shall conclude that, despite (1), it is still possible to think of philosophy as a constructivist (positive) enterprise comprised of useful idealizations. Moreover, in the case of (2) and (3), Wittgenstein also does not conclude that we should stop using real definitions and ideals in philosophical investigation. His conclusion is that we must only be careful not to fall prey of the dogmatism "[…] into which we fall so easily [but not necessarily] in doing philosophy."[5].

We shall then proceed in the mentioned order of Wittgenstein's arguments, analyzing its real implications. Before that, however, it is necessary to lay out the conception of philosophy Wittgenstein set out to criticize.

II. Wittgenstein and Traditional Philosophy

As noted above, in Wittgenstein's works in most cases philosophy is spoken about from a negative perspective, that is, most of Wittgenstein's mentions to it or to other philosophers are critiques and/or objections. It is clear that, for him, this meaning of philosophy stood simply for "metaphysics"[6]; according to Kuusela[7], its great mistake, for Wittgenstein, was not to recognize the difference between empirical and necessary/conceptual judgements.

As traditionally conceived, philosophy was supposed to be a cognitive enterprise[8]. That means, it was commonly held that its goals should be the increase of our understanding of the world. In this sense, philosophy and the sciences, such as physics, shared methodological similarities. For both disciplines

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[1] Drury, *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein*, p.115.
[2] Drury, p.158.
[3] Stern, Rogers, and Citron, *Wittgenstein: Lectures, Cambridge 1930 – 1933 From the Notes of G. E. Moore*, p. 233.
[4] For the reference to Wittgenstein's works, we will employ from now on the following abbreviations: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (*TLP*), *Philosophical Investigations* (*PI*), *Blue and Brown Books* (*BB*), *Notebooks* 1914-16 (*NB*), *Zettel*(*Z*).
[5] *PI* 131
[6] We shall then use the terms "metaphysics" and "traditional philosophy" *salva veritate*.
[7] Kuusela, "The Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy", p.604; Kuusela, *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy*, p.3.
[8] Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, p.293.

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that goal was thought to be achieved through formulations of doctrines and theories about the nature of things[9]. The difference between them consisted solely in the nature of those things about which theories were formulated. The sciences were tasked with formulating empirical propositions in order to undercover possible causal connections existent between contingent and particular phenomena[10]. Its domain of investigation was the empirical realm accessed via sensorial experience.

By contrast, philosophy would not deal with the particularities of empirical reality, but only with its constitutive principles that – in dramatic terms – would correspond to the very underlying structure of reality. As such, these principles were thought to be the very own basis for the understanding of the causal connections formulated in the sciences[11]. With such an important task at hand, philosophical propositions had to have a special status: they would transmit positive knowledge – would be synthetical, in Kantian terms – about things in themselves, while being, at the same time, incapable of falsehood[12], since they would depict reality in itself. In these terms, although philosophy and the sciences would share a similar method, they clearly had different epistemic statuses, philosophy being superior to the empirical sciences.

Wittgenstein also agreed that philosophy and the sciences are different activities, for in the *TLP* he says that philosophy "must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them."[13]. As we shall see next in more details, he could not have more different reasons for that. For Wittgenstein, the idea of philosophy as a cognitive activity – in this way similar to sciences – was wrong from the start[14]. His reason for this was the rejection of the idea of the representation of necessary states of affairs through necessary propositions. This assimilation of the idea of necessary as an ontological property[15] was for him a misunderstanding of the way propositional representation truly works. The *TLP* aims precisely at getting it correct. For that he draws the first argument against metaphysics, which demonstrates that the idea of necessary propositions with content is wrong. We shall sketch this argument now.

(1) There cannot be Necessary Propositions

As Kienzler[16] rightly notes, Wittgenstein was a peculiar philosopher also in the sense that he had only general interests in philosophy. Although the *TLP* is a book on logic and philosophy, he did not focus on a particular topic of logic or philosophy such as the nature of logical connectives and so on. Rather Wittgenstein's interest in logic was to investigate the nature of projections in general, which we make through propositions. From that it would be possible to investigate the nature of philosophical propositions and, thus, to answer the question "What is philosophy?".

