

# Wittgenstein on Aesthetics: The Silent Language of Beauty

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## Abstract

This paper examines Ludwig Wittgenstein's contributions to the philosophy of aesthetics, charting the development of his ideas from his early work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (TLP)*, to his later text, *Philosophical Investigations (PI)*. Wittgenstein's aesthetic philosophy is marked by a shift from a more formal, structured perspective in *TLP* to a pragmatic, context-dependent understanding in *PI*. In *TLP*, Wittgenstein's early philosophy of language suggests that aesthetic experiences and judgments fall within the realm of the ineffable, belonging to what cannot be said but only shown. Aesthetic values, like ethical and metaphysical truths, are outside the limits of language that can describe facts, leading to the idea that aesthetics, though deeply meaningful, transcends propositional language. In his later work, Wittgenstein moves away from the notion of a rigid logical structure and adopts the idea of "language games," highlighting the importance of context, usage, and the varied nature of language in influencing aesthetic understanding. Aesthetic judgments are seen as interwoven with particular forms of life, and Wittgenstein introduces the notion of "family resemblance" to account for the fluid, non-essentialist way we speak about beauty, art, and taste. Here, the focus shifts from trying to define aesthetics in abstract terms to analyzing how we talk about and engage with aesthetic experiences in everyday life.

This inquiry examines both periods of Wittgenstein's thought, comparing his early mystical conception of aesthetics with his later pragmatic approach. The paper contends that Wittgenstein's later work provides a more adaptable and socially rooted approach to interpreting aesthetic discourse. In this paper includes an introduction part, then section one to section four we've discussed various aspects of Aesthetic view of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

**Keywords:** *Wittgenstein, Aesthetic, Language, Judgement, Philosophy*

## Introduction:

Normally the term "aesthetic" pertains to the appreciation of beauty, art, and sensory experiences. It encompasses a wide range of concepts and ideas related to how we perceive, evaluate, and respond to visual, auditory, and other sensory stimuli. Here are some key elements that define the concept of "aesthetic": Beauty, Art and Artistic Expression, Sensory Experience, Subjectivity, Judgment, Philosophical Inquiry. Aesthetic" refers to the principles and experiences related to

beauty and art, encompassing both subjective perceptions and broader philosophical inquiries into the nature of artistic expression and sensory experience.

*In linguistic philosophy*, "aesthetic" refers to the exploration of how language captures beauty, artistic expression, and sensory experiences. Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of aesthetic expressions derives from their use in specific language games rather than from fixed rules. Wittgenstein highlights that aesthetic judgments are shaped by cultural practices and the shared understandings of communities. Aesthetic appreciation involves an implicit agreement on what constitutes beauty or artistic merit. "We can think of a language as a city: a city with many houses, of which some are grand, some mean, and some are adorned with a variety of decorations."<sup>1</sup> The aesthetic experience often evokes emotional responses, and language can be used to express these nuanced feelings. The richness of aesthetic language captures the depth and the intricacy of human experience. "A picture can represent any reality whose form it has."<sup>2</sup> Aesthetic language can be indeterminate, as people may interpret the same artistic work differently depending on their backgrounds and personal experiences. "One can imagine that there is a kind of general agreement of taste."<sup>3</sup>

Hence, it seems that in linguistic philosophy, "aesthetic" pertains to the exploration of how language conveys beauty and artistic expression, emphasizing the contextual nature of meaning and the role of cultural practices in shaping aesthetic judgments.

