Can Machines Think? A Brief Reading of Ethics in Wittgenstein's Work[1]

¿Pueden pensar las Máquinas? Breve lectura de la ética en la obra de Wittgenstein

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Abstract

The dynamic development of technology, as well as of AI's, raises the fundamental question: can machines think? At the beginning of the 20th Century the Austrian philosopher wonders about this problem and analyses it from a logical-philosophical conception which conveys the need to recognize all the elements comprised in the thought-language relationship. An ethical-religious dimension is revealed in certain uses of language. This dimension, which shows the human's attitude to the world, stems from the human tendency to search for explanations. This attitude does not extend to machines.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, language, thought, machines, attitude.

Resumen

El dinámico avance de la tecnología como de la AI, nos plantea hoy una interrogante fundamental ¿pueden pensar las máquinas? El filósofo austríaco a principios del S.XX se formula esta pregunta la cual examina desde una concepción lógica-filosófica que expone la necesidad de reconocer todos los elementos que conllevan la relación pensamiento-lenguaje. En ciertos *usos* del lenguaje se devela una dimensión ética-religiosa producto de la tendencia humana a la búsqueda de una explicación la cual se manifiesta en la *actitud* del ser humano en el mundo, esta *actitud* no es extensible a las máquinas.

Palabras clave: Wittgenstein, lenguaje, pensamiento, máquinas, actitud.

1. Introduction

We must plough through the whole of language.

(Wittgenstein, 1979, p. 68)

Technological progress constantly challenges our imagination by transgressing the way we understand the human being. Our hopes and fears encourage us to search for answers about the human nature by prompting us to identify those aspects that define us as a species, especially considering the possible existence of a non-human more technologically advanced intelligence which might be more efficient than human themselves in dealing with everyday practical matters. According to W., the examination of human intelligence involves the thorough analysis of the thought-language relationship, which is conceived as unique to human beings and, hence, distinguishes us from machines.

In this regard, considering the development of machines, such as AI, new questions arise: Can there be a non-human thinking? Can machines think? Wittgenstein's philosophical reflections shed light on these new problems, especially by recognizing those aspects that constitute human thinking. The objective of this article is to analyze, on the basis of Wittgenstein's ethical work, the nature of human thinking and how it differs from machine thinking. To achieve this purpose, this study seeks to address the following three fundamental questions: first, what does the thought-language relationship establishes regarding what can be said of the world? Second, can machines think? And, third, what is the role of ethics and religion in technology?

This study puts forward the following two hypotheses: firstly, in his earlier work (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*), W. proposes the close thought-language relationship by conceiving propositions which denote the different facts that configure our world: propositions with a sense. However, in the thought-language relationship we find another type of propositions which show our *attitude* to the world: the nonsensical propositions.

Secondly, in his later work (*The Blue and Brown Books*, and *Philosophical Investigations*), on the basis of the examination of the different *uses* of language, W. establishes that the thought-language relationship consists in an operation with signs, which is an activity that can be performed by machines. However, the use of language establishes forms of life that also show the human tendency to express an *attitude* to the world, which can be evidenced, for instance, in premises inherent to Ethics and Religion, which is a dimension unique to human beings and that cannot be performed by machines.[2]

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[2] Albeit Turing and Wittgensteins' discussions on whether machines can think address a relevant problem of our times, this work seeks to understand W.'s strict conception of ethics.

By virtue of these hypotheses, this study addresses three main issues: first, the thought-language relationship and the determination of the mystical. Second, can machines think? Third, Ethics, Religion and Technology.

2. The thought-language relationship and the determination of the mystical in the *Tractatus*

The purpose of this section is to recognize the aspects that make the thought-language relationship possible from the logical-philosophical context in order to draw a limit to what can be said of the world in opposition to what cannot be said, i.e., the mystical. This analysis has been organized into two stages: first, on the ontology in the *Tractatus*, and second, on what cannot be said, the mystical in the *Tractatus*.