For Wittgenstein, we make pictures of states of affairs in thought[17]. These, states of affair are combinations of objects[18], these combinations can occur and not occur in the world[19]. As thoughts, they stand in logical space waiting for confirmation with reality, i.e., the assignment of a truth value[20]. For Wittgenstein it is impossible only by looking at a picture of states of affairs to tell if it is true or false[21]. But the assignment of a determinate truth value is not itself a condition of thoughts, but only a product of their relation to how things stand in the world[22]. Therefore, pictures can be true of false, but they are not necessarily always true of false[23]. The conclusion of this is that, for Wittgenstein in the *TLP*, the idea of necessity cannot cope with the positive existence of a state of affair: "There are no pictures that are true a priori"[24]. If there were necessary true pictures, they would be unthinkable, since Wittgenstein connects the capacity of thinking a picture to the possibility it being true or false[25].

For Wittgenstein, this also showed that the unity of a picture must lie in something beyond – in the sense of deeper – its truth value. For Wittgenstein, this was its sense or the pictorial form[26]. The proposition is the sensorial expression of this sense[27], therefore, the proposition is, for Wittgenstein, the expression of our thoughts, i.e., our pictures (*TLP* 3.1.). If this is so, so the propositions must also rely on the above conditions of representation, that is, its sense must also be submitted to the possibility of being true or false (*TLP* 2.223). Independently of the attainment or non-attainment of the states of affair the propositions represent, both possibilities must be conceivable in thought. Therefore, propositions cannot be *a priori* true or false as well, they are bipolar (*TLP* 4.023).

[9] Kuusela, *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy*, p.1.
[10] Hacker, "Metaphysics: From Ineffability to Normativity.", p. 209.
[11] Kuusela, "From Metaphysics and Philosophical Theses to Grammar: Wittgenstein's Turn.", p.96
[12] Hacker, "Metaphysics: From Ineffability to Normativity.", p.209.
[13] *TLP* 4.111
[14] Glock, "Necesity and Normativity.", p.201
[15] Or, as Diamond, (*The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*, p.196) calls, necessity imagined as a fact.
[16] Kienzler, "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Development.", p.24
[17] *TLP* 2.1, 3.
[18] *TLP* 2.01
[19] *TLP* 2.201
[20] *TLP* 2.202, 2.21
[21] *TLP* 2.224
[22] *TLP* 2.221-2.223
[23] *TLP* 2.201, 3.31
[24] *TLP* 2.225
[25] *TLP* 3.02
[26] *TLP* 2.22-2.221
[27] *TLP* 3.1

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This is only possible, for Wittgenstein, because propositions share with the pictures they represent a common and essential form. This common essence is the logical form[28]. It allows propositions to be complete mirrors of pictures. If pictures are composed of simple objects for them to be determinate, so must propositions be composed of simple names which are proxys for these objects[29]. The propositions must also be an articulate that represents the combination of objects in a certain way and not in another[30]. And so on… However, the propositions cannot represent themselves this logical form, for it is the very condition of representation and therefore cannot be itself represented[31]. If it were to be represented it would be subjected to truth or falsity, therefore, it would not be anymore a condition, for to be a condition must mean to be something which determinates necessarily the form of all propositions.

But what of logical propositions? These propositions are tautologies or contradictions, e.g., propositions of the type "*p v* ~*p*" or "*p* & ~*p*". In them the resulting truth values are always true or always false, so they cannot be bipolar, rather they are necessary. Yet they bear the name "propositions". This, however, is not due to an exception, but to a kind of loose use of the term "proposition". Wittgenstein himself acknowledges that a proper account of the nature of logic must assign a special place to the "logical propositions"[32]. This special place is not in the same level as ordinary propositions, for logical propositions do not have sense. Therefore, they cannot be ordinary propositions.

That Logical propositions are necessary, but they do not have sense was a core insight in Wittgenstein's philosophy of logic[33]. He held that in logic we must assign a special place for this kind of "propositions" for they have an unordinary feature that allows us to recognize them and their truth values just by looking at how their signs are articulated[34]. In the case of tautologies, such as "*p v* ~*p*", it is possible to recognize that it is true before assigning any meaning to *p*. By introducing the disjunction (*v*), we want to say that the proposition will be true if one of its constituent propositions is true. Since the only propositions in the tautology are *p* and ~*p*, just by analyzing its signs, we can conclude that it will be true for any value of *p* *TLP* 4.46). So while with ordinary propositions we cannot tell "[…] from the picture alone whether it is true or false" (*TLP* 2.224), with logical propositions we can. Then if tautologies and contradictions are necessary in this sense, they cannot be pictures, for "There are no pictures that are true [or false] a priori" (*TLP* 2.225).