### **Section One**

Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the most influential philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, held a distinctive perspective on the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, particularly in his early work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). Wittgenstein suggested that ethics and aesthetics are not merely related but are, in fact, deeply intertwined. He treated both as transcendental disciplines that reflect the limits of language and human expression. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* posits that

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<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans., p. 20). Oxford: Blackwell., p. 30

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.14

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 28

language and reality share a structural correspondence, enabling language to depict facts about the world. However, ethics and aesthetics, he argued, lie outside this framework of propositional language. Wittgenstein famously wrote: “Ethics and aesthetics are one”<sup>4</sup>, this assertion reflects his belief that both domains address values that transcend factual descriptions, pointing instead to how life and the world appear meaningful to individuals. In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein emphasized that ethics and aesthetics share a commonality in their engagement with the world’s totality, rather than specific parts of it. Ethics concerns the question of how one ought to live, while aesthetics deals with how one perceives and appreciates the world. In this sense, both are existential disciplines, oriented toward understanding the subjective meaning of existence.

### ***How is aesthetics connected to ethics?***

While Wittgenstein does not explicitly label aesthetics as an aspect of ethics, his discussions suggest that both fields share a concern with guiding human life toward value and meaning. For Wittgenstein, ethics is frequently viewed as a way of life, with aesthetics playing a key role in shaping our awareness of beauty, harmony, and emotional depth. In this sense, aesthetics can be viewed as enhancing ethics, together offering a deeper insight into what it means to lead a meaningful life. In *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Wittgenstein’s reflections reveal a deep interrelation between aesthetics and ethics. His assertion that “Aesthetics and Ethics are one and the same” underscores their shared concern with values, their resistance to empirical analysis, and their reliance on context, practice, and forms of life. While he does not explicitly make aesthetics a subset of ethics, the parallels he draws between the two suggest a unity in their roles as essential components of human experience and understanding.

The relationship between ethics and aesthetics is also evident in Wittgenstein’s concept of the mystical. He described the mystical as what cannot be said but only shown<sup>5</sup>. For him, ethical and aesthetic experiences belong to this domain of the mystical because they reveal a dimension of life that language cannot

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<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., p. 6.421

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.522

fully capture. Another essential aspect of their relationship lies in Wittgenstein's emphasis on the unity of action and perception. In his later work, he would suggest that living ethically or aesthetically is less about adhering to rules and more about adopting a particular attitude or approach toward the world. This attitude aligns ethical living with aesthetic sensibility, as both require a form of attentiveness to the world's complexity and beauty. Wittgenstein's view that "ethics and aesthetics are one" encapsulates a profound philosophical insight. For Wittgenstein, the unity of ethics and aesthetics lies in their shared transcendental nature and their capacity to reflect the way individuals engage with and interpret the world.

Wittgenstein's *Lectures on Aesthetics* suggest a profound and intricate relationship between aesthetics and ethics, presenting them as deeply interconnected aspects of human experience. While he does not explicitly categorize aesthetics as a subset of ethics, his remarks throughout the *Lectures* often align the two fields as domains that engage with values and go beyond the boundaries of factual or empirical explanation. Wittgenstein asserts, "Aesthetics and Ethics are one and the same"<sup>6</sup>. This statement implies a harmony between the two disciplines, as both deal with values rather than facts. Aesthetic judgments, like ethical ones, express an attitude toward life and meaning rather than describe objective truths. For example, calling a work of art "beautiful" or an act "good" reflects a judgment grounded in a form of life—a shared cultural and social context where such evaluations acquire meaning.

In both fields, Wittgenstein argues, the emphasis is not on finding rules or principles but on understanding the practices and sensibilities that shape judgments. He notes that "the words we use in aesthetics are not general terms but expressions of specific attitudes"<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, ethical terms such as "good" or "right" function within specific contexts, reflecting shared human experiences and attitudes rather than universal principles.

Wittgenstein frequently highlights the role of context and training in shaping both aesthetic and ethical understanding. He notes that appreciating art or

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<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1966). *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* (C. Barrett, Ed.). Oxford: Blackwell, p. 11

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.8

music requires exposure, guidance, and participation in a particular cultural tradition, much like learning ethical behavior requires immersion in a moral community. “You learn aesthetics through examples,”<sup>8</sup> he states, emphasizing that aesthetic sensibilities are cultivated through practice rather than theoretical instruction. Ethical sensibilities, too, are developed through engagement with examples and forms of life, where the meaning of actions and values becomes evident. Wittgenstein observes that, in both fields, understanding often involves demonstrating rather than explaining: “In aesthetics, showing someone a painting or a symphony often explains more than words”<sup>9</sup>. This aligns with ethical instruction, where guiding someone by example often proves more effective than providing abstract rules.

