

IS LATER WITTGENSTEIN A RELATIVIST?:  
AN INVESTIGATION ON / THROUGH FORMS OF LIFE

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2011

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Thesis submitted to the  
Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
Philosophy

by  
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Boğaziçi University  
2011

## Thesis Abstract

### Caner Turan, “Is Later Wittgenstein A Relativist?: An Investigation On / Through Forms of Life”

There are two main interconnected concerns of this thesis. One is to make an investigation on “forms of life” which is one of the most important notions in philosophical framework of later Wittgenstein. When Wittgenstein makes a critique of traditional philosophy and separates himself also from his early thoughts, he has given up an analytical and a very systematic way of doing philosophy about language and the relation between language and the world. Rather, he has focused on the multiplicity of language-games and forms of life which underlines the close connection between language and practices through priority of activity. After constituting the importance of forms of life in the thesis, as a second aim, related to this approach of later Wittgenstein, by making an internal reading on his works especially *Philosophical Investigations*, *On Certainty* and *Zettel* it will be shed light on the discussion whether usage of varied and alternative forms of life which are at the bottom of language-games endorses relativism. In later Wittgenstein, at the foundations of forms of life, there is nothing that can be either true or false, either rational or irrational. Thus, there is a common tendency to claim that this pluralistic understanding of forms of life in later Wittgenstein paves the way for relativism. But I will have a counter philosophical attitude against this tendency. Under a closer and more careful scrutiny on the general framework of later Wittgenstein, I will defend that the pluralistic kind of views about forms of life doesn't necessarily make him a relativist. His interest on the notions such as “natural history”, “common behaviour of humankind”, his non-traditional foundationalism and his emphasis on “primitiveness” that can be recognized through his criticism against Frazer and some passages in his texts will be presented as some indicators that there cannot be radical separation and/or alienation between forms of life which is implied by relativism. In the light of my proposal about micro and macro aspects of forms of life and the mirror effect related to the interaction between forms of life, it would be claimed that liberating forms of life from relativist tag and highlighting some points such as changeability, possibility of criticism, understanding concerning the nature of our forms of life are not so distinct from each other.

## Tez Özeti

Caner Turan, “Geç Wittgenstein Bir Rölativist midir?: Yaşam Biçimleri Üzerine /  
Üzerinden Bir Soruşturma”

Bu tezin birbiriyle bağlantılı olan iki esas amacı vardır. Bir tanesi, geç Wittgenstein’ın felsefi çerçevesinde yer alan en önemli kavramlardan birisi olan “yaşam biçimleri” üzerine bir soruşturma yapmaktır. Wittgenstein, geleneksel felsefeye dair eleştirisini sunarken ve bu vesileyle kendisini önceki düşüncelerinden de ayırırken, dille ve dil ile dünya arasındaki ilişkiyle ilgili analitik ve oldukça sistematik bir felsefe yapma yolunu terk etmiştir. Daha ziyade, eylemin önceliği üzerinden dil ve pratikler arasındaki yakın ilişkinin altını çizen dil oyunlarının ve yaşam biçimlerinin çeşitliliğine odaklanmıştır. Tezde, yaşam biçimlerinin önemi tesis edildikten sonra, ikinci bir amaç olarak, geç Wittgenstein’ın bu yaklaşımıyla ilintili olarak, özellikle *Felsefi Soruşturmalar*, *Kesinlik Üzerine* ve *Zettel* adlı çalışmalarına dair iç bir okuma yapılarak, dil oyunlarına temel teşkil eden çeşitli ve alternatif yaşam biçimleri kullanımının rölativizmi olumlayıp olumlamadığı tartışmasına ışık tutulacaktır. Geç Wittgenstein’da, yaşam biçimlerinin temelinde doğru veya yanlış, rasyonel veya irrasyonel olabilecek herhangi bir şey bulunmamaktadır. Bu minvalde, geç Wittgenstein’daki bu plüralist yaşam biçimleri anlayışının, rölativizme yol açtığını iddia etme eğilimi bulunmaktadır. Fakat, ben bu eğilime karşı bir felsefi tutum takınacağım. Geç Wittgenstein’ın genel çerçevesine daha yakından ve daha dikkatle bakıldığında, yaşam biçimleriyle ilgili bu plüralist anlayışın, onu zorunlu olarak rölativist yapmadığını savunacağım. Onun “doğal tarih”, “insanların ortak tavrı” gibi kavramlara olan ilgisi, geleneksel olmayan temelciliği (foundationalism) ve Frazer’a olan eleştirisi ve metinlerindeki bazı pasajlar üzerinden fark edilebilecek olan “ilkellik” vurgusu, hayat biçimleri arasında rölativizmin ima ettiği gibi radikal bir ayrımın ve/veya yabancılaşmanın olamayacağına dair kanıt olarak sunulacaktır. Yaşam biçimlerinin mikro ve makro duruşları ve yaşam biçimleri arasındaki etkileşime dair getirdiğim ayna etkisi önerisi ışığında, yaşam biçimlerini rölativist yaftadan kurtarmakla yaşam biçimlerimizin doğasıyla ilgili değişebilirlik, eleştiri imkânı, anlama gibi bazı noktaları vurgulamanın birbirinden çok da farklı şeyler olmadığı iddia edilebilir.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Chryssi Sidiropoulou for kindly agreeing to be my thesis advisor and also for her guidance throughout the thesis period. There is no doubt that it would be impossible to write this thesis without her. Her comments and thoughts on the subject have always been helpful to me. I mostly benefited from her feedbacks throughout my process of writing the thesis.

I am profoundly grateful to Aydan Turanlı for accepting my invitation to be in my thesis committee. Her philosophical excitement in our meetings and discussions has always been one of the touchstones of my motivation to write the thesis.

I am also deeply indebted to Stephen Voss for his vital comments and encouragement. He is one of the most important people in my graduate studies in general. His insightful ideas, challenging questions, puzzling examples and thought experiments, his optimism and his way of doing philosophy have always incredibly affected my eagerness to study philosophy. I am in deep gratitude to him for the example he set for me as a philosopher.

I want to thank my dear brother Mesut Turan for his great encouragement he has been giving me for many years. I must thank my father Hasan Turan for the unconditional support he has given to what I have been doing for twenty-six years.

To the seasons...

The earth hangs down  
to the lake, full of yellow  
pears and wild roses.  
Lovely swans, drunk with  
kisses you dip your heads  
into the holy, sobering waters.

But when winter comes,  
where will I find  
the flowers, the sunshine,  
the shadows of the earth?  
The walls stand  
speechless and cold,  
the weathervanes  
rattle in the wind.

- Hölderlin, *At The Middle of Life*

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important activities of a philosophy student is problematization.<sup>1</sup>

Problematization means to see something as a problem. It is to regard something as an object of inquiry. If we do not take something as an object of inquiry, then we can possibly claim that there is not any problem there even if there is. So, without this approach of problematizing, the reliability of being a philosophy student can be doubtful. Certainly this can be taken as necessary, but not sufficient. In order to problematize, a problem should exist or should be created by the problematizer.<sup>2</sup>

Problem and problematization are two interrelated notions. That is, if there are already problems, then the ground for problematizing can be constituted; if there is an activity of problematizing, then new problems can arise. There is an interesting and maybe productive circularity between them. Activity of problematizing necessitates an active participation of human with a careful examination. I believe that almost every philosophical study springs from this activity of problematizing. In this sense, the following thesis will be an attempt at problematizing of a philosophy student.

We, as humans, live in the world. Therefore, we have relations with other things and other humans in the world. We can create very interesting scenarios in order to show

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<sup>1</sup> I think the term *problematization* can be seen in the philosophy of Foucault. He sometimes uses this term. Basically his main concern is to undertake existent practices and institutions as objects of inquiry, as problems. Thanks to this attitude, he wants to reveal the control mechanisms behind these practices and institutions that we cannot understand in the first place. Whereas his usage of the term is somehow technical, I do not use this term in such a technical sense.

<sup>2</sup> The activity of problematizing –certainly should be an active process– maybe related to the intellectual pleasure of philosophy.

evidence that a human can live without any other human. The Robinson Crusoe case or the child who has grown with wolves can be some examples. However, we cannot think that humans can live without the world. In this world, we are in an epistemic adventure. In the relation between us and the world –this does not imply a distinction; rather, it implies to be together– we are always in a situation of learning new things, creating beliefs, finding new ways to survive etc. Here ‘episteme’ is used not just to point to a particular type of knowledge or to propositional knowledge, but used in a wider sense. The epistemic attitudes of human in the world are about their ‘forms of life’ which can be thought of as their grounds at the time of living and acting. ‘Forms of life’ can be searched in very different patterns and models. However, in this thesis, this notion will be scrutinized in the context of later Wittgenstein in which there is an ambiguity about it. Therefore, one of the aims of this thesis is to make a research and clarification on ‘forms of life’ in the later Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein, one of the most significant figure in the twentieth century philosophy, has been one of the most important subjects of problematization among thinkers because of his considerable amount of influence in the discussions of various philosophical topics such as logic, language, ethics, perception, aesthetics, religion, cultural studies etc. In general, his philosophy can be divided into two stages as early Wittgenstein and later Wittgenstein. Early Wittgenstein is summed up with the work called *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (TLP)* in which he talks about the relations between world, thought and language whereas later Wittgenstein is mostly known with the work *Philosophical Investigations (PI)* in which he makes a critique of traditional

philosophy and separates himself also from his early thoughts.<sup>3</sup> His interest has turned from analysis and a very systematic philosophy into ‘family resemblance’, multiplicity of ‘language games’ and ‘forms of life’.

I believe that in later works of Wittgenstein, especially in *On Certainty (OC)* and *PI*, it is to be debated whether his notions of *forms of life* and *language games* are relativistic or not. The question on relativism of forms of life is also a question on the existence of incommensurability about them. In this context, I am taking incommensurability and relativism as having the same meaning since it seems to me that both of them are defending the impossibility of making a comparison or of comparison by a common standard or measure. Putting aside early Wittgenstein,<sup>4</sup> the relation between relativism and Wittgenstein is this: the usage of multiplicity of language games and the related notion of forms of life has pushed people to associate later Wittgenstein with relativism. Relativist readings of Wittgenstein’s philosophy are so common since at first glance one can find so many points in *OC* and *PI* in order to base a relativist reading. They say that in Wittgenstein at the foundations of forms of life, there is nothing that can be either true or false, either rational or irrational. Hence, any language games or forms of life can be equally legitimized. People who label him as relativist are often mentioning about, for example, Wittgenstein’s point about the existence of a community who consults an oracle for guidance in their life. Keeping Western science in mind, Wittgenstein (1972) questions, “Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be

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<sup>3</sup> To a degree, it is controversial whether this is a real separation or not. For example, in his article called “Wittgenstein and Idealism” in *Moral Luck*, Bernard Williams argues that transcendental idealism in *Tractatus* still takes place in later Wittgenstein. For him, Wittgenstein moves from the usage of the solipsistic ‘I’ to the usage of ‘we’ as an aggregate solipsism, so he is still a transcendental idealist. But I will not go into this discussion.

<sup>4</sup> The thesis will mention not the points in early Wittgenstein, but in later Wittgenstein.

guided by it? – If we call this “wrong” aren’t we using our language-game as a base from which to combat theirs?” (§609) Points like these seem to open the door for a relativist reading of Wittgenstein. However, under a closer scrutiny on the general framework of Wittgenstein, I believe that the pluralistic kind of views about language games and forms of life in later Wittgenstein doesn’t necessarily make him a relativist. In Wittgenstein’s framework, pluralism in forms of life or alternative ways of life does not imply that there is not any common ground among them. The notions such as ‘natural history’, ‘common behaviour of humankind’, ‘primitive reactions’ are some indicators that human forms of life have some commonality as long as we give them the feature of ‘humanness’.<sup>5</sup> As I will show in the next chapters, the notion of *forms of life* is one of the key terms to understand later Wittgenstein. So, I do not hesitate to associate strictly *forms of life* and later Wittgenstein. Hereby, people who regard Wittgenstein as relativist are also implying that relativism is also valid for forms of life. In my opinion, this is not a proper way of approach to Wittgenstein and forms of life. That’s because it can have an effect to imprison forms of life in their own system of behaviours and beliefs, to stop external criticism and discussion which is able to come from outside, to push people into mere passivity. Lastly this approach justifies a discourse about forms of life like “I cannot say anything on whatever goes there”. It also blocks understanding of different forms of life from ours. It seems to me that such alienation between forms of life is against the nature of them. Any specific form of life can be understood and be significant within the other forms of life in the context of natural history. In this sense,

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to this, not only commonality among human forms of life, but also the commonality between human and animal forms of life can be claimed since human forms of life carry some animalistic behaviour as I will mention later through quoting some passages of Wittgenstein. This implies that maybe there is no difference in kind, but in degree between human and animal forms of life.

shedding light on later Wittgenstein can be useful to underline the multiplicity of forms of life in one human form of life.

In the second chapter of my work, with the object of gaining a clearer understanding about forms of life, I will bring this notion of Wittgenstein's under the spotlight and endeavour to determine the conceptual borders of it.

In the third chapter, I will undertake the importance of "forms of life" in Wittgenstein's overall epistemological framework which includes some discussions about knowledge, doubt and certainty. I believe that if we bring together his epistemological framework with the notion of forms of life, then the question whether Wittgenstein is a relativist and –as an implication of this– the question whether relativism is valid about forms of life can be answered in a very secure way.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, by a critical approach to the relativist reading of Wittgenstein, some alternative reading will be made in order to suggest that he is not a relativist. That's because, after liberating him from a relativist tag, Wittgensteinian forms of life can be taken as a support for suggesting the impossibility of radical breakdowns among forms of life assuming that relativism implies the opposite way.

In the last chapter, some concluding remarks will be declared about the prominence of the commensurability of forms of life for human life.