The reason for this is that being necessary, they cannot be thought otherwise, i.e., their contrary is unconceivable. As we said, the sense of a propositions is the agreement or disagreement with reality (*TLP* 2.222), since logical sentences are necessary, they have no sense, in them the possibility of sense is canceled out in the very mode of articulation of signs[35], for it excludes the possibility of circumscribing a determinate area of logical space. E.g., the proposition of the form *p v*~*p* "it rains and it does not rain" doesn't offer a description of a possible state of affairs. For Wittgenstein, this kind of "propositions" is then special for they are not propositions at all (*TLP* 4.461). Despite their lack of sense, Wittgenstein does not label the "propositions of logic" as illicit combinations of signs or non-sense (*Unsinn*). In effect, for him, they have an important role in the symbolism, that is, they show the combinatory possibilities of signs in the construction of complex propositions (*TLP* 6.12). They play the role of rules.

Since the conception of necessity in work in the *TLP* is restricted to rules of logic, we can say Wittgenstein has a normative conception of necessity or *de jure*. As we said above, this also shows that for Wittgenstein, necessity cannot cope with description, it cannot mean a necessary content being represented by propositions. There is not in the *TLP* a conception of ontological necessity or *de facto* necessity. As Diamond[36] argues, that is a conception Wittgenstein wants us to get rid of and that implies a critique of the pretensions of propositions in philosophy.

It is easy to see how this turns into a critique of traditional philosophy. But before sketching these implications for the method of philosophy we must have in mind what Wittgenstein himself thought of his discovery of the nature of proposition. For one could rightfully ask what one thing have to do with the other. That is, if empirical descriptions function in the above-mentioned way, why should we think this also applies to philosophical propositions? Couldn't we just agree that philosophical propositions are a special kind of propositions not governed by these conditions, such as bipolarity, simple names, etc? Wittgenstein would deny this for, as we mentioned earlier, he had very general aims in doing philosophy. So he thought of himself not interested in only in a specific kind of representational device in language, rather he wanted to unravel the nature of representation itself, which governed every

[28] *TLP* 4.121
[29] *TLP* 4.0311-4.0312
[30] *TLP* 3.141
[31] *TLP* 4.12
[32] *TLP* 6.112
[33] *TLP* 6.113
[34] Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein in Cambridge : Letters and Documents, 1911-1951*., p.58

[35] *TLP* 4.462.
[36] Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*, p.196.

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manifestation of our practice of constructing pictures[37]. The external manifestations of language as a human practice notwithstanding, they would all have a common form[38]. For him, then this common form was something that dug deep in the nature of representation itself. The specific manifestations of language in particular cases, being it in scientific, every day, empirical propositions or "philosophical propositions", they all have to conform to an ideal[39], because the general form of the proposition, i.e., that things stand thus und thus, must be the deep structure of every proposition in every sign language (*TLP* 4.5). So if philosophy were to have any pretensions to formulate propositions, it too would have to conform to the ideal of propositions as pictures.

However, as we have seen, philosophical propositions aim precisely at being something, which is ruled out by this ideal: they aim at being the depiction of necessary states of affairs, truth in all possible cases and capable of being cognitively accessed through abstract thought alone. By doing this, philosophy combines arbitrarily only a few aspects of the idea of necessity and of the idea of representation. It wants its propositions to be necessary, but not to be senseless. It wants them to be representational as well, but it doesn't accept that for that they must also be bipolar. It is with this conception of philosophy as metaphysics in mind that Wittgenstein asserts that traditional philosophical thought must abandon its pretensions, for what can be said is only that which can be represented by propositions, that is, "[…] the propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy"[40]. Wittgenstein's conclusion from this is that philosophy should not be a doctrine, i.e., a body of propositions. Rather, it should be a critique of language, whose goal is to elucidate our thoughts (our use of concepts and language) in order to show the deep structure of our language[41].

We think that this is Wittgenstein's most powerful argument against traditional philosophy. It looks, however, that there is a problem in it. For it does not follow from the fact that philosophy cannot formulate pictures that it can only do analysis. We will develop this strain of thought in the last section of the paper. For now, we should move to Wittgenstein's second argument regarding the conception of real definition.

(2) The Crave for the Real Definition

As mentioned above, at the time of the *TLP* Wittgenstein held a single, unified and precise conception of language based on the thought that all propositions must be pictures of slices of reality, which he called states of affairs. Later he would regard this as a result of the dogmatism into which we so easily fall while doing philosophy[42]. We will deal with the problem of dogmatism in the next section here we will sketch the problems Wittgenstein saw in craving for this kind of generality and precision in his idea of what propositions should be.