A critical aspect of Wittgenstein’s treatment of aesthetics and ethics is their ineffable quality. He argues that “what is essential about both aesthetics and ethics cannot be articulated in words”<sup>10</sup> (*Lectures on Aesthetics*, 1966, p. 4). Instead, both are experienced and shown in life. For instance, the beauty of a painting or the moral worth of an action cannot be entirely expressed through propositions; it must be experienced directly. This ineffability highlights the parallels between the two fields. Both aesthetics and ethics deal with aspects of life which cannot be simplified into factual descriptions or logical analysis. They illuminate ways of being and perceiving the world, enriching human life in ways that transcend linguistic articulation. In this sense, Wittgenstein’s claim that aesthetics and ethics are “one and the same” suggests not a hierarchy but a profound interconnectedness. Wittgenstein’s emphasis on forms of life further unites aesthetics and ethics. He sees both as emerging from shared human practices that give meaning to our experiences. Aesthetic judgments, like ethical ones, depend on a shared understanding of context, history, and tradition. He remarks, “Aesthetic appreciation is part of a form of life, tied to the way we live and what we value” (*Lectures on Aesthetics*, 1966, p. 10). This statement underscores the idea that

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.9

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.7

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.4

aesthetics and ethics are embedded in communal practices, where meaning arises not from individual subjectivity but from collective human activity.

The concept of the mystical plays a pivotal role in Wittgenstein's aesthetic theory, particularly evident in his "*Lectures on Aesthetics*"<sup>11</sup>. While the mystical is often associated with religious or spiritual experiences, Wittgenstein employs it to describe a unique aesthetic experience that transcends the domain of language and logical analysis. For Wittgenstein, the mystical in aesthetics is defined by a sense of awe, wonder, and transcendence that emerges from experiencing a piece of art. This encounter is ineffable, meaning it cannot be fully captured or expressed in words. It represents a condition of heightened awareness and sensitivity, where the boundaries amidst the individual and the artwork dissolve, and a deep sense of harmony arises<sup>12</sup>. This mystical dimension of aesthetic experience is closely linked to Wittgenstein's awareness of the boundaries of language. The mystical, as an ineffable experience, lies beyond the reach of language and can only be hinted at or suggested.

Wittgenstein's concept of the mystical also connects to his broader philosophical project of investigating the nature of meaning and understanding. He suggests that the mystical experience can provide a more profound comprehension of the world and our place within it. So, the mystical plays a significant role in Wittgenstein's aesthetic theory as it highlights the ineffable and transcendent nature of aesthetic experience. It underscores the limitations of language and the importance of non-linguistic modes of understanding. By exploring the mystical dimension of art, Wittgenstein offers a unique perspective on the nature of beauty, meaning, and human experience.

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<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein, 1966

<sup>12</sup> Full article: Wittgenstein, mysticism and the 'religious point of view': 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' - Taylor & Francis Online [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com)

## Section Two

### *What was Wittgenstein's purpose in discussing aesthetics in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus?*

Ludwig Wittgenstein's exploration of aesthetics in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP) emerges within the context of his wider philosophical investigation into language, meaning, and the boundaries of expression. Wittgenstein's central ideas in the *Tractatus* is that the world consists of facts, and language's role is to describe these facts. Significant propositions are those capable of representing facts through a logical framework. However, aesthetics, like ethics, involves values that do not describe facts but instead express subjective, transcendental aspects of human experience<sup>13</sup>. For Wittgenstein, the essence of aesthetic judgment lies not in factual description but in its capacity to "show" something about the world. He distinguishes between what can be *said*—propositions about the world—and what can only be *shown*, such as the ineffable qualities of beauty, meaning, and value.