## CHAPTER 2

### “FORMS OF LIFE” IN LATER WITTGENSTEIN

The notion of forms of life is used five times in *PI* and a few more in the other writings, but according to some scholars, Wittgenstein is not so clear about what he means by forms of life although it has a very crucial place in his later ideas. His first usage of it is as follows,

It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle.—  
Or a language consisting only of questions and expressions for answering yes  
and no. And innumerable others. —And to imagine a language means to imagine a  
form of life. (Wittgenstein, 2001 §19)

Hence, in the first place, he talks about the relation between language and forms of life. It can be a good way to make language a part of the form of life through somehow seeming to equate language and form of life. Hunter (1968) argues that we can interpret “means” in two ways in this passage. It can either mean “involves” or “is a case of”. In the sense of involving, it says that language does not just involve words, but also some actions in which the words are used. This interpretation makes forms of life a part of language. But as we might see in the quotation that I made below, Wittgenstein thinks that language is part of a form of life. So, I believe that Hunter does not want to make a hierarchical order between language and form of life, but to point out their relation. In the latter suggestion, “means” is equated with “is a case of”. This argues that in imagining a language, one is imagining a form of life at the same time. Such examples can enlighten this proposal; our imagining Istanbul means our imagining a great city or our imagining *Faust* means imagining one of the greatest works of German literature. In order not to be confused, we just have to focus on how “means” is used in those

examples. I think this is an important point here. Moreover, although Wittgenstein's understanding of language will be clearer later, I can say a few things for now about what he reacts to concerning language. In the traditional sense, meaning in language is shaped by the idea that words have meaning since they represent some objects in the world. That is, if we have a meaningful sentence, then it implies that individual words in the sentence have meaning because of having some objects that can be pointed to by these words. In addition to this, by making a distinction between language and thought, it is asserted that language is a reflection of our inner thoughts. We have some inner thoughts that have some meaning and then express them through language. However, Wittgenstein does not agree with this traditional approach towards language and meaning. He believes that a word gains its meaning through the usage in language-games. Words by themselves do not have any intrinsic meaning. Language cannot be isolated from how people are using it in their daily activity and life. Wittgenstein (2001) adds, "Here 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." (§23) It might be proper to keep in mind that Wittgenstein puts a special emphasis on not only language, but also *speaking* of language. According to Hunter, because of Wittgenstein's regarding activity not as "organized communal affairs" such as basketball, chess, but as activity in which one is "active" such as *playing* basketball, *playing* chess etc., he stresses *speaking* of language in order to stress "the *doing*". A similar claim about the relation between activity and language has been argued in his work *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Wittgenstein (1966) says, "Language is a characteristic part of a large group of activities –talking, writing, traveling on a bus,

meeting a man, etc.” (p.2) Language cannot be restricted to making some descriptions about our experiences. For example, when we have a pain, we say “Ouch! It hurts!”, or when we visit our friend and see his / her house, we say “Your house is so beautiful”, or we can point to a chair and say “Chair!” In such cases, we have also some certain behaviour. In normal conditions, we have a facial gesture that shows our pain. When we talk about the beauty of a house, we show our emotions. Our words concerning beauty gain their meaning together with our behaviours. When we point to the chair and say “chair”, we express what kind of a purpose we have. For example, we might maybe ask our friend to bring the chair or we might want to point non-existence of the chair in the room, etc. So, we are not only using our language to describe, but we are in an action of which language is a part. Our being in an activity which is woven with our language can be called as a form of life as general. Hence, language-games and forms of life are two important notions that are much related to each other.

But maybe before focusing on this relation, a few things about the analogy of language and games should be underlined. It is not a coincidence that Wittgenstein finds some similarities between languages and games that we play in our daily life. When we use language, we are acting as we do when playing a game. Let us imagine a chess game. In a chess game, there are some certain rules that one has to follow. For example, bishop only makes a diagonal move or knight only makes L-shape move. Every piece in chess has its role in a very active way. When chess is played, none should violate the rules of possible moves of bishop or knight. These pieces are really tools to play the game. That is, people who play chess together cannot privately determine the rules of chess because its standards are determined by a pre-existing socially available

agreement. These rules also constitute the meanings of bishop or knight and rules cannot precede their meanings. So, meanings also are determined by sharing. Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of the word is not determined mainly by a mental process, but it is determined by the ability to use the word in some certain case for some certain purposes. Pieces of chess are also like this. As we play chess, pieces move according to the general rules of chess for the purpose of winning the game. Furthermore, meanings of bishop and knight in chess do not precede rules, either. In that sense, meaning and rule exist together so that none of them precede the other. People who sit at the chess table know the standard rules of the game and meanings of pieces before they start playing. Pieces in chess are like words in our language. As pieces in chess board are moved with combination, words are not used through the isolation from the other ones, but through a combinatorial manner. Games are created by humans and they have a rule-governed feature. I cannot imagine any game without any rules. Like games, language has some rules to be followed. These rules have to be understood and learned through training: “The foundation of the ability to play a game, like the foundations of our linguistic skills, typically lies in training. The ability to play a game, like the ability to use the words of a language, is mastery of a technique.” (Baker and Hacker, 1980 p. 52) The notion of “master of a technique” is analogically used by Wittgenstein also. Wittgenstein (2001) says, “To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique.” (§199) Hence, being master of a technique does not underline the thing which is played or the thing that is said, but the mechanism and training that we get in the process of playing a game. It does not matter whether it is a chess game or a language-game. Pieces in chess and words in our

language are similar in terms of their being a tool to play the game. Wittgenstein (2001) argues,

Language has some tools to be used. These tools are words. “Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, nails and screws. –The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities.) (§11)

As the objects that Wittgenstein talks about above have some active roles, words that we use in language are active in human life.

On this point, I have to remind that automatically a strict relation between language and activity is constituted. Like pieces in the game, words do not bear meaning through their relation to objects that they refer to or they do not have any intrinsic meaning, but they get their meaning within the usage of language. He clearly says, “...the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §43) I want to give an example. It looks like the primitive language that Wittgenstein has used in the beginning of *PI*. Imagine that a carpenter wants his apprentice to bring the saw from the cellar and utters “Saw!” and then he uses the saw to cut the wooden piece in the garden. Here by the utterance of “Saw!”, the carpenter is giving an order to the apprentice to bring the saw if it is possible. This is also the meaning and usage of saw in the sentence. OR after using the saw, again the carpenter can utter “Saw!”. This time, the carpenter wants his apprentice to take the saw to where he had taken it from. The same word has been used in both utterances, but the language-games in which it has been used are contextually and minimally different. If we just take care of the word and the object that the word points to and describes, we can lose the real usage of the words as an instrument in language. It is like ignoring the usage of the saw in our tool-box. Wittgenstein (2001) states,

When philosophers use a word –“knowledge”, “being”, “object”, “I”, “proposition”, “name” –and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language which is its original home?–

What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical<sup>6</sup> to their everyday use. (§116)

Putting aside describing things, the sophisticated structure of language presents itself in various language-games. “...reporting an event,...forming and testing a hypothesis,...singing catches,...translating from one language into another” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §23) are some of them.

The other analogy between language and games can be that both of them come into existence, change or disappear, but in a specific time there is a boundary of a language and –also of rules of a game– to be called what they are and to be played properly. For example, no one can guarantee that classical chess will not be changed or will not be added new rules or pieces. But here the significant thing is that if I decide to play a chess game with my housemate at the moment, we need a certain boundary of rules and character of pieces in order to have a proper game of chess. Similarly although language is like an organism in the sense that it grows and changes like a living being, in a specific time, it has to have a boundary to exist. Having an idea of the relation between language and games, now we can relate language-games to forms of life.

When Wittgenstein defines the relation between language-games and forms of life, he underlines that language is something to be woven with feeling, thoughts and activities that we have in our daily life and that we experience because of being part of a shared structure of society. Hence, language-games are very complex which cannot be

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<sup>6</sup> As I will explain later, Wittgenstein uses metaphysics here as the opposite of priority of activity.

reduced to words. We have to take attention that all these language-games are some activities that cannot be isolated from other ones. It comes as a package.

Gier (1980) argues that it can be a subject of a discussion whether language-games are equal to the forms of life or part of the forms of life. He thinks that the latter one is more proper than the former one because of some textual evidence coming from Wittgenstein's works. For example, Wittgenstein (1972) says,

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; –but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (§204)

Examining the above passage, we can easily understand that Wittgenstein regards language-games as not forms of life, but parts of the forms of life. So, language games are embedded into the forms of life. That is, acting is more basic than language-games. The confusion is derived from especially §19 in *PI* since Wittgenstein argues that imagining language is like to imagine a form of life. One can indicate some passages in *PI* by suggesting that Wittgenstein regards language-games and forms of life as equal since he gives primary importance to language-games as he does for forms of life. For example, he says, “What is the purpose of telling someone that a time ago I had such-and-such a wish? –[Look on the language-games as the *primary* thing.]<sup>7</sup> And look on the feelings, etc., as you look on a way of regarding the language-game, as interpretation.” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §656) However, if the overall ideas of Wittgenstein are read as an entire structure, it can be seen that he does not think that language-games and forms of life are equal. He believes that forms of life are at the bottom. §23 in *PI* is one of the most important passages in this context. It has been quoted above. We have to keep in

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<sup>7</sup> Emphasis is supplied by me.

mind that Wittgenstein (1972) agrees with Goethe by suggesting “Im Anfang war die Tat”.<sup>8</sup> (§402) Hence, what I want to underline is that there is a priority of activity. This priority of activity is very important in Wittgenstein’s discussion on language as a tool and meaning as use.

In order to make this point clearer, I want to open a parenthesis and deal with his critique of the metaphysics concerning ostensive definition and the relation between language and reality. As we know, in the beginning of *PI*, Wittgenstein talks about Augustine’s picture of language as a representative of Western thought on language.

Augustine says,

When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of the voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires. (Augustine, *Confessions*, I.8)<sup>9</sup>

Here Augustine thinks that the children learn language ostensively through associating the word and the object that the word points to. Wittgenstein (2001) extracts “Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands” (§1) from Augustine’s ideas. But the language learning process that is explained by Augustine’s account is so limited for an account of language and meaning. In this traditional and also early Wittgenstein view, there is a dichotomy between language and the world. So, words and sentences have different ontological status than

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<sup>8</sup> “In the beginning was the deed.” –not language–

<sup>9</sup> Cited from *PI*, §1.

events or the things which can be regarded as ‘out there’. Then, the problem is how the gap between language and the world can be closed. The Augustinian picture of language suggests *ostensive definition* to bind language to the world. Ostensive definition is the definition of the word through pointing at the object which it is supposed to correspond. However, the later Wittgenstein has mainly two objections here. At first, there are some words which do not have any correspondence in the world. For example, we say “I will bring two chairs”. There is not any “two” in the world but we know how “two” is used contextually. Related with this, secondly, for Wittgenstein, the correspondence between language and the world cannot be simply solved by ostensive definition since the traditional approach upon ostensive definition creates a very rigid and dichotomist kind of relation between language and the world. What Wittgenstein presents through language-games is different than the traditional picture of language. He asserts that language is more than the simple describing and naming process that are closely connected with mental processes. In order to understand the relation between language and the world and the richness of it, one should look at language-games woven with action in which we are. Wittgenstein (2001) says,

And the processes of naming the stones and of repeating words after someone might also be called language-games. Think of much of the use of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses.  
I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, a “language-game”. (§7)

Hence, Wittgenstein regards action of language users as a part of language also. That is, the relation between language and the world is not just the relation between name and object so that this relation cannot be explained by simple ostensive definitions. Such a picture of language is based on a wrong assumption: it insists that the meaning of a word

is the *object* or *mental image* named by the word. By contrast, Wittgenstein believes that the meaning of words and the “intelligibility of rules” are set in action are not in “inner” mental processes. In that sense, priority of action is one of the most crucial points that Wittgenstein holds against people before as far as the relation between language and the world and the meaning of words are concerned. This criticism of Wittgenstein is also connected with his discourse concerning “bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §116).

Establishing the relation between language-games and forms of life above, now we can focus on what forms of life are about. Form of life, which is *Lebensform* in the original texts of Wittgenstein, clearly seems to be composed of two concepts; form and life. I think Hanna Pitkin gives a brief definition by pointing at these two concepts. Pitkin (1972) says, “Because they are patterns, regularities, configurations, Wittgenstein calls them forms; and because they are patterns in the fabric of human existence and activity on earth, he calls them forms of life.” (p. 132) The definition of Pitkin reminds us that life is not so random, but it has some regularities and forms. In this regularity and in the fabric of human existence, human beings exhibit some structures of society that consist of religious values, moral values, and an economical system, etc. All of these have a regulative power and give a style for lives. For example, fashion of life in a Christian society and an Islamic society can be different at least to a degree. Or the manner of life in society-A in which there is language without ‘Thanks!’<sup>10</sup> might have very different values and relations from society-B in which ‘Thanks!’ is very important in daily activities. I am not saying that without ‘Thanks!’ people in society-A will always

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<sup>10</sup> I assume that ‘Thanks!’ is an expression of being polite in our society.

be rude and cannot learn to be polite to each other, but I can say that the activities and regulations of being thankful can be different and this difference reflects itself in the other behaviours in the society in which manner of life can be regarded as different. Because of this reason, there can be a huge amount of particular forms of life among humankind.

However, in nature, we are not alone. There are also some non-human beings. It seems somehow obvious that we, as humans, have different forms of life if we assume that non-human beings –that is, animals– also have forms of life. Otherwise, we should say that only *we* have a form of life. I do not want to make a general discussion here about the differences between human and animal. But for now what is more important is the idea of Wittgenstein about forms of life of non-human beings. For example, we are beings who can talk. Our talking is not just to combine some words in language level, but there is a much more complicated background behind our ability to talk. Associating talking with hope, Wittgenstein (2001) remarks, “Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life.” (p. 148) At first glance, it seems that hope is taken as a mode of this complicated form of life. But if we look at the second sentence, we can realize that Wittgenstein tries to emphasize not only hope itself, but also our having ability for usage of hope. This ability is also valid in the other activities that we have. I think Wittgenstein makes a double stress here. One is our having mastered for the ability to hope. The other is the fact that we can hope as a feature of our forms of life and it is surrounded by some bodily behaviour, thoughts, gestures, expressions, anticipations about future, etc. Our ability to use language variously makes

us somehow different in the world kingdom and this is the difference between us and animals. One can object and claim that parrots can talk or birds can sing songs so that there is not so much difference and also they can communicate with each other by sounds. But neither their sounds nor their so-called talks are the same with ours. Furthermore, in order to draw this difference, Wittgenstein (2001) says, “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.” (p.190) We can feed them so that whenever they see some food in our hand they can wag their tails. We can love them. However, the quotation from Wittgenstein seems to tell us that there will always be an impossibility of communication if we assume that understanding and communicating have a strict connection with each other. However, it might be very controversial to claim that the gap between forms of life of a human being and a non-human being can not be bridged. To a degree, there is no doubt that the social context of our forms of life is not valid for non-human beings. This social context is the most important point to make our forms of life very complicated. However, one might object that forms of animal life are quite complicated as well. A comparison of complexity between human life and animal life apparently needs a very deep analysis through also some scientific and maybe anthropologic research. But for now at least I can say that the difference between human and animal forms of life is not a difference in kind but in degree. Such a difference in degree can pave the way for us to claim that humans and animals can minimally communicate with each other and I think we can recognize this by looking at our relation with animals. For example, although we cannot clearly observe their smiling in their face, we can understand that they become happy when we play a game together. Or although they cannot express their pain by some verbal utterance like us, we can still

understand their pain. I believe that this kind of relations can be evidence for the possibility of communication between human and animal forms of life.