As we have seen, Wittgenstein was deeply critical of traditional philosophy. Despite this, at the time of the *TLP*, he still committed himself with an assumption typical of metaphysical philosophy. That is, the conception of real definition which he inherited from Russell and Frege[43]. According to the conception of real definition, a definition to be valid must anticipate with precision all possible instances of a concept *Fx*. For it to be possible it must circumscribe in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions the property *F* which makes all *x* be predicated by *F*. For Frege and Russell, that could only be achieved through logical analysis of the constituent components of a concept. The result of this analysis should not admit exceptions, or as Frege calls "contradictions in the application", that is, there should not be any doubt, after the definition has been attained, whether an *x* is a case of *Fx*. For example, according to Russell:

> "[…] the real desideratum about such a definition as that of number is not that it should represent as nearly as possible the ideas of those who have not gone through the analysis required in order to reach a definition, but that it should give us objects having the requisite properties".[44]

And also Frege:

> It is […] impossible to doubt whether or not a given object falls under the concept once the contradiction in it has been recognized […] The real driving force is the perception of the blurred boundary. In our case too, all efforts have been directed at finding a sharp boundary.[45]

The underlying idea behind these exerts is that a concept with blurred boundaries is not a concept at all, for "[…] nothing falls under a contradictory concept"[46]. Wittgenstein also committed himself with this idea in the *TLP* in believing that in the essential and general form of the proposition: "[…] only what is essential to the most general propositional form may be included in its description— for otherwise it would not

[37] *Cf.*, e.g., *NB* 65, when Wittgenstein writes that he did not concepts from particular cases; and also him writing that his task was to explain "the nature of proposition" (*NB* 39). Therefore, this nature didn't come from particular cases as well, but from the intrinsic properties of all rpopositions.

[38] *TLP* 4.002

[39] He speaks with this tone when analyzing the nature of functions in the *Notebooks*, for him the nature of the prototypical forms of functions was something that we somehow were acquainted with *a priori*. It was not derived from any particular cases (*NB* 65).

[40] *TLP* 6.53

[41] *Cf. TLP* 4.0031, 4.111-4.112

[42] *PI* 131

[43] Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part I*, p.204-6.

[44] Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World: As a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*, p.165.

[45] Frege, *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy*, p.134.

[46] Frege, p.134.

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be the most general form […] [and that] there cannot be a proposition whose form could not have been foreseen" (*TLP* 4.5).

Another entailment thereof is the preconceived idea that any philosophical or theoretical enterprise that did not reach to sharp definitions was to be considered epistemic inferior. Another assumption Frege and Russell made was that the search for definitions was that logicians should not considered the definitions to be given, but should dig in its essential parts[47]. Only when these were open to view we would be ready to start with theoretical investigation. That is, seemingly, for them, we couldn't do nothing before we had a sharp definition at hand. Wittgenstein puts precisely this idea in the mouth of his interlocutor in the *PI* to question it: "You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what is essential to a language-game, and so to language: what is common to all these activities, and makes them into language or parts of language"[48]. According to this point of view, by doing this then Wittgenstein would be running away from the most important part of any investigation! This, however, is grounded in the idea that without a real definition, it would be impossible to do a number of things, such as, to know what a thing is or to explain it to someone. For it should be first necessary to mentalize the semantic content of the definition in order to be possible to apply it to the relevant cases.

In the early 30s when Wittgenstein starts to criticize this idea his argument tries to show that this alleged necessity of real definitions grounded on *redutiones ad absurdum* was an illusion. As we can notice, the conception of real definition is grounded on deep intellectualist presuppositions. What Wittgenstein then does is to try to criticize this intellectualist view and show that definitions do not have priority over uses.

Wittgenstein counters this idea in the form of a *reduction* as well, drawing an example of the context of a game[49]. According to him, if the possession of a real definition were truly a *condition sine qua non* for understanding a concept, e.g., that of a game, it would follow that all practices related to that concept could not function properly before we had in mind a real definition of game. It would then be impossible to give an example of a game, explain what a game consists in, etc. before we had mentalized the property that makes a game a game. This however is deeply implausible. It is perfectly possible to point to a number of individual cases as examples of a game only by referring to overlapping similarities between them and saying: "This and similar things are called 'games'."[50]. For Wittgenstein this shows that the exemplification of games is already a kind of explanation not to be considered incomplete only because it draws on blurred similarities (*PI* 70). According to Wittgenstein, this shows that it is false that the definition should in all possible cases have priority over use. In effect, he argues that it is the definitions that have to consider the role a certain term plays in the context of the language game[51].