Aesthetic experiences, as Wittgenstein argues, cannot be reduced to propositional language because they do not correspond to verifiable facts. Rather, they express an attitude toward the world, uncovering its transcendental aspects. For instance, the beauty of a painting or a piece of music is not a quality that can be objectively defined; it arises through the manner in which the work is experienced and valued. In this sense, aesthetics aligns with Wittgenstein's metaphysical perspective, which asserts that values are essential yet cannot be expressed within the confines of logical language.

The connection between aesthetics and ethics in the *Tractatus* is particularly significant. Both, according to Wittgenstein, pertain to what is "higher" or "beyond the world" and are thus unsayable<sup>14</sup>. Aesthetic judgments, like ethical values, manifest an individual's perspective on life and the world rather than articulate a logical proposition. This perspective highlights the transcendental dimension of

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<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (C. K. Ogden, Trans.). London: Kegan Paul., Proposition 6.41

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, Proposition 6.421

human existence that lies outside the boundaries of linguistic expression. Wittgenstein's treatment of aesthetics is also influenced by his broader philosophical concerns with the limits of language and what lies beyond those limits. His assertion, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"<sup>15</sup>, captures his perspective that certain dimensions of life, resist verbal articulation. By emphasizing the unspeakable nature of aesthetics, Wittgenstein underscores its importance as a domain that illuminates the limits of human understanding and expression.

Wittgenstein discusses aesthetics in the *Tractatus* to illustrate how values, including beauty, transcend the logical structure of language. His inquiry places aesthetics within the wider framework of his philosophical approach, which seeks to delineate the limits of meaningful discourse. Aesthetic experiences reveal profound truths about the world and our relationship to it, even though these truths cannot be articulated in words. Thus, aesthetics, like ethics, serves as a window into the ineffable aspects of human life, reinforcing the boundaries between what can be said and what must remain shown.

### ***What was Wittgenstein's purpose in discussing aesthetics in the Philosophical Investigations?***

Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of aesthetics in *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) reflects a shift from the rigid logical structure of his earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, to a more nuanced exploration of language as a form of life. In the *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), Wittgenstein explores aesthetics not as a metaphysical or transcendental realm, but as an essential aspect of everyday language and human practices. This discussion forms part of his broader aim to clarify how meaning emerges in our everyday interactions and contexts. In the PI, Wittgenstein dismisses the notion that aesthetic judgments can be simplified into objective properties or abstract principles. Instead, he emphasizes the role of language games in shaping our experience and discourse surrounding aesthetics. Aesthetic appreciation, according to Wittgenstein, is rooted in specific cultural and cultural practices that give rise to shared criteria for judgment. For

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, Proposition 7

example, calling a painting "beautiful" is not simply a reflection of subjective taste but a statement embedded in a context of artistic traditions, techniques, and shared understandings<sup>16</sup>.

Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance" also applies to aesthetics. He argues that aesthetic terms like "beauty," "grace," or "harmony" does not have a single essence but are connected through overlapping similarities. These terms derive their meaning through their use in specific contexts, rather than through reference to a fixed definition<sup>17</sup>. For instance, the beauty of a classical symphony may be understood differently from the beauty of a landscape, yet both share aspects that connect them as aesthetic experiences. A crucial aspect of Wittgenstein's approach is his focus on the pedagogy of aesthetics. He explores how we learn to see and describe aesthetic qualities through examples and training, much like learning a language. For instance, a teacher might guide a student to notice the balance in a painting or the rhythm in a poem, not by appealing to objective rules but by drawing their attention to specific features and fostering an attunement to the work. This process highlights the interplay between subjective experience and communal criteria in aesthetic judgment.