Turning back to our forms of life, all the activities such as saying something, making gestures and creating stories are “mutually related in the sense that if we are displaying certain gestures and performing certain actions, we are likely to say that we, e.g., pity someone, and also that if we are encouraged to pity someone and do pity them, we shall make gestures and perform actions of the type belonging to the pity-package.” (Hunter, 1968 p. 234) Hunter also thinks that a form of life comes in a package so that behaviours and expressions of it are related to each other and none of them can be isolated from the others. So, for example, in a case that we really pity someone, we don’t just say that “What a pity!” and then laugh, but we have grief in our face to express as evidence that we really pity. The words that we use in language are connected with our expressions and these connections are “in certain *standard* ways” (ibid., p. 234). But certainly it is not to say that people cannot behave very differently from what they say. In such cases, language games can be distinguished from behaviours. For example, Jill and Maria are two friends. Maria’s mother dies. Jill says that she has grief because of the death of her friend’s mother, however she laughs. Then, we respond that indeed Jill doesn’t have any grief normally.<sup>11</sup> Hence, form of life which is correlated with language-games is also logically, internally and conceptually connected with our behaviours.

But again we have to say that behaviours are not themselves forms of life, but they are parts of the forms of life as language-games are. The significance of our behaviours has been displayed in *PI* through the words “common behaviour of

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<sup>11</sup> Here, abnormal attitude is that X goes mad because of huge grief and then he laughs. We are excluding this possibility.

mankind” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §206). The reason for its commonness is that human forms of life is itself a common ground within its social structure for Wittgenstein and humans’ behaviours have to be seen within this structure. We can still understand the other people who seem to have very different forms of life than us because of the commonness. When stressing the difference between animal and human, we have to see the notion of natural history. Wittgenstein (2001) says,

It is sometimes said that animals do not talk because they lack the mental capacity. And this means: “they do not think, and that is why they do not talk.” But –they simply do not talk. Or to put it better: they do not use language–if we except the most primitive forms of language.–Commanding, questioning, storytelling, chatting, are as much a part of *our natural history* as walking, eating, drinking, playing. (§25, my emphasis)

Our ability to interpret an alien form of life lies at the root of this commonness which is explained by the natural history of humankind. He goes on saying, “The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.” (ibid., §206)

In §25, I think the last sentence is the most significant one for our purpose now. Like the complicated activities of human beings such as “commanding”, “questioning”, “storytelling” and “chatting”, some biological realities have been mentioned such as “walking”, “eating” and “drinking” and they are part of our natural history also. So, another aspect of forms of life is the biological one. But this point can cause misunderstandings. It seems that Wittgenstein thinks that biological aspects of forms of life are as important as social aspect of forms of life. At first glance, it is clear that having a biological body is necessary for having a form of life, but heeding biology so much in the context of forms of life can be misleading since when talking about the differences between human forms of life and non-human beings, the important one is not

the biological one, but the social one. For example, a human being prays to God. Praying to God is a very complicated attitude of human beings. It is probably like hope. We know that Wittgenstein thinks that to hope needs a complicated form of life. In his article, Hunter gives so much importance to the biological aspect in the discussion of forms of life and he interprets forms of life as ‘the organic account.’ He is not happy about reading forms of life as ‘formal things in life’ since he treats forms of life as “something typical of a living being” and he goes on to say, “...typical in the sense of being very broadly in the same class as the growth of nutrition of living organisms, or as the organic complexity which enables them to propel themselves about, or to react in complicated ways to their environment.” (Hunter, 1968 p. 235) But in such a reading, Hunter overemphasizes the biological account –he calls as the ‘organic account’– so that the difference between human beings and non-human beings with respect to forms of life disappears or becomes blurred. In this sense, to a certain extent, Hunter is in difficulty to see the beyond the organic structure.<sup>12</sup> I argued above that praying to God needs a complicated way of life. Hence, there is a discrepancy between praying to God and eating food.

However, one might object that it is not so easy to point out the difference between praying to God and eating food. Eating food needs a very complex system in which some of our muscles work, our digestive system becomes active etc. and it can be regarded as very influenced culturally. Also praying to God can be taken as a biological drive. I do not deny that eating food is culturally influenced but it seems to me that eating food itself is like breathing. Praying to God can surely have some biological drive

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<sup>12</sup> I think nobody denies that we need a structure of flesh and blood to have a complicated way of life. But a complicated form of life goes beyond this.

but it is more than this in our cultural context. That is, for the sake of sharpening the difference between them, it can be asserted that we can live without praying to God, but not without eating food. However, what matters for us here is the cultural aspect of our forms of life. When we talk about human forms of life, complexity of them is about customs, conventions and traditions.

Winch (1958) concedes a privilege for human behaviours by propounding that “...analysis of meaningful behaviour must allot a central role to the notion of a rule; that all behaviour which is meaningful (therefore all specifically human behaviour) is *ipso facto* rule-governed.” (p. 51-52) Rule-governing most probably points to the cultural perspective of human forms of life which is also about our customs. Wittgenstein (2001) adduces,

...It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood; and so on.—To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions). (§199)

Gier (1980) makes a similar criticism to Hunter and he says that Hunter has difficulty to see the importance of our ‘cultural-historical conventions’. Although Hunter regards ‘hope’ as a biological adaptation that ‘any living being would not do’, Gier still demands a clarification on the definition of biological adaptation. His guess is that biological adaptation is taken as ‘some physiological changes that occur in the nerves and muscles when we learn a new skill’ in Hunter’s framework. But it deserves consideration that learning, training, education are some activities that are done in social interaction for Wittgenstein. Furthermore, Gier (1980) offers a very interesting proof which comes from the facts that, “Millions of dogs and humans have lived intimately together thousands of years in the same physical environment, but dogs have not adopted any human life

forms.” (p. 250) This example can certainly be generalized for all non-human beings that live with us. I do not want to enter into a discussion on evolution here but I can say that although we share some biological features with animals, after a while, we have started to have some socio-cultural environment which goes hand in hand with our language-games and forms of life and this clearly lacks in animals. To shed light on the issue, maybe Garver’s sentence can be helpful for us. He says “Wittgenstein used ‘forms of life’ to refer sometimes to culturally variant patterns of living rather than to biological forms and patterns.” (Garver 1994, p. 240) Our integration to the culture piecemeal by training gives a general outlook on life, a general picture of life and world. This is also one of the things that animals do not have. In *PI*, Wittgenstein himself asks for the reason why dogs can have pain, but cannot pretend to have pain. The reason is certainly not that they are too honest. He gives a proper answer that can be coherent with Garver’s discourse, “...But the surroundings which are necessary for this behaviour to be real simulation are missing.” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §250) What is ‘surroundings’ is our culture.

Related with the conventional aspect of forms of life, Baker (1984) attributes two features to forms of life. One is that “forms of life are communal property” and the other is that forms of life have a conventional character. According to him, these two features are based upon agreement among people. I think Baker’s analysis is very coherent with what Wittgenstein says in a passage talking about forms of life. The passage reads, ““So, you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?”—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §241) In this text, Wittgenstein emphasizes our being in a condition of agreement about forms of life.

Agreement is the check point of forms of life; otherwise it would be meaningless to talk about them. That is to say, forms of life are shared and standardized by agreement. In this sense, such an agreement which is interwoven with culture differentiates human beings from non-human beings not in kind but in degree. The cultural context of forms of life is also cited in his *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics* maybe in an indirect way. Wittgenstein (1966) says,

The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgement play a very complicated role, but a very definite role, in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture. What we now call a cultured taste perhaps did not exist in the Middle ages. An entirely different game is played in different ages. (§25)

What belongs to a language game is a whole culture. (§26)

If we regard language games as part of forms of life, then we can easily derive the strict relation between culture and forms of life from this passage. Gier (1980) reminds us that even ‘pain’ is explained by referring to cultural history and convention by Wittgenstein. Moreover, Hunter (1968) claims that the act of language usage is like the manner we have when we withdraw our hands from a fire. We do it without thought, instinctively. However, although Wittgenstein (1981) can accept what Hunter argues about organic interpretation to a certain extent and says, “It is a help to remember that it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain.” (§540), in previous passages again in *Zettel*, he says “The concept of pain is characterized by its particular function in our life. Pain has *this* position in our life; has *these* connexions (That is to say: we only call “pain” what has *this* position, *these* connexions).” (ibid., §532-§533)

I believe that these passages throw a light on the matter. We can assume that a primitive reaction when we are in pain is used as the biological aspect of humans here. But the characterization of pain in human forms of life has some other roles as well. One of the most important roles of pain in human culture is that it has a power to create a bridge and behaviour within the society through empathy. When we see someone having a pain in the street, it does not matter whether we know him / her or not, we probably have distasteful feelings. When we see some war scenes even in fictional works such as literature or cinema, we feel pity for those who experience it. This feeling cannot be underestimated since it is one of the most important codes to hold society together. It has a cohesive power. To a degree, it could be asserted that some animals also have this feeling for their own kind. That is, animal instinct can also play a role in our life. But it cannot be like human feeling because of the existence of a social background behind our feeling. Therefore, this kind of biological aspect of forms of life exists in human beings necessarily, as it is in animals; however, humans within the social context have gone beyond this organic aspect. What I try to say is not to create an unbridgeable structure between humans and animals. I want to say that Hunter's organic interpretation can be necessary, but is not enough to understand the differences between human and non-human beings.

Previously I have claimed that commonness among human forms of life can be explained under the concept of natural history. I will return to this notion in later parts of the thesis. Now I want to express that, although there is a commonality, in some parts of his works Wittgenstein says that there can really be some different forms of life among human beings. Imagine that a man from England visits some tribes in Africa. OR a man

from Indonesia comes to Germany. Both men can get into confusion because of their having different forms of life as background. Wittgenstein (2001) argues,

We also say of some people that they are transparent to us. It is, however, important as regards this observation that one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even given a mastery of the country's language. We do not *understand* the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.) We cannot find our feet with them. (p. 190)

In addition to this, in *Zettel*, he says,

I want to say: an education quite different from ours might also be the foundation for quite different concepts.  
For here life would run on differently.–What interests us would not interest them...<sup>13</sup> (Wittgenstein, 1981 §387-§388)

But when Wittgenstein remarks something about differences of forms of life among humans as quoted above, he also thinks that there are no sharp boundaries between them. Maybe he does not do this explicitly, but his general thoughts on natural history on the basis of commonness can be an indirect proof. On the other hand, his idea about commonality does not have a power to stop the discussion about whether there are so many –maybe infinite– forms of life or one kind of form of life among humans. One can say that all in all humans are humans and there is no need to accept the existence of a differentiation between their forms of life so that there is one kind of form of life.

However, another one can claim that there are so many forms of life. For example,

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<sup>13</sup> For Lynch (2001) “interest” here means something which is about our world view. World view –we can also call it as world-picture– is one of the key notions which are related to language games and forms of life. Lynch metaphorically takes *world view* as it has an organic nature as a whole. Its parts cannot be isolated from each other, but must be grasped in relation to their role that they play within the whole. These parts work together in a complex system. According to Lynch, the human world view does not only and simply consist of concepts that we use for the purpose of explaining our beliefs, but also our interests that tell the reasons for our having some concepts. In addition to our interests, it includes for instance our values that rule our interest. Lynch believes that world view is sometimes called by Wittgenstein “form of life”.

although Garver thinks that Wittgenstein makes a reference to ‘culturally variant patterns of life’, then immediately he explicates his doubts about whether the general idea of pluralistic forms of life is reliable or not in Wittgenstein. For him, it seems that this plurality consists of imaginary forms of life such as the builders’ form of life which Wittgenstein told in the beginning of *PI* or the form of life of wood-sellers who are selling their wood according to not volume, but area.<sup>14</sup> Garver (1994) thinks that these kinds of forms of life cannot be proof for the existence of different forms of life since “By their divergence from our common practices, they make evident how much *we* have in common.” (p. 247) Probably when Garver talks about commonality here, he takes language and language-games into consideration as a radical breakdown between us and non-human beings. Among us, there is not so much difference since at the end we are human beings. It is maybe possible to assume that wood-sellers who sell their wood according to the area or builders are using language as a part of their forms of life and this general pattern can be taken as common. But one can have doubt, for instance about the form of life of builders, whether they are really speaking a language because of having just very basic orders. A radical interpretation can be that they are not human. To a degree, they would have a different tradition, institution or custom than us. This can be acceptable. But is it enough to say that they are not human or there is a radical breakdown between them and us? Such a question can be asked within our society. In our society, some people are very religious and some people live as non-religious people. The former ones occasionally pray to God, go to mosque or church as a duty,

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<sup>14</sup> In passage §2, Wittgenstein imagines a kind of language between builders and they just need four words which are ‘block’, ‘pillar’, ‘slab’ and ‘beam’. When one utters one of these words, the other one brings the thing which is called as such.

and marry someone who is also religious whereas the latter ones do not do these activities. Then do we have to say that they have different forms of life? But we know that these two people can go to the same school, go to the same supermarket for shopping or eat the same food. It seems that Garver's answer will be negative to these questions through presenting a reason that they share a form of life. So, for him, it cannot be said that imaginary builders and wood-sellers are not human. Actually this view is not so different from that of Wittgenstein himself. Wittgenstein (1981) says,

‘These men would have nothing human about them.’ Why? –We could not possibly make ourselves understood to them. Not even as we can to a dog. We could not find our feet with them.  
And yet there surely could be such beings, who in other respects were human.  
(§390)

In this sense, Wittgenstein accepts not only the existence of such humans, but also their different forms of life so he endorses not a singular, but a pluralistic view of forms of life.

Although relevant passages consisting of the notion ‘forms of life’ can give an idea to the people about the issue whether Wittgenstein means one human form of life or many human forms of life, such a strategy can be captious and defective. As I said in the beginning of the chapter, this notion has been used five times in *PI* and a few times in other works. If we restrict ourselves to these passages in order to understand what a form of life is, our understanding of it would be misleading. Because of my desire to block such a misunderstanding, it can be a proper way to see the importance of “forms of life” in Wittgenstein's overall epistemological framework which includes some discussions about knowledge, doubt, certainty etc. I believe that if we bring together his framework with the notion of forms of life, then the question whether Wittgenstein is a relativist or

not can be answered in a more secure way. For this purpose, the next chapter will be devoted to his general thinking on knowledge, certainty etc. and the place of the notion of forms of life in it.