For Wittgenstein, what led Russell and Frege fetishizing about the conception of real definition was the insistence of modelling philosophy in scientific terms. This was grounded on the thought that science was a more successful theoretical enterprise than philosophy had ever been. Russell, e.g., writes:

> "It seems to me that science has a much greater likelihood of being true in the main than any philosophy hitherto advanced (I do not, of course, except my own). In science there are many matters about which people are agreed; in philosophy there are none. Therefore, although each proposition in a science may be false, and it is practically certain that there are some that are false, yet we shall be wise to build our philosophy upon science, because the risk of error in philosophy is pretty sure to be greater than in science[52].

According to Wittgenstein, philosophers, such as Russell, are under the illusion– often found in philosophy – of measuring the achievements and the method of philosophy by a scientific model. The generalization and precision science requires often seduce philosophers to think that if the same requirements are applied in philosophy, it would have the same "trustworthiness" as the sciences. For Wittgenstein, however, this is a misleading idea, for it misconceives the achievements which are possible philosophy. As he maintained in the *TLP*, philosophy is not one of the natural sciences, therefore, it should not aim at an increase in knowledge only attained with real definitions. As we have seen, this confusion about the method in philosophy is also what makes metaphysics problematic[53].

This argument is also drawn to show that the craving for conception of real definitions is a reification of the boundaries of our concepts which are themselves arbitrarily drawn. Again, we will further explore that point in the last section, because it will lead us to showing that Wittgenstein is not against real definitions themselves, but only against the craving for them. He then only denounces a kind of insistence on this kind of conception, which can lead to dogmatism. In the following we will analyze Wittgenstein's third argument against philosophy which is caused by confusions and misunderstandings with our modes of representation.

[47] Frege, p.134.
[48] *PI* 65.
[49] *PI* 66-9.
[50] *PI* 69
[51] *PI* 135.
[52] Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, p.145.
[53] *BB* 18

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(3) Misundestanding the Role of the Ideal or the Problem of Dogmatism

Wittgenstein was particularly interested in why philosophers insist in real definitions and why see them as the best way to provide an account of what is for some *X* to be an *X*. This was so because Wittgenstein himself had been under the illusion that without such and such precisions, some things in philosophical investigation would not be possible.

As noted, in the time of the *TLP* Wittgenstein held that all propositions are pictures. In order to be pictures, propositions had to have sense, which was independent of their occurring in reality and of other elementary propositions. The sense of a proposition was given by their essential form, which states: "things are thus and thus". That means that it is the agreement or disagreement with reality. First, however, for propositions to be in agreement or disagreement with reality, they had to reach to it. For this to be possible a proposition had to be composed of simple names which are articulated internally in such a way that they represent the exact way simple objects are in reality. Moreover, these objects had to be simple because they constituted the substance of the world. If they were not simple, and if the world had no substance, a proposition could never be fully analyzed, therefore, sense could not be determined internally. Rather it would be dependent on another proposition being true. In this case, however, one could never know what a proposition means, for, first propositions are bipolar and that would create an *ad infinitum* chain of justification. So simple objects had to be the end-product of the analysis of propositions, if not there would not be elementary propositions. They were the final premise of the chain of justification, which allowed propositions to do something remarkable and unique.[54]

It is possible to note that Wittgenstein tangled himself in a number of presuppositions of the form of a *reduction ad absurdum*. As he himself latter noted, this thought – that propositions are something remarkable for, because their own essential and internal structure, they can represent the whole reality – was due to the fact that he simply did not "[…] look and see how propositions work"[55]. For him this was caused by a misunderstanding of the role of logic in philosophical investigation. Earlier he had thought that the role of logic was to discover all that chain of hidden presuppositions, which underlid the workings of language. By doing this, however, he thought that he was doing something sublime, that is, he thought that "[…]in explaining the nature of the proposition" he was also "[…] giving the nature of all being"[56]. For logic, that is, its propositions, represented not just the properties of language, but also the *a priori* order of the Universe[57].

Latter Wittgenstein found out that his conception of the role of logic and also of the role of real definitions (for the former was also assented on the latter) was mistaken. This mistake, as he describes, is a case of dogmatism into which we so easily fall while doing philosophy[58]. Wittgenstein gives an account on what this dogmatism consisted in: it consists mainly in misunderstanding the role of the ideal plays in our investigations[59], in his case, in the investigation of language. This misunderstanding, in turn, amounts to confounding properties that belong to our mode of comparison – we compare things by means of the ideal – as properties that necessarily belong to the thing we want to investigate. And by doing this, we come to the illusion that we have unraveled "[…] a highly general state of affairs"[60]. That is, we are deluded when we present a model of representation as depicting the intrinsic property of what is represented, of *X*. That amounts to formulating an *a priori* proposition that aims at describing the objective nature of things[61]. This is a misunderstanding for the ideal presents itself as a requirement laid out on reality[62], to which it must correspond, while it should be conceived simply as a means to emphasize certain characteristics of *X*, i.e., to make comparisons with some familiar structures[63].