Wittgenstein's discussion in the *PI* also critiques the tendency to over-intellectualize aesthetics by searching for underlying theories or explanations. He emphasizes that aesthetic experiences are often immediate and embodied, not reducible to propositional knowledge. For example, the enjoyment of music or art is not something that can always be analyzed or explained but is part of how we live and engage with the world. Hence, Wittgenstein's treatment of aesthetics in the *Investigations* represents a notable shift from his earlier his earlier work. By embedding aesthetics within the framework of ordinary language and shared practices, he illustrates that aesthetic judgments are not theoretical or detached, metaphysical but are deeply rooted in human forms of life. This perspective underscores the richness and diversity of aesthetic experiences while rejecting the need for universal theories or definitions.

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<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.) Oxford: Blackwell. §19

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, §67

### Section Three

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, aesthetics involves understanding the principles and criteria that govern judgments of beauty, taste, and artistic expression. In his lectures on aesthetics, Wittgenstein treated the concept not as a rigid or systematic theory, but as a matter of lived practices, cultural contexts, and forms of life. He stressed that aesthetic judgments cannot be reduced to simple factual statements, but are closely connected to how people interact with the world and express values. For Wittgenstein, aesthetic experiences are deeply embedded within their specific contexts. He suggested that aesthetic appreciation is intertwined with our language games and forms of life. For instance, he stated that understanding a work of music or a work of art requires familiarity with the cultural or historical framework in which it was created. As he remarked:

"Aesthetics is descriptive; it tries to grasp the essence of the rules for using words like 'beautiful,' 'good,' and so on"<sup>18</sup>

Rather than defining beauty or aesthetic value universally, Wittgenstein's philosophy emphasized the diversity of aesthetic practices. He saw aesthetics as a study of how humans express their feelings, tastes, and judgments in specific circumstances, stressing the role of context and communal agreement. Furthermore, Wittgenstein considered aesthetics deeply connected to our lives and experiences. He believed that aesthetic judgments are less about stating facts and more about expressing attitudes or forms of life. For him, aesthetic understanding involves grasping the nuanced interplay of factors—cultural, emotional, and perceptual—that influence human appreciation. Wittgenstein's approach to aesthetics is a practical and a detailed exploration of how people experience and articulate beauty and value within their cultural and social contexts. Wittgenstein's practical approach to aesthetics stems from his philosophy of language. He believed meaning arises from use within a "language-game," a social activity embedded in a cultural context. Applying this to aesthetics, he saw our experience and articulation of beauty and value as similarly shaped by shared practices, conventions, and social norms. For

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<sup>18</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief* (C. Barrett, Ed.). University of California Press. p. 11

Wittgenstein, aesthetic judgments aren't based on universal, objective criteria but rather on the agreed-upon ways of seeing, feeling, and talking about art and beauty within a specific community. Our responses and expressions of value are thus learned and practiced within our cultural and social contexts.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's perspective on aesthetics is intrinsically linked to his broader philosophical ideas, particularly his views on language, meaning, and life. Aesthetics, for Wittgenstein, is less about defining beauty or art and more about understanding the conditions under which aesthetic experiences arise and are communicated. In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*<sup>19</sup>, Wittgenstein emphasizes that aesthetic discussions are not about establishing rules or universal principles but about examining how people interact with art, beauty, and culture in their lived experiences. He dismisses the notion that aesthetics can be reduced to a formalized system of principles. Instead, he suggests that aesthetic appreciation is embedded in the practices, traditions, and forms of life of a community. Wittgenstein argues that aesthetic judgments are profoundly influenced by context. They are not mainly concerned with objective qualities in the artwork but about the reactions and practices surrounding the object. For instance, when we say that a musical piece is "moving," we are not describing a measurable property of the music; instead, we are expressing our experience of it within a particular cultural and personal context. Thus, aesthetic judgments are more akin to expressions of taste or sensibility rather than objective assessments.