## CHAPTER 3

### GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH OF WITTGENSTEIN IN RELATION TO THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMS OF LIFE

In order to see what Wittgenstein thinks about knowledge in his later works, at first we have to grasp his problematic mainly in *OC* which is one of the main texts that he has left for us and which includes some points highly related to our present discussion here. In *OC*, Wittgenstein starts by giving an answer to G. E. Moore's famous paper called "A Proof of an External World". Let us remember what Moore says in this paper. Moore's argumentation chain is like this:

P1 – Here is a hand.

P2 – Here is another hand.

C – Two hands exist.

In this simple chain, the conclusion also implies the existence of the external world. That is, there is an external world. Moore adds that there are three requirements for something to be a proof. At first, premises have to be known. For him, he knows that "Here is one hand and here is another hand" through some certain combinations of gestures and he knows it would be absurd to say that he does not know. Secondly, the conclusion has to be different than the premises. The conclusion which is "two human hands exist at the same time at this moment" is very different than the premises since the premises are more specific than the conclusion. Thirdly, truth of premises implies truth of the conclusion. He is sure that his conclusion obviously follows from the premises. Hence, he believes that his argumentation satisfies all

these three requirements so that it is a proof for the existence of an external world. But there are some objections to his argumentation. As an example, one might say that it is impossible to know that Moore has his hands before already knowing that there is an external world. So, there is a kind of circularity in this proof.

I will not go into this objection and the other objections, but I will express Wittgenstein's ideas about it. Wittgenstein can have a little sympathy for Moore's attempt but he argues that Moore is not in the right direction. According to Wittgenstein, when one uses such a structure as "I know that here is a hand", one can directly jump into a sceptical discussion that one does not want to. That is because if there is a knowledge claim somewhere, it presupposes that there can be a sceptical attitude towards this claim. So, any knowledge can possibly be doubted in this regard. Propositions like "Here is a hand" seem to give information about facts in the external world; however these kinds of propositions enable us to speak about the external world. So, in a sense, these kinds of propositions are not subject to the questions which are valid in the case of things we claim to *know*. So they are not subjected to sceptical claims. Wittgenstein's aim is not to find a much more reliable proof for an external world better than Moore's proof, but he wants to say that such propositions like "Here is a hand and here is another hand" have very important roles about how we use our language and about its working mechanism. They are in a realm beyond our doubts. This realm beyond our doubt points to certainty which is one of the vital concepts in later Wittgenstein. He, just in the beginning of *OC*, warns us that we "do not see how very specialized the use of "I know" is." (Wittgenstein, 1972 §11) When a person in a court uses "I am certain" instead of "I know",

certainty and knowledge can be the same. But putting aside these kinds of special cases, they cannot be taken as they have the same character. He explicitly states this distinction. “‘Knowledge’ and ‘certainty’ belong to different *categories*.”

(Wittgenstein, 1972 §308) For Wittgenstein, certainty is not in knowledge, but it is the foundation of knowledge and it has a different character than knowledge.

Doubting does not have any significance in the category of certainty.

In this picture, because of taking certainty as a foundation of knowledge, Wittgenstein can be regarded as a foundationalist, but what kind of a foundationalist approach does he have? We can firstly say that with his above approach, there is a radical breakdown of Wittgenstein from traditional foundationalist insights about knowledge. Traditional foundationalism basically claims that our knowledge should start from an infallible and certain knowledge upon which all our other knowledge could be based and justified. Beyond this point, there is no need to look for further justification of knowledge. That is, our beliefs, propositions and knowledge are based on other ones. Foundational beliefs, propositions and knowledge do not need further ground to be based on since they are themselves basic ones. Descartes’s “*cogito ergo sum*” or propositions in the structure of “I seem to see...” can be some examples. In such cases, the end of justification is identified with certainty and it has the same character with knowledge, unlike for Wittgenstein. Stroll (1994) uses the concept of “homogeneous foundations” for this case. But, for Wittgenstein, this is not the case. Ground has different feature than knowledge itself. In this sense, Wittgenstein’s foundationalism is different than the traditional foundationalism. Richter (2001) says,

“...one of Wittgenstein’s moves against scepticism is to point out that knowledge, one might say, is what successful inquiry achieves. (p. 350)

But Richter emphasizes that this kind of inquiry does not question some very basic issues. For example, existence of humans or existence of the world or existence of meanings in our words and sentences are not questioned in normal condition. These are examples of not asking questions to make an inquiry. So, they are certain. But knowledge, as a different category from certainty, can be investigated to be true or can be doubted. Therefore, certainty is on the basis of our knowledge and of our inquiry for knowledge and so it is indubitable. Wittgenstein believes that any kind of doubt presupposes something which is un-doubtful. Because of this, scepticism has no place.

Wittgensteinian foundationalism basically seems to have two kinds. One is a propositional kind and the other is a non-propositional kind. In the propositional kind of foundationalism, propositions are absolutely certain but it does not mean that they cannot change in time. In a specific period of time, they are certain and they become a basis for our other propositions and beliefs, but they are not constant. After a while, one kind of proposition which is very certain can be in a status for to be doubted. This is best explained by Wittgenstein in *OC* and it is also pointed by Richter. It says,

[...] some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. (Wittgenstein, 1972 §96)

It can be argued that foundational propositions have a revisable character, but this does not prevent them from being certain. For Wittgenstein, these kinds of propositions have a very unique role in our system in which we have some epistemic propositions.

However, even these propositions are different than propositions in traditional foundationalism. That is, they are not propositions ordinarily. Here the notion of hinge propositions should be mentioned. These hinge propositions are special ones since they are beyond confirmation, evidence etc. which are applicable to propositions in the ordinary sense. Hinge propositions are immune to doubt since we cannot apply truth or falsity criteria to them. In normal conditions, we do not learn them in a very explicit sense and we do not doubt.

However, Richter (2001) reminds us of a possible objection here. The notion of “normal condition” points to the “conditions in which the proposition is beyond our doubt” and there is a circularity which states itself as being true. Richter’s preference is to say that “there are combinations of words that we do not use to express doubts” instead of using the notion of “normal condition”. (Richter, 2001 p.354) I am not sure about the reliability of such a small objection and Richter’s alternative usage since there is no need to dig into the notion of normality here on the basis of the fact that it is not difficult to understand what Wittgenstein might mean by using it. For example, in the example of the existence of the earth, normality is the condition in which the existence of the earth penetrates into our daily life and actions whereas the non-normal condition is the condition in which we explicitly question the existence for it. Imagine a case: one experiences a huge bombing in the earth when he/she is at home and looks through the window, then everywhere is filled with smoke. This case can be an example for a non-normal condition to ask about the existence of the earth just for a second. Then, after a short while, he will understand that the earth still exists since he is still living. Putting aside this issue, Wittgenstein (1972) says, “The propositions describing this world-

picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.” (§95) and “We do not, for example, arrive at any of them as a result of investigation.” (§138) In these passages, there is no doubt that Wittgenstein talks about hinge propositions even if he does not use this concept explicitly. He underlines that hinges are not investigated but they are the rules that we use without questioning when investigating other stuff.

In addition to propositional foundationalism, the other kind is non-propositional foundationalism. I think the latter kind of foundationalism is more important than the first one since elements of this second approach enable us to make some connections with the notion of forms of life in a proper way in Wittgenstein. Here foundational elements are different than the structure which is based on them. Richter (2001) calls these foundations as non-intellectual.<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein talks about this non-intellectual foundation in the sense of acting. He says,

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;-but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (Wittgenstein, 1972 §204)

So, human activity, human customs, the practical part of life can be included in the non-propositional foundation. Stroll (1994) thinks that when Wittgenstein wants to make an interpretation contrasting with the propositional view, he has the notion of world-picture in his mind and this world-picture is somehow an inheritance of humanity. One relation between human action and certainty is that we cannot act and go on with our life if we

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<sup>15</sup> The *intellectual* one is regarded as *propositional*. In that sense, non-intellectual foundation means non-propositional foundation.

have some doubts about everything. This situation can be very similar to a scientist's situation. A scientist who is making an experiment in the laboratory with tubes cannot doubt about the existence of tubes and spend time on this, otherwise she/he cannot take further steps of the scientific investigation. So, in order to go on with our life, we do not doubt everything, just as a scientist does not doubt everything in the situation of scientific investigation. "...it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigation that certain things are in *deed* not doubted" and "...we just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put." (Wittgenstein, 1972 §342-343) In this sense, acting and certainty are strictly related to each other. Certainty seems to be regarded as a form of life by Wittgenstein. But Sharrock (2004) claims that here certainty is not equal to a form of life. It is highly similar to something which is non-propositional such as a form of life. This certainty is not justified or unjustified but lies beyond these. Justification for knowledge is not sought in some belief or knowledge categories, but beyond these categories. Beyond these categories, there is human action. Wittgenstein talks about the end of justification not in the way of traditional foundationalism but in a different way. The end of justification, in other words, the ground for our knowledge is "...not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting." (Wittgenstein, 1972 §110) So, this ungrounded way of acting is beyond our justification system. However, for Wittgenstein, as a habit of making explanation and justification, we still try to use our justification system in order to find the ground although the characteristic feature of a ground is that it cannot actually be justified or unjustified.

In the tradition of theory of epistemic justification, contrary to foundationalism, there is coherentism. Coherentism is against foundationalism and basically claims that our knowledge does not rest on a non-inferential foundation of knowledge. For coherentism, justification does not end with some special foundational beliefs or knowledge. No belief can be isolated from the others and called foundation, but all beliefs and knowledge are members of a coherent set and this coherent set is itself justification. In some sense, coherentism wants to reject the distinction between basic beliefs and non-inferential beliefs. So, there is no need to look for a foundation since there is not any such foundational belief. Although some textual evidence can be shown for the fact that Wittgenstein has some foundational elements, there are also some passages which can be proof that Wittgenstein holds some coherentist elements, too. Some of his claims about our belief system seem to draw a coherentist picture for one who reads him. Wittgenstein (1972) says,

All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our argument:...The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life. (§105)

In addition to this passage, he has a few passages which are about our learning system.

In the middle of *OC*, he states, “We do not learn the practice of making empirical judgements by learning rules: we are taught *judgements* and their connexion with other judgements. A *totality* of judgements is made plausible to us.” (ibid., §140) and “It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support.” (ibid., §142) Our propositions and beliefs support each other in a very holistic manner so that we cannot isolate any of them from the others. So, it seems that Wittgenstein’s epistemology has both foundationalist and

coherentist elements. Caraway (2003) underlines that Wittgenstein both makes a hierarchy between beliefs as a foundationalist and at the same time gives an interdependent character to basic beliefs as a coherentist.

Although this thesis does not aim to go into a discussion between foundationalism and coherentism, at first glance, it can be claimed that there is a paradox here since foundationalism and coherentism are rivals to each other and they cannot be together. However, I am not as pessimistic as this. When Wittgenstein argues that he has reached rock bottom of the convictions, then he says that “these foundational-walls are carried by the whole house”. (Wittgenstein, 1972 §248) It seems to me that the notion of “mutual support” in §142 is pointing to the condition of foundational walls although one might think that “mutual support” is more open to a coherentist reading. But it can be inferred that foundational propositions are connected with some other propositions and convictions that we have. In addition to this, Wittgenstein thinks that, as I have quoted before, some propositions can be hardened and they can function as channels for other propositions which are not hardened, but this situation has a revisable character. Some fluid propositions can be hardened and some hard ones can become fluid. In *OC*, Wittgenstein uses a very helpful metaphor and image in order to show the situation of propositions that we have. He says,

The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other. (Wittgenstein, 1972 §97)

In this river-bed of thoughts, our thoughts are not immovable or unchanged. So, our foundations can have some alterations from time to time. Our propositions and thoughts have a very dynamic relation with each other and they can be fluid or hardened.

Sharrock (2004) suggests that there is a categorical difference between empirical propositions and rules in the distinction between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself. Sharrock gives the example of our walking on the moon. At one time, “human cannot walk on the moon” was a hard proposition whereas after travel to the moon it became a fluid one. So, the category of the same proposition has changed. Wittgenstein (1972) states that “...the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing.” (§98) This can also be an indicator of the idea of Wittgenstein about the changing status and character of propositions. I will turn back to this issue in the part which is about discussion of relativism in Wittgenstein.

Let me shortly summarize what is taken in hand up to here before going on to the next chapter of the study. At first, some clarifications have been made about the notions of forms of life and language-games in the philosophy of Wittgenstein. I have a belief that understanding the contents of these notions and their vitality in the epistemology of Wittgenstein is certainly necessary for grasping his overall philosophy and his importance as a philosopher. Therefore, the previous chapter has included some preliminary remarks about this. This chapter has mentioned some basic ideas of Wittgenstein on knowledge, certainty etc. In my opinion, the notion of forms of life is one of the most important issues in later Wittgenstein. However, if we keep in mind that one aim of Wittgenstein is to bring back notions from their metaphysical usage to daily usage, then the importance of “forms of life” can be understood much more properly in

his later philosophy.<sup>16</sup> When the picture of the epistemology of Wittgenstein was drawn in this chapter, I think it was a need to underline his so-called foundationalist perspective and, more importantly that he has placed “forms of life” or “acting” or “practicality” of humans into this foundationalist account. According to me, his move for giving weight to language games and forms of life is the most important reason for him to be labelled as a relativist as will be shown in the next chapter. On the other hand, with the assistance of his other important ideas especially in *PI* and *OC* and by shedding light on them, I will claim that labelling Wittgenstein as a relativist, and in this connection, having a relativist approach to forms of life are not so fair. In the first place, such a reading detaches some important ideas from his whole later philosophy in an improper way. Secondly, since forms of life and later Wittgenstein have a strict relation with each other, the attribution of relativism to forms of life implies some improper views to be mentioned.

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<sup>16</sup> As I basically explained before, what Wittgenstein means by metaphysical usage of language refers to the dichotomy between language and the world. It implies that the meaning of the word is a object that points to in the world or mental image named by it. That is, the meaning of the word is in the mental process. However, Wittgenstein blurs the dichotomy between language and the world. He claims that the meaning of the word is in use, in action.