Certainly, Wittgenstein is not totally wrong in representing propositions as pictures in his early work, for some propositions are indeed pictures. What he latter regarded as problematic was our tendency torwards generalization[64]. I.e., the tendency to generally define the term "proposition" by its property of being a picture. The result of this, for Wittgenstein, was a dogmatic state of mind for it depreciated different modes of application of particular cases as problematic, such as the ordinary uses of words like "sentences", "words", "signs", etc.[65]. Just like the case with the struggle for real definitions this problem of generalization, for Wittgenstein, also has its source in "[…] our preoccupation with the method of science[66]. In effect, we believe that he speaks here intendedly in the first person of the plural, for, according to Baker & Hacker, Wittgenstein did not think the confusion with the ideal in philosophical investigation was an idiosyncratic problem or a lack of attention to counter examples, rather he thought it to be a very typical thing to happen

[54] *PI* 93-5.
[55] *PI* 93.
[56] *NB* 39.
[57] *NB* 108, see also *TLP* 6.124 and 6.13.
[58] *PI* 131
[59] *PI* 100
[60] *PI* 104
[61] Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part I*., p.265
[62] *PI* 101
[63] *PI* 101
[64] *BB* 17.
[65] *PI* 105
[66] *BB* 18.

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in philosophy[67], for it is caused by very deep and rooted tendencies in philosophical thinking[68]. In this sense, he believes that his case is paradigmatic[69].

We have now sketched all three of Wittgenstein's arguments against traditional philosophy. In brief, he argues that (1) there cannot be necessary propositions that depict necessary states of affairs, therefore there cannot be philosophical propositions; (2) in philosophy we have a tendency to search only for real definitions, where as they are not necessary at all to all kinds of investigations; and, finally, (3) this tendency also leads in philosophy to the misunderstanding of the role of the ideal, therefore, to dogmatic conclusions and assumptions. We shall critically scrutinize these arguments now.

III. Wittgenstein and Traditional Philosophy (Take 2)

We must now consider whether these arguments ((1), (2) and (3)) are powerful enough to abandon traditional philosophy all together and to adopt a critical conception of philosophy, as Wittgenstein understands it. For this we shall comment further on the knots we left loose in the previous sections, i.e., we shall consider whether if philosophy cannot formulate propositions, it must only stick to analysis and whether we are also interdicted to use real definitions and ideals in philosophy.

As mentioned earlier, we thing that Wittgenstein's first argument against philosophical propositions is the most powerful one. Although it was formulated in his early work, we think that there is no reason to suppose that he rejected it latter. He still maintained that traditional philosophy involved a certain kind of illusion[70] in regard to the logic of our language, whichever it is. In the *PI* he characterizes this illusion of a grammatical type, which: "[…] arises through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth"[71]. More specifically, when we think our forms of expression are determined by rules that are hidden and not by their actual forms of application, which we identify in their ordinary use. And this leads to the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language[72].

Further, there is also a methodological continuity in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Although it also undergoes some changes particularly in regard to how philosophical approach to language should be[73], Wittgenstein continues to maintain that philosophy is not and empirical activity, i.e., that it does not comprise of empirical propositions, that its problems are not of empirical nature and that it is not a science[74]. Rather it is an activity of conceptual description of the variety of ways we use language[75], whose goal is to avoid misunderstandings that lead to uttering nonsense[76]. This being so, while now Wittgenstein accepts that there can be propositions in philosophy, he still considers them of a different kind in relation to those of the sciences. The latter are, in contrast, grammatical (or conceptual) propositions or simply rules that clarify the use of expressions[77].

Wittgenstein's argument seems powerful in our opinion because, if we accept that philosophy is indeed a different activity in relation to the sciences[78], the latter cannot formulate descriptions and causal connections between phenomena, since this is the former's job. Further, we nowadays have no reason to think, as metaphysicians usually did, that philosophical propositions represent necessary states of affairs or the underlying order of things. In contrast to the sciences, there is no method of confirmation that these propositions are true. As Wittgenstein writes[79], they only seem, at the same time, true and necessary, because we use arbitrarily modal vocabulary while talking about them. We say things such as "[…] this is how it has to be!'"[80] or "there must be *an a priori* order of things" and so on. We do this often voluntarily, as Austin would point out[81], for perlocutionary purposes, i.e., to cause an impact on our interlocutors. And – although Wittgenstein would deny it – these propositions do make sense for us, but it does not follow thereof that they are true.