A key aspect of Wittgenstein's view is his focus on language. He highlights that aesthetic appreciation often involves understanding a specific "language-game" — a concept he introduced to explain how meaning arises in diverse contexts. Wittgenstein opined that Aesthetic language functions within a particular framework of understanding, where words like "beautiful," "sublime," or "elegant" carry meaning only when used in context. Furthermore, Wittgenstein underscores the importance of comparisons in aesthetic discussions. He notes that people often explain aesthetic judgments by drawing analogies or referring to examples rather than providing definitions or justifications. For example, when exploring the

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<sup>19</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief* (C. Barrett, Ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work 1938) p. 3-44.

reasons behind a painting is considered "balanced," we might point to other works or explain it in relation to its harmony, symmetry, or the emotions it evokes. These comparisons, rather than any strict rule, shape our aesthetic understanding. Wittgenstein also connects aesthetics to ethics, suggesting that both are focused on our way of living and attitudes towards the world. This connection reinforces his view that aesthetics is not merely about isolated experiences of beauty but about how these experiences integrate into our broader human practices and values. Wittgenstein's approach to aesthetics is less about theorizing art and beauty and more about observing the practices and language through which aesthetic appreciation is expressed. Aesthetics, for him, is deeply embedded in cultural practices and shared understandings.

#### Section Four

In *TLP*, Wittgenstein maintains that aesthetic judgments belong to the realm of the ineffable— what cannot be expressed in words but can only be demonstrated. He makes a distinction between what can be conveyed through factual propositions and what goes beyond them, including aesthetic and ethical values. He writes, there are, in fact, things that cannot be expressed in words, they reveal themselves. They are what are mystical<sup>20</sup>. In *PI*, Wittgenstein moves away from this mystical approach. He contends that these judgments are not transcendent but are rooted in the language-games of everyday life. These judgments are integral to the way we use language in specific forms of life. He suggests that "our understanding of a word resides in its use in language"<sup>21</sup>, which includes aesthetic terms like "beautiful" and "elegant."

In *TLP*, Wittgenstein sees language is a tool for describing facts about the reality, and anything outside this domain (including aesthetics) cannot be meaningfully discussed. The famous statement, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,"<sup>22</sup> implies that aesthetics, like ethics, cannot be captured

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<sup>20</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922/1961). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness, Trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1922), p. 6.522.

<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.). Blackwell, p. 20e.

<sup>22</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922/1961), p. 7.

in propositional language. In *PI*, Wittgenstein introduces the concept of language-games, showing that language delivers many functions beyond merely describing facts. He writes, for a large class of cases of the employment of the word 'meaning'—though not for all—this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its function within.<sup>23</sup> This includes aesthetic discourse, where words acquire meaning focused on how they are employed within specific cultural practices.

Wittgenstein's *TLP* reflects an essentialist view, suggesting that there is a logical structure underlying language, and which might be meaningfully said must fit within this structure. Aesthetic judgments do not fit this model, as they do not correspond to states of affairs in the world.<sup>24</sup> In *PI*, Wittgenstein rejects essentialism, embracing instead a pragmatic, use-based understanding of meaning. Aesthetic terms do not have an inherent, fixed meaning but gain meaning through their usage in specific contexts. Wittgenstein uses the idea of "family resemblance" to explain why aesthetic concepts like "art" or "beauty" do not have a single defining essence but rather overlap in various ways.<sup>25</sup>

In *TLP*, aesthetic disagreement is difficult to conceptualize because aesthetic judgments are considered beyond language and logic. Since these judgments are ineffable, they cannot be subjected to rational debate or logical analysis.<sup>26</sup> In *PI*, Wittgenstein's language-game approach allows for a richer understanding of aesthetic disagreement. He shows how disagreements in aesthetic judgments arise from differences in how people use language. These are not about objective correctness but about differing criteria and practices within specific cultural and linguistic contexts.<sup>27</sup>

In *TLP*, language is seen as a formal system of representing the world, and which is not applicable in this system—such as aesthetic experience—lies outside meaningful discourse.<sup>28</sup> In *PI*, Wittgenstein argues for a context-based

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<sup>23</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953), p. 20e.