## CHAPTER 4

### RELATIVISM, WITTGENSTEIN AND “FORMS OF LIFE”

In his later work, Wittgenstein seems to commit to relativistic approaches. At least, whereas some thinkers are reading and labelling him as relativist; some might object to this and claim that Wittgenstein is not a relativist. In this chapter, at first, there will be some general statements. Then, I will consider some people who read him and their ideas as relativist and this will give a general idea about why there is such a discussion in the literature and which points in Wittgenstein have given rise to the debate whether he is relativist or not. Related to this, my next move will be to investigate this issue through some important passages in a closer way so that I will have a chance to present my own ideas about the subject and claim that reading him as a relativist does not represent the reality of his overall philosophy. Such a reading is wrong, or at least a very misleading kind of reading since it opens a door for attribution of relativism also to forms of life and this has some dangerous way of thoughts for human relations in the world.<sup>17</sup>

Relativism is a very wide concept so that it is impossible to make a clarification of it at all in this very limited space. There are many kinds of it and it finds some places for itself in many areas of philosophy as well. In philosophy of science, under the topic of conceptual change between scientific revolutions, relativism manifests itself as incommensurability between scientific theories. In ethics, in the problem of finding an ethical standard between cultures, relativism can easily be used by some thinkers. In the

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<sup>17</sup> I want to remind that some passages which are quoted previously in this work in order to bring the philosophical framework of Wittgenstein under the spotlight will occasionally be quoted again.

theory of epistemology, relativism has an enormous effect on some vital discussions about knowledge, objectivity etc. In philosophy of art, it can be used to utter some ideas about beauty. As I said, it is difficult to go into all these issues one by one to have a clear meaning of relativism. But for the sake of the present aim, I can say that relativism holds there is no absolute truth. Glock (2007) gives a basic definition of relativism and, instead of dealing with varieties of relativism on the whole, I will bear with this definition. He says,

Relativism maintains that our beliefs, concepts, or practices cannot be assessed from an impartial, universally acceptable vantage-point, since they are valid (true, justified, good, etc.) or invalid (false, unwarranted, bad, etc.) only relative to a particular individual or group of individuals (societies or even species).  
(Glock, 2007 p. 378)

So, relativism means that all points of view are equally valid to each other and none of them can claim an absolutely correct point among the others. Some specific system of references –these can be language, the subject itself, the culture in which this subject lives– determines the standards of truth and justification. The reason for some relativistic interpretations of Wittgenstein is the system of reference which includes the notions of “language-games” and “forms of life”.

After these basic remarks, now I want to mention of some scholars who regard Wittgenstein as one of the representatives of relativism and look at their reasons for this. At first, I want to touch on the ideas of Robert Kirk. He mainly interprets and focuses on Wittgenstein’s language-games about this issue. Kirk underlines that discussion of language-games causes some very relativistic picture; it even leads some to think that people who belong to different language-games live in different realities. For him, language-games seem to state that people grow up in different cultures, different

communities and with different rules and norms. Their values and interests are changing from culture to culture so that they are led to take notice of different things. Rules of a language game are determined by the practice of communities to which this language-game belongs. Acceptability of the assertions and truth of them are determined by the language-games in which we are accustomed to live. So, truth is dependent on our experiences. Then, he says, “That seems to imply a further conclusion: different communities may fix different systems of truth, which in turn seems to mean that *different communities may occupy different realities.*” (Kirk, 1999 p. 98) Kirk argues that being within the frame of language-games, there is not truth or acceptability beyond them. He imagines two communities: One believes that the earth is smaller than the sun. The other believes that the sun is smaller than the earth. According to Kirk, the language-games argument tells us that there is not any independent point for correctness and incorrectness except within their language games. Even measuring them and determining the bigger one is an activity which is done within the community-based language games since “measuring the sun and the earth requires us to use *theories* about the structure of the universe; and they are cultural constructions”. (ibid., p. 99) This situation makes reality depend on our point of view. For Kirk, putting it another way, the language-games argument captivates people for anti-realism. So, he thinks that in the argument of language-game, the argumentation chain goes like this,

P1 – Language-game depends on rules and norms.

P2 – Rules depend on custom of the community in the sense that there is no higher point to appeal to.

P3 – There are some questions of truth, falsity etc. in the language-game.

P4 – Rules connect acceptability and truth.

C1 – Truth is just about acceptability within its own language-game, not beyond the language-game.

C2 – Since there are different communities with different language games, each one of them has a different system of truth and a different ontology.

Furthermore, Kirk asserts that the language-game argument does not just apply to the fact-stating kind of discourse, but also to moral, aesthetic and religious kinds of discourses. For example, moral rightness or wrongness about the legality of abortion depends on our attitudes and system of norms, too. “All types of assertion, ‘fact-stating’, moral, aesthetic, religious, or whatever, have to be regarded as being on an equal footing, since they are all just different kinds of language-games.” (ibid., 101) Then, he adds that realists do not have sympathy for the conclusions of the language-game argument. However, in the later part of the related chapter Kirk tries to refute the language-game argument. Especially he focuses on the notion of rationality since he thinks that the Wittgensteinian language-game argument makes rationality depend on the communities which truth and acceptability also depend on and he wants to liberate rationality from a relativistic approach. Kirk talks about the need and want and ability of acquiring information in order to go on living and these standards are not relative to communities. Rationality is defined on the basis of these features so that he tries to demolish relativism in this sense. But Kirk does not hesitate to claim that Wittgenstein is a relativist because of his language-game argument.

Hans-Johann Glock clearly thinks that Wittgenstein is advocating relativism. He takes conceptual diversity in Wittgenstein as a base for his claim since Wittgenstein

imagines some alternatives way of counting, measuring and calculating etc.<sup>18</sup> For example, Wittgenstein imagines a community who are calculating the price of a piece of wood by area covered rather than volume of it. Glock (2007) says, “Wittgenstein rejects even the modest suggestion that our form or representation is *superior* to these alternatives in any way other than a pragmatic one which is relative to certain interests.” (p.383) For Glock, conceptual diversity in Wittgenstein is necessary but not sufficient to suggest his being a relativist. The other requirement is *epistemic incommensurability*. According to Glock’s definition, epistemic incommensurability is that “there is no universal scientific rationality which would allow us to assess different paradigms as more or less faithful to reality. More generally, we lack a common ground for evaluating different conceptual schemes as more or less rational” (ibid., p. 383) Recognizing Glock’s argument about Wittgenstein’s being a relativist, then this implies that at the same time he believes that Wittgenstein endorses epistemic incommensurability. In addition to this, in one of the other passages, in his book *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, Glock assumes that Wittgensteinian relativism which is shaped by the autonomy of language does not simply accept some common forms of representation and some metaphysical standards. He says, “[...] it is based on the idea that each form of representation lays down its own standards of rationality, which implies that even pragmatic justifications are internal to particular language-games.” (Glock, 1996 p.126)

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<sup>18</sup> Glock defines *conceptual diversity* as “plurality of different conceptual frameworks, ways of making sense of experience or the world which we use either in general, or in specialized forms of discourse such as science.” (Glock, 2007 p.383)

But indeed Wittgenstein does not have any problem to embrace some generalizations.

He does not hesitate to use some concepts like “the natural law” or “our natural history”, etc. For example, in OC, he says,

But do we not simply follow the principle that what has always happened will happen again (or something like it)? What does it mean to follow this principle? Do we really introduce it into our reasoning? Or is it merely the *natural law* which our inferring apparently follows? This latter it may be. It is not an item in our considerations. (Wittgenstein, 1972 §135)

So, Wittgenstein does not seem to defend epistemic incommensurability and also he does not seem to defend relativism. I will come back later to explicate my ideas about this in a detailed way.

Maria Baghramian does not think so differently than the previous philosophers. For her, Wittgenstein suggests that our human life consisting of our conceptual life is woven with socio-cultural context or a ‘form of life’. It would never be to grasp the language through isolating it from practices and goals of the people who belong to a form of life. The meanings of some concepts like ‘rationality’, ‘truth’ etc. and any description of reality are determined by our concepts and language on the basis of our way of life. It is impossible to get out of particular language-games and our forms of life. Reasoning, act of thinking, and even logic, are also strictly connected with our form of life. Making some objective or external comparisons between belief systems independent of a form of life is impossible since there is no way to get outside of all forms of life. Baghramian (2004) says,

Wittgenstein is denying that rules can exist outside the actual practices which involve their application, or be understood independently of these applications. No rules, including rules of logic, exist independently of the occasions of using them. (p. 76)

and she adds, “Rules of logic and standards of reasoning, he seems to suggest, are relative to the form of life from which they emanate and in which they are embedded.” (ibid., p. 77) At the end of the related chapter in her book *Relativism*, she expresses her anxieties about the issue since she believes that although there are some obvious passages leading Wittgenstein to relativism, in addition to this, still there are some naturalistic interpretations of forms of life in his works. But unfortunately instead of explaining what she means by the existence of naturalistic interpretations of forms of life, she goes on saying “what is beyond doubt is that Wittgenstein introduced a view of language where all criteria of meaningfulness and significance are internal to our practices” (ibid., p.78) and she closes the chapter with this internalist point of view of Wittgenstein which advances relativism in religion, social sciences etc.

Therefore, as it can be discerned, because of ‘language-games’ and ‘forms of life’, Wittgenstein is charged with advocating relativism. The first and very quick answer may probably and interestingly finish this discussion here. If Wittgenstein were alive and we asked him whether he is a relativist or not, he could say that he was not. His aim is not to create a theory, not to defend a strong thesis. These kinds of attitudes necessitate doing some systematic philosophy, following strict argumentative chains and offering a philosophical account. Wittgenstein does not do this even in his style of writing. But one might ask whether he makes some philosophical claims about knowledge, certainty, language, human life so that he has a philosophical account. It is true that he has some philosophical problems to raise, but this does not make him defender of theorizing. I might be convinced that if one makes a very deep systematic reading of Wittgenstein, she / he can find some systematic conflicts in his ideas. This is a possibility, but this

reading is a wrong way of reading a thinker like Wittgenstein and it is to miss a chance to understand ideas of a very important figure of the twentieth century. About not holding a philosophical position, O'Grady (2004) reminds us that what Wittgenstein is adopting "is sometimes called 'quietism'" (p. 315) In the *Tractatus*, language is regarded to have a relation with reality as isomorphic. Moreover, while in the *Tractatus* he follows some strict logical forms to make some judgements and to make some generalizations and unification, in later works especially in *PI* and *OC* he claims that we learn tacitly by being in social life as an agent. In the *Tractatus*, he wanted to give a total framework of linguistic meaning with respect to the relationship between world and language. But this formal unity did not have a chance to give attention to look at how language, words, sentences work in our daily social life since the relation between them and the world was examined very abstractly. This abstractness gave this relation a very strict logical form. However, after Wittgenstein pays attention to the situations in which language is used, he realizes that communication between people is carried through some rule-governed activity which takes place with total relations of other social behaviour and actions which can be called 'language-game'. Human life is played in some cultural, natural or social context which can be basically called 'form of life'. So, in Wittgenstein, there is a shift from strict logical forms to the fluid life forms. This fluidity gives a much more varied character to forms of life and language games. In the first chapter, some clarification of language games and forms of life has been made, so there is no need to define them here in a detailed way again. However, it would be a good way to consider closely some of the passages that seem to endorse relativism.

Wittgenstein thinks that in using language, we do not only utter some fixed meanings of words and sentences, but also see how a language can have multiple tools and ways to be used. By using the same word, we can order or describe an object or make jokes. Sentences are also like words. There are various kinds of use of sentences like a tool. I look at my room now and I see so many objects and tools. There is a pencil, table, computer cable etc. All of them seem to play their strict and determined roles. However, it is obvious that they can also be used for different purposes and so have different roles. I can easily use the computer cable or pencil to kill someone and I can use the table to sleep on it instead of writing on it. Hence, there are various usages of a tool. This kind of variety and different usage of language is important and interesting for Wittgenstein to be compared “with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.)” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §23) So, just in the beginning parts of *PI*, we can observe that he makes a shift from strict and general logical forms of language to a multiplicity of it. Furthermore, his shift intends to look for our daily particular usage of language. So, it requires turning from looking and studying in abstract terms into giving attention to the activities which are associated with our life forms. As I stated before, language games are highly related with forms of life since every language-game needs a base for its existence. In this sense, if there is a multiplicity in language-games, then it can be reliable to assert that there are various forms of life as house of language-games, and also various kinds of justification, since the end of justification which lies beyond some belief and knowledge categories is in forms of life.

Some of the most important passages about this issue in *OC* are the passages between §95-97. Because of their importance, at first, I will quote them here.

Wittgenstein (1972) says,

The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules. (§95)

It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. (§96)

The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other. (§97)

In those passages, Wittgenstein talks about propositions and their character. I have mentioned his ideas on this issue in previous chapters. But for just a reminder, for him, some of the propositions that we have are hardened for the purpose of providing other fluid propositions' flow through these hardened channels, but this structure is not constant. In the length of time, hard ones can become fluid and fluid ones can be hard. When I utter, "I know that the earth has existed long ago", it seems clear that many fluid propositions are made possible thanks to this hard proposition or hinge proposition. The proposition shows my knowledge status. However, Wittgenstein says, no one can deny that this hard proposition can lose its hard character. Imagine that, once upon a time, it was believed that "the earth is flat and it is the centre of the universe" with the support of other presuppositions. This was a fundamental and hinge proposition which the others were turning around. No one has believed the other way around. But then, tests have refuted this fundamental proposition and propositions like "the earth is round and the

sun is the centre of the universe” have become fundamental ones. Also this was a change in the other supporting propositions. So, the overall knowledge status of people has slowly changed. If the fundamental proposition loses its character, then we can imagine that the context of our knowledge status and our understanding of certainty can change. If that is the case, O’Grady (2004) says, “So, knowledge, certainty and doubt are relative to the context of presuppositions and grammatical rules which form a framework containing them.” (p. 319) This changeable feature implies multiplicity in justification, in language games and forms of life in general. It can provoke people to think that Wittgenstein is defending relativism since it paves the way for alternative and different justificatory systems and different forms of life. Furthermore, we have to notice that Wittgenstein does not say that all foundational propositions and beliefs becomes fluid, but when some of them become fluid, some of the fluid ones become hardened. So, there are always some beliefs and propositions at the bottom metaphorically as channels. For example, that humans cannot go to the moon could be regarded as a fundamental proposition. It was at the base of language-games. It was neither true nor false, neither grounded nor ungrounded, neither rational nor irrational. It was beyond knowledge and doubt. It was a hinge proposition since the other ones were turning around this certainty. The relation of such a hinge proposition with the other ones can give an idea about what kind of a form of life and world view people had at the bottom. However, after the journey to the moon, the hinge proposition has changed.