However, it also does not follow from it that philosophy should stick only to analysis. In accordance to (1), we can still maintain a constructivist conception of philosophy, according to which philosophy can indeed formulate sentences, prescriptions, doctrines, provide foundations to our practices, etc. We must only keep in mind that any metaphysical pretension should be abandoned. That is, we don't see any conflict between

[67] Baker and Hacker, p.252.
[68] *BB* 29-30
[69] *Vide*, e.g., *PIPreface*.
[70] *Vide*, e. g., Diamond, "ETHICS, IMAGINATION AND THE METHOD OF WITTGENSTEIN'S TRACTATUS", p.169; Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*, p.184 Sattler, *L'Éthique Du Tractatus: Non-Sens, Stoïcisme et Le Sens de La Vie*, p.90.
[71] *PI* 111
[72] *PI* 109
[73] Compare, for example, *TLP* 4.112 and *PI* 5,13, 109. For more on that *vide* KUUSELA, O. From metaphysics and philosophical theses to grammar: Wittgenstein's turn. *Philosophical Investigations,* v. 28, n. 2, p. 95–133, 2005.
[74] *PI* 109
[75] *PI*117, 124
[76] *PI*117, 124
[77] *PI* 232
[78] Of course, it is possible to deny that, such as Quine did by denying a distinction between ontological questions and questions of natural science (Quine, *From a Logical Point of View: Logico-Philosophical Essays*, p.45). Nevertheless, this denial doesn't amount to the revival of the old philosophical pretentions, for Quine, it is rather the opposite, philosophy is actually reduced or incorporated to the sciences.
[79] e.g., *PI* 98, 101
[80] *PI* 122
[81] Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, Lecture VIII, p.101.

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this idea and (1), as long we do not hold anymore that these philosophical construals are the mirroring of the scaffolding of the world, as Wittgenstein once thought. Rather, we must regard them as voluntarily constructed concepts, which aim at fulfilling our purposes. That seems quite clear in political theory. We undeniably need doctrines and theories prescribing the course of action we ought to take to be a just citizen. But there is no need to mean by that that these doctrines or theories are grounded in the underling, moral or social nature of human beings. Rather, to provide a plausible justification for it, we must only say that we think these doctrines and theories fulfill our need as beings that live in society.

Indeed, in this point, Wittgenstein seems to have made an error in identifying metaphysics with traditional philosophy or in rejecting any conception of philosophy that is not logical or grammatical analysis. For the claim of philosophy as a positive activity in the way sketched above is entirely independent of any metaphysical assumptions. In this sense, Wittgenstein seems confused in concluding that philosophy, as a *sui generis* activity, can only describe our actual use of language and not justify it (*IF* 124) or – by extension – could not justify anything else. Surely, philosophy can and should be description in this sense, but it should not be limited to it.

Moving on to Wittgenstein's second argument against traditional philosophy, it is necessary to clearly lay out the point of Wittgenstein's critique to real definitions. One could think by reading *PI* 65-77 that Wittgenstein rejects the possibility of providing real definitions to terms. That is, that he switches from a realist conception of definition to an antirealist one. According to the latter, there simply is not some property in common to the things real definitions explain, in virtue of which we use a certain term.

But this is not Wittgenstein's point here. He does indeed say that in *PI* 65: "Instead of pointing out something common to all that we call language, I'm saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common in virtue of which we use the same word for all a but there are many different kinds of affinity between them". However, to state that there cannot be real definitions, but only definitions that state a variety of similarities is an explanation about what a definition is and what it should be. To interpret, then, Wittgenstein's position toward definitions as an antirealist one seems to be in contradiction with Wittgenstein's own philosophical spirit, which states that there must be no explanation, deduction or theories in philosophy[82].

In the cited remark, Wittgenstein is only presenting a thesis held by some possible interlocutor who might hold an opposite position in regard to real definitions. Indeed, Wittgenstein's point is that it does not need to be so. He soon then softens this position stating that in order to explain what a number is, for example, we can try to give a real definition with rigid boundaries, but we can also explain it in terms of the overlapping similarities between the various types of number[83]. Wittgenstein's point is only that there is not an ulterior reason for giving a real definition or something which is presented like a natural necessity or an impossibility, such as a proposition having sense or in order to explain what something is. And also, that giving a real definition is not a better explanation to what a thing is then giving definitions with blurred boundaries or giving examples[84]. When we formulate real definitions, we do not then point to boundaries that are necessarily drawn, rather we draw them ourselves voluntarily and for arbitrary reasons we might have[85].