<sup>24</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922/1961), p. 6.41.

<sup>25</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953), p. 66e-77e.

<sup>26</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922/1961), p. 6.421.

<sup>27</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953), p. 77e

<sup>28</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922/1961), p. 6.421

understanding of language. He writes, "The meaning of a word is its use in the language,"<sup>29</sup> which suggests that aesthetic meaning is fluid and contextual, shaped by the way it is used in everyday life. Wittgenstein's shift from *TLP* to *PI* marks a movement from viewing aesthetics as an ineffable, mystical domain to seeing it as a dynamic, practical activity deeply intertwined with how we use language in various cultural and social contexts. This evolution reflects his broader philosophical shift from a formal, rigid view of language to one that embraces its fluid, context-sensitive nature. For Wittgenstein, language has limits, and certain profound aspects of human experience, including intense aesthetic appreciation, might lie beyond those boundaries. This doesn't necessarily mean these experiences are meaningless, but rather that our linguistic tools are inadequate to fully capture their essence. The "mystical" here could refer to a direct, perhaps even spiritual or deeply personal, encounter with beauty or value that resists complete verbalization.

To understand why the aesthetic concepts in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) are considered richer and more effective than those in his earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (*TLP*), one must examine the evolution of his philosophical approach. The transition from the rigid, formal structure of the *Tractatus* to the open, dynamic methodology of the *Investigations* represents a profound shift in Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning, language, and aesthetics.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's aesthetic concept is implicit and subordinated to his broader theory of language and logic. He views aesthetics as including to the field of the mystical, a domain beyond the limits of language: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence". Aesthetic value, like ethical value, is expressed like inexpressible in propositional language; it transcends facts and exists outside the form of the world as represented by logical propositions. Such abstraction, while profound, provides little practical insight into the lived experiences of aesthetic judgment or how people interact with art and beauty.<sup>30</sup> By contrast, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein shifts away

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<sup>29</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953), p. 43e

<sup>30</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1922). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (C. K. Ogden, Trans.). Routledge, Proposition 7

from the idealized, logical framework of the *Tractatus* and instead emphasizes on the "language-games" and "forms of life" through which meaning is created and understood. This perspective makes his aesthetic concept more nuanced and applicable to real-world experiences. In *PI*, Wittgenstein demonstrates that aesthetic discussions are grounded in the practices and traditions of a community. For example, he writes: "What belongs to a language-game is a whole culture", emphasizing that aesthetic meaning arises from shared activities, conventions, and contexts.<sup>31</sup>

The concept of language-games in *PI* enriches the aesthetic discourse by allowing for a pluralistic and contextual approach. For instance, when people engage with art, their responses whether admiration, critique, or interpretation are shaped by their cultural and linguistic frameworks. Unlike the rigid dichotomy of the *Tractatus*, where what cannot be said is silenced, the *Investigations* allows for a more expansive exploration of the ways people express aesthetic judgments, even in non-verbal or metaphorical terms.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, the shift in *PI* allows for a practical investigation of how aesthetic concepts function in everyday life. Wittgenstein observes that aesthetic appreciation often involves comparisons, descriptions, and analogies rather than strict definitions or logical criteria. This aligns with his broader philosophy in *PI*, where he asserts that meaning is use-dependent (*Investigations*, §43). Such an approach better reflects the diversity and complexity of aesthetic experiences than the formalized mysticism of the *Tractatus*.<sup>33</sup>

So, the aesthetic concept in *PI* surpasses that of *TLP* by offering a richer, more grounded understanding of aesthetic value. While the *Tractatus* confines aesthetics to an ineffable, metaphysical realm, the *Investigations* integrate it into the dynamics of human life, culture, and language, making it more relevant and accessible for philosophical exploration.

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<sup>31</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans., 3rd ed.). Blackwell, §23

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, §43

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, §11

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