Then, the fact that humans can have access to the moon has become a hard proposition. There are two things here. One point is that a proposition “humans can go to the moon” has become a hard one in the new system. The other is that it has proven

itself to be false within the old system. These two things can be regarded as automatically the same. The important thing for our purpose is to have a ‘hinge proposition’. However, one can still insist that the changeability of any hinge proposition is evidence that we do not have any foundational proposition for all time and for all humans. A hinge proposition which is valid in one time and/or any place might be fluid in another time and/or another and vice versa. The person who insists on this can open a way to add that this kind of an outlook in Wittgenstein makes him a relativist. It seems reasonable at first glance but this claim can give a chance to underline the universality of some hinge propositions. Such an argument implies a distinction between universal and non-universal hinge propositions. Non-universal hinge propositions<sup>19</sup> are propositions which can change from place to place and from time to time. So, for example, they can depend on the culture in which these propositions are applied. As in the example just given above, the earth’s being flat was a hinge proposition. However, after some scientific investigations, now the earth’s being round is a hinge proposition although there can probably be some communities who still believe that earth is flat. In spite of changeability, non-universal hinge propositions constitute some world-view of some people at a period somewhere. Sharrock (2004) says,

They are culture-variant and many of them seem to be the product of empirical observation (e.g. ‘The earth is round’, ‘Trains normally arrive in a railway station’) or epistemic inquiry (e.g. ‘The existence of Napoleon’, ‘No one was ever on the moon’). (p. 136)

So, as I quoted before, Wittgenstein (1972) states that “...the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing.”

(§98) By the way, the usage of ‘epistemic inquiry’ above can be problematic since in

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<sup>19</sup> Sharrock (2004) calls them ‘local hinges’.

Wittgenstein hinge propositions are in the ground to provide epistemic inquiry, but they are not the products of epistemic inquiry. If they were, then Wittgenstein would fall into a trap of traditional epistemology. We have to remember that Wittgenstein aims to save 'certainty' from the claim that knowledge is at the ground of certainty. He has a belief that knowledge and certainty belong to different categories, and hinge propositions are related with certainty. Transformation of hinge proposition from hard into fluid is an indicator that these hinge propositions are temporary and at the time of transformation they can be subjected to investigation.

Then what can we say about universal hinge propositions? Are there any universal ones that are immune to change, unlike non-universal hinge propositions? Although one can claim that all propositions are changeable, I agree with Sharrock that there are some universal ones which are immovable. Now I will investigate this. I believe that if such an attempt is reliable, then we can get very important power against people who argue that Wittgenstein is a relativist since it means that there are some fundamental propositions which are valid for all people, for all time. We have said that a hard proposition like "Humans cannot have access to the moon" can change its character and lose its hardness. But, for example, is it possible to say that one of the fundamental propositions, "the world exists", can lose its fundamental character? Can such a proposition be an object of investigation? One might argue that at the time of the Day of Judgement people can ask each other about the existence of the world. Then, it becomes an object of investigation. Or the same person might suggest that people are philosophically discussing about the existence of it through the centuries, they are trying to construct some epistemological theories about the existence of world. So this kind of

behaviour can also be cases of investigation about it. However, at first, conditions like the Day of Judgement are the end of everything about this world and this is beyond discussion here since the existence of the world is about our whole system of beliefs and way of life before the end of the world. If there is another world to which we altogether go after death and we have a chance to discuss the existence of the world, then I can positively answer that in such a case the existence of the world can be investigated but as I said this is a very abnormal condition. For the other objection about what philosophers do through the centuries, I can say that whatever we do in this world is implicitly assuming that the world exists. We cannot abandon it since the existence of the world is not so distinct from the existence of human kind. They are highly related to each other so that we cannot separate them and say “I exist, but I am not sure about the existence of the world”; even the most extreme sceptic has *implicitly* a foundational belief that the world exists. That the world exists has totally penetrated into our all actions in our daily life like a ghost. Our overall education system, our system of geology, our getting information and using it to survive, our looking for food leans upon the existence of the world. It seems that this case does not change in some tribes. When they go on living, make their daily practices, dance for the rain, and show some ritualistic gestures, they have this certainty. It did not change through the history of human kind. Sharrock (2004) suggests that “universal hinges are innumerable.” (p. 150) For example, that a human being cannot turn into a bird and that a baby cannot look after itself are some universal hinges. Following the river metaphor, Wittgenstein (1972) says, “And the bank of that river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place now in another gets

washed away, or deposited.” (§98) In this passage, it is stated that some parts of hard rock might not be changed and this may be evidence to claim that “some hinges are revisable does not make the whole bedrock revisable” (Sharrock, 2004 p.148). That is, some universal hinges remain to be universal naturally without changing.

At this point, if we assume that hinge propositions constitute our forms of life and world views through association with the other convictions and propositions that we have, we can say that Wittgenstein tries to construct a balance between the changeable and non-changeable character of human forms of life. In my opinion, bearing with this distinction, he is defending a variety of human forms of life in one human form of life. It is like to defending ‘difference in sameness’. In order to understand this similarity, I believe that the notion of ‘natural history’ in Wittgenstein can help us recognize the common ground among forms of life. I think that ‘natural history’ clearly points to both our biological features and also our customs and practices rituals. It is difficult to distinguish the latter from the former. Biologically all humans in the universe carry some certain characteristics. For example, in order to go somewhere, human must move. There is no doubt that human forms of life have strict connections with sexual intercourse, death and birth. I cannot imagine that we cannot understand the form of life of a *so-called* alien society which is woven with some issues such as eating food, drinking, death, birth, sexual intercourse, etc. Differences between forms of life can practically modify the meaning of death, and even different religions in a specific place can have different understanding of death but they cannot change the reality of the issue of death itself. So, some biological issues of forms of life can be regarded as commonalities among them.

As we can easily claim, this kind of issues of human forms of life is valid for animal forms of life also. In one of the previous parts related to forms of life, it is expressed that human forms of life are not excluding some animalistic features. However, if we remember that human forms of life are also woven with some customs and conventions, then we also have to underline the cultural side of the human forms of life which goes beyond our animalistic character. This does not certainly mean that we have given up being an animal. In this sense, we can say that in Wittgenstein's usage of forms of life the human being does not only have a biological nature, but also some cultural nature. Wittgenstein (2001) states,

It is sometimes said that animals do not talk because they lack the mental capacity. And this means: "they do not think, and that is why they do not talk." But –they simply do not talk. Or to put it better: they do not use language–if we except the most primitive forms of language.–Commanding, questioning, storytelling, chatting, are as much a part of *our natural history* as walking, eating, drinking, playing. (§25, my emphasis)

Whereas eating, walking etc. are about our physiology, behaviours like commanding, questioning are about our culture. Expressing our feelings is learned through our integration to the community in which we are born. By being in the cultural environment, we acquire some practices. We have a form of life.

In that sense, our human form of life consists of not only a naturalistic character but also a conventional one. Since cultural environment has an importantly vital effect on the human form of life, human forms of life are various. For example, there can be different communities who manifest their feelings differently. Expression of feeling can change from society to another. But the reality that they feel cannot change<sup>20</sup>. People

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<sup>20</sup> There is no doubt that this is a huge topic to discuss. But here, I assume that feeling is strictly related with all living beings.

who claim that there can be some alien communities consider only variety of cultures, but they ignore the basic biological and conventional similarities among them. These basic similarities give a chance to us to close the gap between human forms of life since “The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.” (ibid., §206) Wittgenstein suggests that human beings share some behaviours but it seems that they do not pay attention to this reality when they think that there can be totally different forms of life. Wittgenstein (2001) argues,

What we are supplying are really remarks on *the natural history of human beings*; we are not contributing curiosities, however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes. (§415, my emphasis)

Because of having some common behaviour, it is not impossible to understand another form of life although at first it can appear very strange and alien for us. In this sense, there can be some bridgeable-alternative world views. So, alternative world views “...are not imaginatively inaccessible to us; on the contrary, it is one of Wittgenstein’s aims to encourage such imagination.” (Williams, 1981 p.155) We have said that on the basis of changeability of hinge propositions, world views are also changeable in the sense that there can be alternative language-games,<sup>21</sup> forms of life and world views some of which can be incompatible with ours at first glance. The case of wood-sellers in his work *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* can be an example. Wittgenstein imagines a community who has a different system of calculating amount of wood and a different payment system than us. He says,

Those people –we should say– sell timber by cubic measure –but are they right in doing so? Wouldn’t it be more correct to sell it by weight –or by the time that

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<sup>21</sup> “...a language-game does change with time.” (Wittgenstein, 1972 §256)

it took to fell the timber –or by the labour of felling measured by the age and strength of the woodsman?... (Wittgenstein, 1956 §148)

How would I shew them that –as I should say– you don't really buy more wood if you buy a pile covering a bigger area?... We should presumably say in this case: they do not mean the same by “a lot of wood” and “a little wood” as we do; they have a quite different system of payment from us. (ibid., §150)

Such a discourse of Wittgenstein seems to lead him into relativism since an alternative world view seems to be as legitimate as our own world view.

When explaining the epistemological framework of Wittgenstein, it has been stated he argues that at the bottom of our knowledge and justification and language-games, lie ways of acting or forms of life. On the basis of our theories, inquiries and justifications, there are forms of life and our human practices. As testing our knowledge and empirical propositions, “as if giving grounds did not come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting.” (Wittgenstein, 1972 §110) This expresses that there is no way to ask some questions beyond our acting. “Why do I not satisfy myself that I have two feet when I want to get up from a chair? There is no way. I simply don't. This is how I act.” (ibid., §148) and “Sure evidence is what we accept as sure, it is evidence that we go by in acting surely, acting without any doubt.” (ibid., §196), that is it. So when acting and human practices are regarded as foundation, then as it is argued about the conceivability of another world view because of the changeable character of the nature of a world view, some different forms of life which are grounds for some different justification systems can also be imaginable. “Men have judged that a king can make rain; *we* say this contradicts all experience. Today they judge that aeroplanes and the radio etc. are means for the closer contact of peoples and the spread of culture.” (ibid., §132) I think a few of the most

important passages in *OC* about encountering a different form of life and our attitude in this case are the passages in §608-612. Since I want to dwell upon them a little bit, I will quote them here. Wittgenstein (1972) states,

Is it wrong for me to be guided in my actions by the propositions of physics? Am I to say I have no good ground for doing so? Isn't precisely this what we call a 'good ground'? (§608)

Supposing we met people who did not regard that as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? –If we call this “wrong” aren't we using our language-game as a basis from which to *combat* theirs? (§609)

And are we right or wrong to combat it? Of course there are all sorts of slogans which will be used to support our proceeding. (§610)

Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and heretic. (§611)

I said I would 'combat' the other man, –but wouldn't I give him *reasons*? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*. (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives.) (§612)

These passages seem to defend relativism on the basis of the existence of a different form of life than ours. When we meet a tribe who uses an oracle to consult, ultimately we will call upon our language-game and form of life as the standard for our action and thought and this standard might not be applied to the form of life of the tribe. In such a situation, what is true or what is false is determined by the forms of life. Wittgenstein (2001) says that “...it is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.” (§241) In just above the five passages in *OC*, I think it is not a coincidence Wittgenstein writes the notions of 'combat', 'reasons' and 'persuasion' by italics. People who argue that Wittgenstein makes a very strict distinction between the forms of life of us and this tribe

are ignoring the importance of these concepts. Using the notion of ‘combat’ should make us pay attention to the fact that Wittgenstein does not simply accept the difference and become a quiet man on the basis of the existence of relativism here. That means he wants to show a reaction to a form of life of a tribe who uses oracle. If he was a relativist, wouldn’t he even try to be quiet and not to show any reaction? But he insists that using the predictions which are done through physics combats consulting an oracle for the predictions. Hence, it seems to me that Wittgenstein somehow defends being well-balanced between two things. One is to ‘combat’ by giving some ‘reasons’ in order to persuade the other side and the ‘persuasion’ is the last point of the situation. The other thing is to accept the difference which can give an opportunity for us to try to understand the form of life of the other side. In this well-balanced situation, Wittgenstein does not seem to be sympathetic to declaring the other side as ‘fool’ or ‘heretic’ or false since in this kind of declaration we will fail to understand different forms of life than ours. I believe that if Wittgenstein was a relativist he would not explicitly use ‘combat’ and he would not implicitly try to understand the other form of life.