If this is so, Wittgenstein then adopts a sort of minimalist or middle ground position in the discussion regarding definitions[86]. Its aim is to argue against our craving for the real definitions, i.e., against the thought that they are somehow better and necessary for a philosophical investigation to be legitimate. This position is, in turn, in agreement to Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, for it shows that the traditional philosophical conception of real definition is a conceptual confusion, which must be eradicated by achieving a surveyable representation, i.e., an overview of how we use words in ordinary sense[87].

This also shows that Wittgenstein, in fact, writes nothing in the *PI* rejecting the possibility of giving real definitions[88]. Therefore, Wittgenstein's argument does not testify against the use of real definitions in philosophy, if we feel justified for practical reasons to do so. It all comes down to knowing what is our real need and if we do gain something with it. For Wittgenstein, the answer to that question is often dogmatic in philosophy and can be shown not to be profitable[89], but there is no

[82] *Vide*,e.g., *PI* 109

[83] *PI* 68
[84] *PI* 71.
[85] *PI* 68
[86] Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part I*, p.212; Dall'Agnol, "SEMELHANÇAS DE FAMÍLIA NOS USOS DE 'BOM.', p.221"
[87] *PI* 116, 122
[88] Perissinotto, "'The Socratic Method!': Wittgenstein and Plato.", p.59.
[89] Wittgenstein himself would reply to this, by saying that, even though a philosopher could justify her choice for real definitions in pragmatical terms, this would often not be an honest justification, but of deeply rooted philosophical tendencies (*BB* 29-30). Following the parallel with political theory, one could say that Wittgenstein's counterargument is similar to the contented-slave objection. According to van Parijs "Any characterization of a person's freedom that makes essential reference to her wants would seem to give rise to [this objection] (Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All: What (If Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?*, p.18). That means, a contented-slave's want, such as the justification of the philosopher, would not reflect his/her true opinion, but a manipulated desire. Still, this only shows that such an illusion is often the source of one's wants and one's justifications for them. We agree with Wittgenstein and with this objection on that matter. But that does not counter our argument, for it does not present a logical impossibility to these wants and justifications.

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logical impossibility that the answer is: "yes, we have something to benefit from in using real definitions". If this is so, again Wittgenstein seems not to be correct when in the beginning of the Blue Book he writes: "[t]he questions 'What is lengh?', 'What is meaning?', 'What is the number one?' etc., produce in us a mental cramp"[90]. The problem in fact is not with the form of such definitions, but how philosophers often, but not necessarily, relate themselves to it.

Finally, we come hereby to Wittgenstein's third and last argument against traditional philosophy: (3) that philosophers confuse the role of the ideal. The implication here is akin to the one in the last argument, Wittgenstein is not against the use of modes of representations or ideals, rather only to a certain relation philosophers often maintain towards them. He says that very often in philosophy we find ourselves confused about our concepts, we think them as necessary states of affairs depicting property of the things in themselves. They, however, are only properties of the mode we represent things[91], therefore, this amounts to a misunderstanding of the role of the ideal in our investigations[92].

Here again, there is not a necessity that in philosophy this will always be so. Wittgenstein's case is a clear example of it. When the calculus analogy – which caused him so much trouble – is abandoned, Wittgenstein adopts another analogy to approach language, that of a game. He therefore never stops using ideals and modes of representation in his philosophical investigations. The difference now, as Baker and Hacker[93] state, is that the ideal is treated *qua* ideal and not as a necessary state of affairs. Wittgenstein's own case shows then that dogmatism, although frequent, is not inescapable phenomenon in philosophy. Even if we do not apply a flexible ideal such as his game analogy, there is no such certainty that we will inescapably fall into dogmatism, if we relate ourselves properly to it.

IV. Concluding Remarks

Wittgenstein provides us with strong objections against the traditional ways of doing philosophy. It is undeniable that from a methodological point of view they make it impossible to keep doing philosophy as a cognitive discipline in the traditional metaphysical sense. This is why he is such an important philosopher. However, his critiques are not conclusive in the sense he himself thinks they are. They do not leave to philosophers the conception of philosophy a critical activity, be it in the grammatical or in the logico-syntactical sense, as the one and only alternative to philosophical practice. In this regard, Wittgenstein's argument on how philosophy should proceed is a *non-sequitur*.

[90] *BB* 1
[91] *PI* 104
[92] *PI* 100
[93] Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Part I*, p.52.

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