In my opinion, people who are ignoring this point of view of Wittgenstein’s might not hesitate to combine these passages with his basic ideas about Frazer’s *Golden Bough*. In that sense, it seems that the other reason to be labelled as a relativist springs from his *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough*. But some other ideas of Wittgenstein in the same context can actually have frustrating effects since commonality and natural history of humankind set in again. In the *Golden Bough*, basically, Frazer thinks that there is a hierarchical relation among magic, religion and science. According to Frazer, science which is related with the general Western world-view is a more important system

of humankind to understand reality than the other knowledge systems. In this order between magic, religion and science, science is the last point and it represents the most developed level of humanity since magic and religion are doing false science. Science in Frazer represents theoretical and reflection based of life in the world and this is the one of the most important features of human beings. Because of this reason, all primitive and religious rituals which should be taken as woven with their way of life are interpreted as expressions of false science about the world. In her work, Sidiropoulou (1995) calls attention to some similarities between Descartes and Frazer. She says, “[...] in a way reminiscent of Descartes, Frazer dismisses tangible and unreflective manifestations of human life (e.g. religious rituals) as unimportant and so dispensable as regards an understanding of such a life.” (p. 108) So, intellectualism in Frazer,<sup>22</sup> as in Descartes, makes him blind to some ways of life of human beings since he mostly suggests making explanations in scientific terms when encountering ritualistic performances or some religious practices. These practices of primitive tribes (e. g. dancing for rain, consulting an oracle) are uprooted from their context in which they have some significance for people’s life. They are subjected to scientific criteria by Frazer. This move of Frazer makes so-called primitive practices seem very unscientific, and putting it another way, false. Although Frazer argues that primitive cultures that live with rituals are doing false science, he is very kind (!) that they have to be tolerated since sooner or later they will understand that they are wrong. Turanlı (2005) says, “Tolerance, here, is evaluated within the perspective of the Western and scientific world-views.” (p. 83) Holding this understanding of tolerance, the interesting thing is that Frazer is despising primitive

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<sup>22</sup> *Intellectualism* can basically mean that human knowledge can be gotten through reasoning. It can probably be regarded as equal to rationalism.

people under the notion of tolerance which is shaped by Western culture. But Wittgenstein criticizes Frazer about his claim that science is superior to magic and religion. According to Wittgenstein, Frazer uses one form of life as a standard over another. Frazer's point is not so proper since this kind of thought about science and tolerance consists of highly Western-based perspective. It applies a justificatory system of one culture over the other one. At this point, one might ask whether Wittgenstein is against science or not. Related to this question, the first reaction of the person who reads Wittgenstein's ideas here is that Wittgenstein is defending a relativist approach to such encounters of different world-views and the same person might argue that Wittgenstein accepts the truth of magic and religion as much as science as a base for his claim. But I do not agree with such a view. Wittgenstein probably admits that science presents reality in a reliable way and he is not against science. He says, "If we compare our system of knowledge with theirs then theirs is evidently the poorer one by far." (Wittgenstein, 1972 §286) In another passage with the relation of reasonableness and science, he says, "[...] we should not call anybody reasonable who believed something in despite of scientific evidence." (ibid., §324) As an example, it was still impossible to get to the moon at the time of Wittgenstein. People believed the impossibility of getting to the moon. But Wittgenstein imagined that there could be some people who believe the possibility of travelling to the moon and they can be regarded as that they do not know as much as the others know. Moreover, Wittgenstein explicitly accepts that they are wrong. In just the above passage, specifically, even though "theirs" is –technically– not about the people who go on living with magic, but about the people who think that it is possible to reach to the moon, it can be asserted that Wittgenstein can have the same idea

about the primitive community. He can probably claim that primitive cultures know less about the moon than we know. But he adds (as I quoted previously), “Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? – If we call this “wrong” aren’t we using our language-game as a base from which to combat theirs?” (Wittgenstein, 1972 §609)

Wittgenstein’s criticism of Frazer also rests upon his distinction between ‘explanation’ and ‘description’. According to Wittgenstein, explanation is the main of feature of doing science. It connects some phenomena through hypothesis, some causal relations and theoretical terms whereas description does not consist of causal law, or some hypothesis. There is no need to test description. Descriptions give attention “to analogies and differences, to internal relations between various expressions, or expressions and practices, aiming, not at new discoveries” (Menahem, 1998 p.109). As a person focusing on language-games which are woven with our forms of life and practices, Wittgenstein certainly emphasizes description much more. He says, “There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place.” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §109) What Wittgenstein observes about Frazer is that Frazer tries to understand so-called primitive people’s rituals under the perspective of scientific explanation. For example, some communities appeal to a rain-king for rain in raining seasons or some tribes celebrate rites of the coming day in the morning by dancing. The explanation of Frazer is that they are stupid to think that rain will fall if they appeal to rain-king since they make a big mistake in an attempt to change the process of a natural event. Or they are wrong to think that if they dance before the dawn, the sun will come again. Wittgenstein suggests that such a point of view of Frazer prevents him from identifying and understanding the significance of

their rituals internally within their way of life. Namely, on the base of description, this is a human way of life, this is what a human being does. People can use this as evidence to mention about the so-called relativism of Wittgenstein. However, I believe that commonality of human kind or ‘common behaviour of mankind’ can step in here in order to show the problematic character of their interpretation. At first, we can express Wittgenstein’s observation about the cause-effect relation of these primitive people who appeal to the rain-king for rain in the raining season and dance for the coming day. He clarifies that these people know that rain-king cannot make rain. If the rain-king did, people could appeal to him in dry seasons also. Moreover, people know that their rites of the coming day will not affect the nature and movement of sun. If these rites did, people would also dance at night. Surely these cases are just examples; there can be many counter examples to prove that the way they see the cause-effect relation is different than us. However, what Wittgenstein cares for is that at least there is some commonality to be taken into consideration. So, he underlines some similarities between us and so-called primitive communities. He says,

Burning an effigy. Kissing the picture of one’s beloved. That is *obviously not* based on the belief that it will have some specific effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather: it *aims* at nothing at all; we just behave this way and then we feel satisfied. (Wittgenstein, 1993 p.123)

Nowadays when people make demonstrations in the streets, they sometimes burn a flag of a country or a puppet of a politician or they can hang posters of some movie stars onto the wall and kiss it. We can often see these kinds of behaviours. It seems that these kinds of behaviours are ritualistic. Wittgenstein emphasizes that throughout the world people engage in some ritualistic practices in different ways. Hence, “...it is nonsense

for one to go on to say that the characteristic feature of *these* actions is the fact that they arise from faulty views about the physics of things.” (ibid., p.129) But this is certainly what Frazer does. Or for some events such as birth, death etc. we are doing some ritualistic actions as primitive communities do. In these events, we are getting a chance to express our happiness or our sorrow. Celebration of the day of the birth of a person is similar to dancing for coming rain. So, through the natural horizon of humankind, it can be asserted that we and some primitive communities are very connected although *apparently* we are alien to each other. When we say ‘natural horizon of humankind’, through referring to §25 in *PI*,<sup>23</sup> we have to keep in mind that not only biological character is highlighted but also cultural character is and this natural history includes our practices, behaviours and acts. I think it is obvious that the usage of natural history can also refer to some so-called primitive behaviour that we have. It does not mean that natural history does not consist of beliefs or some thoughts, but the important thing to understand is that ritualistic practices or some primitive actions do not rest on beliefs and thoughts. Hence, the human being is regarded “as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instincts but not ratiocination” (Wittgenstein, 1972 §475). In the first place, from the perspective of Western thought, “primitiveness” has some bad connotations because it seems to be taken as the opposite of progress. I think Frazer’s usage of “primitive” when looking at tribal communities is adopting this kind of bad connotations and it formulates his point of view about them. Since they are primitive, they are doing false science. Putting it another way, the Western science-and-theory-based form of life is not primitive and it is doing true science. It seems to me that such a

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<sup>23</sup> “... Commanding, questioning, storytelling, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing. (Wittgenstein, 2001 §25)

move ignores the “primitive” in human beings. This move also excludes human practices from humanity itself. On the other hand, for Wittgenstein, human practices are permeated by the “primitive” as part of the natural history of mankind. So, then what is the relation between primitiveness and human forms of life in the framework of Wittgenstein?

At the time of discussing certainty, it has been stated that certainty and knowledge belong to different categories and so certainty and justification are independent from each other in Wittgenstein. He says, “[...] 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 I do’.” (Wittgenstein, 2001 §217) So, we are born in the culture. Our acts are becoming part of us more and more when we grow up in the community. After defining certainty as ‘it is what we do’, then Wittgenstein considers certainty as beyond grounded or ungrounded, as “something animal” (ibid., §359). The end of justification –which can be called ‘certainty’– is an “ungrounded way of acting.” (Wittgenstein, 1972 §110) This approach of Wittgenstein can show us that he underlines the primitive or animalistic state and some instinctive character in humanity and this reality does not change from culture to culture. They are inevitably related with forms of life. He states,

...how misleading Frazer’s explanations are –I believe– by noting that one could very easily invent primitive practices oneself, and it would be pure luck if they were not actually found somewhere. That is, the principle according to which these practices are arranged is a much more general one than in Frazer’s explanation and it is present in our own minds, so that we ourselves could think up all the possibilities... (Wittgenstein, 1993 p. 127)

So, there is not any discontinuity between primitive forms of life and our forms of life. Previously, we have given some common actions of humankind. For example,

celebrating the rites of the coming day and kissing a poster of a movie star are similar ritualistic actions. In addition to this kind of ritualistic practices in our daily life, in *Zettel*, concerning the connection between sensations and our actions, Wittgenstein (1981) says “it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain” (§540). What ‘primitive’ points here to sort of the behaviour that “is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*” (ibid., §541). So, the notion of ‘primitive’ is not referring to a non-linguistic, but pre-linguistic reaction. He wants to emphasize it in italics since he intends to show the continuous relation between primitive reactions and our language-games. After a few passage in *Zettel*, as we might hope, he says, “Our language-game is an extension of primitive behaviour” (ibid., §545) Again the notion of ‘extension’ has a very peculiar meaning in this context for it is used to indicate that exclusion of primitiveness from our language-games is not proper. In another sense, ‘extension’ does not mean that our thoughts and theoretical life supersede primitiveness. I mean they exist together.

One might object that Wittgenstein (2001) argues for a replacement between verbal expression and behavioural expression by showing the passage ““So you are saying that the word ‘pain’ really means crying?”—On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it” (§244). However, I think Wittgenstein uses ‘replace’ here in a different and more special sense than we use in daily life. It adheres to our learning process. Then we use some verbal expressions instead of crying but it does not mean that such a change excludes one from the other. That is, we get the status to use verbal expressions not by breakdown from primitive reactions. It is about

our training. It is about teaching of people surrounding us. Success of teaching is also determined by the share of the behaviours among people.

There to I think the other possible objection might be whether Wittgenstein creates a theory about the development of language. As I said before, Wittgenstein does not feel attracted to theorizing. So, aiming to create a general theory about language does not fit his general framework in addition to the fact that he “*offers no proof for it*” (Dromm, 2003 p.679). What he aims at is to point to the relation between our behaviour and our primitive reactions with our language. We must not forget the importance of the notion not only of language, but of language-games in Wittgenstein. In the same passage, §244 in *PI*, Wittgenstein (2001) specifies, “... words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new-pain behaviour.” (§244) The last word in the quotation, ‘new-pain behaviour’ which is “the language-game of pain behaviour” (Dromm, 2003 p.676) should be noticed. In my view, Wittgenstein wants to underline that using verbal exclamations and sentences does not mean breaking off the connection with behaviour for, as I said before, they co-exist. Just giving a quick example, in our daily language-games, it is not like that first we get the meaning and then use it, but the meaning of the word and the usage of it are woven with each other. Uttering the word ‘Bye!’ when we leave the house of one of our friends, in Wittgenstein, the meaning of this concept is determined through being part of the behaviour that we are in. Normally, it would be nonsense to use ‘Bye!’ at the time of meeting with our friend since our behaviour does not indicate that we are leaving. Our behaviour shows that we have just

come there and we will be with her / him together for a period of time and this behaviour does not go along with our verbal expression. All in all, there is primitive reaction and behaviour at the foundation of our language-games. It is strictly related with our forms of life. That is, “The origin and primitive form of the language-game is a reaction; only from this can the more complicated forms grow” (Wittgenstein, 1984 p.31). Somewhat similar to this, Wolgast (1987) says, “Many of our concepts and language games have their roots and their comprehensibility in the more primitive level of human life [...]” (p. 155) Concerning the points above, two important and interrelated things can be exposed. At first, it is important to recognize that Wittgenstein is directing his criticism towards a theory based way of looking at the world. Moreover, we have also examined that Wittgenstein –I have quoted especially from *Zettel*– underlines the importance of “primitive reactions”. In the second chapter, it has been asserted that there is a debate whether forms of life should be taken as a cultural or biological entity. I believe that the cultural or –let me say– linguistic aspect of forms of life can be regarded as an extension of our biological entity, if we really grasp Wittgenstein’s emphasis on primitive reactions. Hence, the cultural aspect of forms of life does not exclude some primitive and biological reactions. There is not any sharp distinction between them so that people do not need to think of the cultural and biological aspects of forms of life as contrasting perspectives. What is animal in us is also a constitutive part of our forms of life.

Wittgenstein (1980) says,

Believing that someone else is in pain, doubting whether he is, are so many natural kinds of behaviour towards other human beings; and our language is but an auxiliary to and extension of this behaviour. I mean: our language is an extension of the more primitive behaviour. (For our *language-game* is a piece of behaviour.) (§151)

That is, our language and concept-formation springs from primitive, pre-linguistic behaviours. Wittgenstein's dislike of theory is very much related with his effort to undermine what he sees as a metaphysical picture of language. Secondly, we can say that Wittgenstein criticizes Frazer because of his methodology of investigating other forms of life. When Frazer believes that science can easily be justified over magic and religion, this implies that magic and religion which are surrounded by some human practices and a way of life become unjustified and false. Putting it another way, Frazerian intellectualism isolates human reasoning and thinking from human practices. We know that there are various human practices different than science and we should regard this multiplicity of practices as the richness of humanity. One might say that Frazer accepts this multiplicity. However, within the overall philosophy of Frazer, I can claim that his project is to transform the difference between forms of life into an instrument for domination and presenting his own form of life as the prevailing one. He does not want to subvert the kingdom of theory. I believe that Wittgenstein's critique against Frazerian thought is not because Wittgenstein is defending relativism and he is against science, but because of Frazer's approach towards differences among forms of life. His approach does not intend to understand the multiplicity or richness of forms of life that meet in the common natural history of humankind. Therefore, it is not proper way to reject the other world view. This is what Wittgenstein is against and this seems to be what Frazer simply and wrongly does. He is not only against Frazer, but also the Frazerian kind of thought. What Wittgenstein implicitly argues is that to take the world-view of Western society as a standard through science—since science is a part of the world-view of it—has a destructive effect on a different form of life than the Western one

or at least has a preventive impact to understand the different world-view. This is the reason why the Frazerian kind of thought is not proper for Wittgenstein. In other words, any kind of prevailing impact of a form of life on another one will probably be criticized by Wittgenstein. So, thanks to investigating Wittgenstein's point of view about what Frazer does and also some quotations from *Zettel* independent from material on Frazer, we have again found some echoes of the commonalities in humankind or natural history of mankind. Ritualistic forms of life and our primitive features and reactions are implying the existence of some commonalities here. I believe that this can be one of the departure points to claim that there cannot be totally alien human forms of life.

## CHAPTER 5

### FORMS OF LIFE: VARIETY AND COMMONALITY

It has been stated that Wittgenstein regards forms of life as the most fundamental ground to appeal for justifying knowledge claims. It is somehow the end of justification.

Because of this character, at the time of encountering forms of life, people who take later Wittgenstein –and so forms of life– as the endorsement of relativism or of

incommensurability, claim that forms of life cannot be criticized externally. There is no possibility to call them wrong. I think there are a few reasons for these claims. People

can have a tendency to argue that criticism among forms of life is impossible by saying

that there is not any God’s-eye point of view for making comparisons between forms of life and a human being is always embedded in forms of life. For example, if there are

some tribal communities from Africa and Indian society with their different forms of life, none of them can suggest that one’s form of life is better than the other one’s. Or,

science and religion cannot criticize each other’s form of life since they are autonomous.

Hinman (1983) thinks that Winch, by taking the support of Wittgenstein for himself, can

be mentioned here as a holder of the latter example. Winch believes that religion and

science have some peculiar way of living in themselves so that the standards of the one

cannot be applied to the other. He says, “[...] science is one such mode and religion is another; and each has criteria of intelligibility peculiar to itself.” (Winch, 1958 p.100)

However, Sharrock and Anderson (1985) criticize Hinman arguing that Winch’s position

cannot be generalized to a discussion of forms of life, but it is just the “problem of

understanding between the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘scientific’ one” (p. 395). It seems that the

discussion about forms of life is so broad to talk about the discussion about science and religion. Hence, they make a distinction between the discussion of forms of life and the discussion about science, religion etc. I do not think that Sharrock and Anderson have a reliable argument here. Even if the discussion of forms of life is so broad, people's spiritualistic and scientific points of view cannot be regarded as so distinct from their forms of life. When one has really scientific approach to life, her / his beliefs and practices are determined by this approach which can be easily committed to forms of life.

Putting this aside, at first glance, I can say that there is not error in the idea that Wittgenstein's notions of forms of life and language-games are depicting a pluralistic picture although some people ask the question whether there is one form of life or many forms of life. In my opinion, forms of life are much related to each other so that when we investigate a form of life we not only have an opportunity to understand its richness and its different features among the others but also its bridgeable character with the other one. Thanks to this bridgeable character, we can also snap at a chance to call it as a form of life. Concerning the richness of forms of life, we can say that there are many forms of life. For example, the scientific form of life is different from the religious form of life, and the form of life of an African tribe has some different features than the form of life of Indian society. On the other hand, all of these various forms of life have a common base if we continue to call them forms of life. As a reminder, the framework which is shaped by 'natural history', 'common behaviour of mankind' and 'primitive acts' can give some hints to us to think that there are some common behaviors and common human forms of life behind the differences between these forms of life. According to my

reading of Wittgenstein, human thinking and human practicalities have unity under the general commonalities. All forms of life are developed historically and differently, but as a unity. So, this unity and generality of human life can make any form of life intelligible and criticizable for us. Assuming sociality and biology of human being, basic activities such as questioning, obeying, chatting, eating, drinking are parts of natural history as some culturally and biologically necessary features. Keeping these in mind, I can say that differences of forms of life are not incommensurable. Hence, Wittgenstein with his ideas about forms of life is not relativist in this sense. Although there are different forms of life in which people are behaving, acting, theorizing, conceptualizing and viewing the world very differently from each other, these differences cannot be enough to think that there are indeed radical breakdowns between forms of life. That is, these apparent differences shouldn't force us to draw a clear-cut line between them.

In addition to this, for the sake of providing clarification of the issue,<sup>24</sup> when I think about forms of life, I make a distinction within them: micro and macro aspects of forms of life. I use the concept “distinction” here, but actually there is not any distinction between them. In the micro aspect of form of life, we have some beliefs, actions, knowledge, behavior etc. and all of them are creating a holistic structure through relations to each other. For example, when we say “I believe in the existence of God”, even if it seems to be a particular kind of belief we cannot isolate it from the other beliefs and actions that we have. Otherwise, we can have a doubt to call it really a belief. On the other hand, in the macro aspect of form of life, there is a holistic structure of

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<sup>24</sup> However, in philosophy, I believe that always there is a risk of the possibility of stirring up disorder when aiming to make a clarification. Sometimes we want to make a clarification, but actually things get more complicated than they are before. Maybe this is about the nature of philosophy or clarification. Here, I prefer to take the risk.

people who have relations with each other in the community. If we rely on this, as an example, I can claim that the belief of a creationist about the age of the world bears a sense within the other beliefs and actions in his micro aspect of form of life. But, at the same time, he has such belief and action system and life because of the fact that he belongs to a community in which people come together, in which people share their practices with the others in usage. So, one kind of relation is among our beliefs and actions (micro forms of life) and the other kind of relation is among people (macro forms of life).

I want to add that also micro and macro aspects of forms of life are two sides of the coin. They are interrelated to each other. About these tight relations, I want to use the notion of ‘mirror’. In our daily life, we ordinarily look at ourselves in the mirror in an effort to learn how we look from outside and to make a change if it is needed. It seems to me that analogically this is one of the basics of training that we get from childhood and this kind of a thought is not so far away from Wittgenstein. For example, our parents are becoming mirrors for us so that we adapt our actions. Moreover, my suggestion is that we can have a look at our relations on this basis. What I want to say is that, metaphorically, being together in the world with the others is creating a mirror effect on us.<sup>25</sup> In this mirroring, everyone is a mirror for the other one to look at himself / herself. Hence, for example a creationist or an evolutionist is a part of the macro form of life (community) and they are reflecting the effect of this macro to their micro form of life. In such a picture, a creationist can use an evolutionist as a mirror to get a chance to look at himself and make some changes in his beliefs if it is needed. This is also valid for an

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<sup>25</sup> This can be taken as a very Heideggerian kind of human existence.

evolutionist. Nobody is born as a creationist or an evolutionist. A similar situation can be regarded about the confrontation of different cultures. For example, in the confrontation of form of life of an African tribe and of Western society, both sides can notice the possibility of another form of life to understand their own forms of life better and/or make modifications on some points.

I believe that the mirror metaphor refers to the dynamic and fluid structure of forms of life. However, one might ask what if people become much more dogmatic about their forms of life when they meet a different one. I do not deny the possibility of this case and I have to add that meeting is necessary, but not sufficient. Because of this reason, I especially use “to get a chance”. Through confrontation,<sup>26</sup> people get a chance to recognize their own and also other forms of life. But making some changes is about being open to making changes. For example, getting training from parents when we are babies, we do not have any chance to choose to be trained or not, to be open or not since we are necessarily open.

Furthermore, in the nature of mirroring and affecting, difference is a need. It seems that this difference is a point for endorsing incommensurability, but I think that this difference endorses commensurability on the basis of commonality which calls for a stop to radical relativism. Difference is a pre-condition for having a relation. Relation is a communication in human society. This relation also necessitates criticism in implicit or explicit way. This is one of the basics. For example, a relation between a chair and a

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<sup>26</sup> Although *confrontation* can have some negative connotations, I am ignoring them here. Here I am using it basically in the meaning of *meeting*.

table requires difference between these two items.<sup>27</sup> Otherwise talking about their relation would be meaningless. But this difference doesn't prevent a table from being used as a chair or a chair from being used as a table. I mean that they can change their roles in usage. Analogically, for example, the form of life of an evolutionist and the form of life of a creationist cannot be bedded into their own forms of life and isolated from the others. They have relations with each other although there are some differences. At least we have to say that they *can* communicate with each other, since there can be some cases that they are not willing to have a communication with each other.

This can be a clue for us to think that there is a relational character of forms of life and world-picture. As Davidson denies un-translatability of language because translatability is an intrinsic character of language, I deny radical breakdown among forms of life. That's because relational character of form of life makes it possible to have also a commensurable character which opens the door for the possibility of criticism. Relativist approaches to forms of life can bring it about that forms of life are immune to criticism from outside. However, I cannot imagine any kind of human form of life that cannot be criticized on and be understood by me and intelligible to me because of their common features. In this sense, there can be an alternative form of life, but this doesn't mean that it is totally distinct from ours, totally un-criticizable or totally un-understandable. In *Zettel*, Wittgenstein (1981) says, "[...] What interests us would not interest them. Here different concepts would no longer be unimaginable. In fact, this is the only way in which essentially different concepts are imaginable." (§388) It seems to me that Wittgenstein wants to underline the possibility of a variety of forms of life in

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<sup>27</sup> Surely the relation between a chair and a table is maybe not a kind of communication that I am talking about, but we have to heed the form of the argument.

addition to the idea that the other forms of life can be imaginable and accessible to us. So, maybe I can say that any human form of life is a life in this universe in which some commonality can be found with the alternative ones. Such a commonality can be evidence that there can be a transition from one form of life to the other form of life in both theoretical and a practical sense. I use 'transition' –theoretically– in the sense of the possibility of imagining an alternative form of life which will be even *minimally* continuous with our form of life –practically– in the sense of communication among existent ones and of changing practices of our form of life.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The work at hand has in general dealt with the notion of forms of life in later Wittgenstein and some of its implications. Although Wittgenstein's conception of 'language-games' and especially 'form of life' in his later period seems to endorse relativism for many commentators and maybe some anthropologists, I have tried to defend a different position by shedding light on some other important passages in his work. As we know, relativism is a very broad notion that we can trace back to ancient Greek thinking and there are a lot of kinds of it but my aim was not to do a research about it. Also I have to add that this work cannot probably give a clear meaning and history of relativism. However, in order to jump into the issue in my mind, it was a need to make an assumption about a kind of *common-sense* relativism in the sense that any kind of relativist approach can seamlessly accept.

In the first place, the notion of forms of life in relation with language-games has been analyzed from Wittgenstein's perspective and from a general epistemological approach for the purpose of having an idea about what it is. This was also a move to show the importance of 'forms of life' for Wittgenstein. Language is not a structure having just some words and sentences. It does not simply offer a tool to use in order to define and find some correlation between our words and objects outside of us. It goes hand in hand with our feelings, behaviours and complex relations that we gain in society. It does not mean that first comes complex society and then language, and it is not to say that first comes language and then complexity, but they survive together. So, language

should be seen together with all the complex practices that we have in daily life. Language, belief and practices of human beings are interwoven with each other on the basis of forms of life. In this sense, forms of life are at the bottom of our relation with people and the world. They are like windows through which the world including people manifests itself to us or we open ourselves to the world including others. The close relation between language-games and forms of life implies that differentiation among language-games reflect itself also in forms of life. I have indicated that there is a tendency of some people to claim that this kind of picture defended by Wittgenstein can be a reason to charge him with relativism. At first sight, these people can be right and they can even show some textual evidence for such a commitment. I have occasionally referred to these kinds of passages.

My main concerns in this thesis have been to make a clarification and point to the importance of forms of life, and relating to this, to defend a non-relativist reading of forms of life in Wittgenstein again by some textual evidence. An indirect method of this defence can be possible by underlining that Wittgenstein does not want to create a theory about language and forms of life holding the assumption that relativism is a theory. But I wanted to go beyond this and I have made some readings through especially *PI*, *OC* and *Z*.

In my opinion, I have found a few points for having a chance of my defence. In a foundationalist –not in the traditional sense– context, Wittgenstein’s emphasis on hinge propositions is that there are always some beliefs which our other beliefs are turning around. These propositions can lose their hard characters and other fluid ones can become hard beliefs. However, there are two important things here that we should pay

attention to. One is that despite their changeable character, still there is the reality of the existence of 'hinge proposition' and secondly there are some universal hinge propositions that cannot change, such as the existence of the world. Putting aside some very specific situations, so long as we talk about human forms of life together with people within the world, at least the existence of the world implicitly goes on.

In addition to this, I have noted some commonality that binds any human forms of life to other ones. This commonality can be approached in two aspects. Wittgenstein's usage of natural history and common behaviour of mankind is about these two aspects. One is about the universal biological features and the other is about our common conventional practices. I do not think that they are so distinct from each other. As a being attached to nature, human beings in the universe have some common biological features to be mentioned. Some fundamental issues like death, birth and sexual intercourse which are much related with our biological and physical and organic structure do not change from form of life to form of life. When we meet tribal people, their problems about death or looking for food cannot baffle us since we know the importance of these kinds of things for our own forms of life. Assuming that some of their behaviours are determined by these basic issues, we can claim that our behaviours are not so different in kind. For example, in order not to die, people in a different community learn to protect themselves and how to fight with a lion in the forest. Similarly, for the same purpose, we learn to use some weapons such as knife or gun in our form of life.

Concerning our primitive and conventional commonalities, in order to support my view, I have also used his criticism of Frazer, a social anthropologist, as one of my

departure points. Wittgenstein's avoidance of a theory-based reading of human forms of life at the time of making criticism of Frazer states expressly that there are some common practices in forms of life even between very different cultures. Focusing on animalistic reactions and primitive practices establishes that human forms of life are contingently and *apparently* distinct from each other but they are parts of a unity with their differences. It is like the existence of a kernel of variety within the shell of commonality. One might ask whether the foundationalism of Wittgenstein or commonality about human forms of life makes him an essentialist or not in the sense that human nature is unchangeable. I think the response for such a question depends on how we define essence. From a Platonic point of view, it is regarded as an Idea or Form. Wittgenstein, who wants to turn his face from metaphysical discussion to ordinary usage of language, is not defending a Platonic kind of essentialism. However, his thoughts on the nature of human forms of life –which do not imply exclusion from being animalistic and primitiveness, but inclusion and extension of them– which is at the bottom and woven with our beliefs, practices, acts and on their relations to each other in daily life can be essentialist in the sense that there is something at the end point which can change but which cannot change its being of 'form-ness of life' and the foundationally human's being of 'being-ness in the world within form of life'.

Through the thesis, explicitly or implicitly, I have assumed that a relativist reading of later Wittgenstein intimates a relativist reading of forms of life since we cannot isolate these two issues from each other. However, this can bring about very improper results. A breakdown or incommensurability between forms of life seems to me against the nature of human forms of life. It implies that any human way of life can

be justified within itself so that no one can make any criticism externally of it. The reason for this kind of argument is that any one outside of the form of life does not indeed understand what is going on inside there. So, one does not have any right to criticize so that she/he should be quiet. This kind of thought implies that all forms of life have very static natures in themselves and they are imprisoned into their own justificatory system. Being static and being imprisoned into themselves seem to be two different things; however I believe that there is a close relation between them here. Both of them imply that there is a certain boundary of forms of life which prevents them from changing. However, forms of life are not static. They are not immune to change. When two different cultures or when a very scientific and a religious form of life confront each other, because of their having commonality, after a while, they can understand each other. I am not saying that they can easily communicate without any delay. More differentiation among forms of life makes the communication and conceivability more difficult but it cannot be a reason to claim that they are totally distinct from each other. It seems that neither accepting one kind of way of life as a standard and prevailing one nor accepting any kind of life as immune to change and non-criticizable is appropriate with forms of life. Actually I believe that former and latter approaches to forms of life are two sides of the same kind of idea although they seem to defend very different positions. In my view whereas the former approach includes the claim that there is one God, the latter one includes that there are many Gods. I can suggest that Wittgensteinian forms of life are standing between them. His notion of forms of life keynotes the differentiation and richness of forms of life without claiming that they are immune to change. At the same time, this variety among forms of life cannot imply total distinction and

incommensurability, not because of having a metaphysical standard, but because of having some common ground to bind them as a unity that opens the possibility of dialogue, criticizing, agreement, sharing, accessibility and understanding. If I am not wrong, these are some of the most important possibilities of our life forms.

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