First, on the ontology in the *Tractatus*. In his work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein's aim is to draw a limit to the expression of thought. W. refers to the world and language correspondence as picture theory, which asserts that "A proposition is a picture of reality." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §4.01) Thus, the different possibilities of the propositions are prejudged in the possibilities of the state of affairs, which evidence the fundamental role of the analysis of language when exploring the horizon of the possible state of affairs that articulate our world (Kenny, 2006, p. 54; Martínez, 2018, pp. 80 y ss.). According to W., the proposition communicates a possible situation through the symbol itself (Wittgenstein, 1963, §3.4; Anscombe, 2001, p. 159). In this regard, W. establishes the intertwined unity of the thought-language relationship wherein the different facts that configure our world are shown. From this perspective it can be recognized that the essence of language denotes the essence of the world.

However, the possibilities of language not only bring along the different ways of accessing to the horizon of facts, but also the radical possibility of conceiving the world. In this regard, W. recognizes the human craving for generality out of the need for explaining the world as a whole, (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 17) which can cause misunderstandings, especially when examining terms and propositions referring to facts unrelated to their use. To address this problem, W. seeks for a "criterion for distinction" (Fairhurst 2021, p. 165), which may establish that only propositions articulating the horizon of facts have sense; consequently, the expression of "thought" springs from this type of propositions, for which reason W. asserts: "A thought is a proposition with a sense." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §4)

As W. argues, the proposition establishes a possible situation by virtue of the correspondence between names and denoted objects where the names, arranged in a certain manner, configure an elementary proposition that expresses a possible state of affairs. Admittedly, W. adds to this description that the configuration of elementary propositions will give rise to propositions, all of this in correspondence with the configuration of states of affairs which give rise to facts (Lensk & M. Skarica, 2001, pp. 128, 138). The Austrian thinker holds that the relationship

between propositions and facts establishes a structure that determines the language-world relationship: "The general form of a proposition is: This is how things stand." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §4.5) Hence, on the basis of the analysis of language, we conceive the structure, the essence of the world.

In this regard, W. recognizes that ordinary language is configured with this logical form, (Kenny, 2006, pp. 66-67) by virtue of which the object of the logical analysis makes it explicit: "In fact, all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order."(Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.5563) According to this reading, the role of denotation can be established as the fundamental axis which allows to articulate objective knowledge, especially, about what can be said of the world, all of this limited to the totality of the objects that make it up. Consequently, the proposition expresses a form, that is, a way in which objects are by virtue of the method of representation, logics. (Kenny, 2006, pp. 87-88)

On the other hand, we should recognize that Wittgenstein's picture theory finds its counterpart in the truth-value theory. Formulating a proposition *ipso facto* establishes a truth-value (V o F), that is, a state of affairs in correlation with the truth-function of the elementary propositions: "Truth-possibilities of elementary propositions mean possibilities of existence and non-existence of states of affairs." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §4.3) Thus, W. proposes that the truth-function of the elementary proposition establishes the truth-function of all propositions; Kenny states: "(…) but that every proposition was a truth-function of elementary propositions, so that the formula for constructing truth-functional propositions out of elementary propositions was the form of propositions in general." (Kenny, 2006, p. 72)

From this standpoint, the truth-values of propositions reveal possible states of affairs; in other words, through language the way in which objects are laid out and arranged, in terms of the entire system of the truth-conditions, can be recognized. (Pears, 1970, p. 65) Thus, out of determined uses of language we recognize the logical form of the facts, that is, according to Wittgenstein, a fundamental aspect of thought. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that within the very limits of what can be said about the facts, paradoxically arises that which cannot be said, propositions such as tautologies and contradictions do not state anything as they do not describe states of affairs, (Anscombe, 2001, p. 156) these propositions open or close the logical space. W. argues: "(…) A tautology leaves open to reality the whole-the infinite whole-of logical space: a contradiction fills the whole of logical space leaving no point of it for reality. Thus, neither of them can determine reality in any way." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §4.463) Consequently, on the basis of tautologies and contradictions we recognize the limits of the thought-language relationship, the world appears as a whole, that is, the idea of the substance of the world.

Hence, in the limit of the nature of what can be said of the world appears, however, that which cannot be said of it: the mystical (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.44; Fairhurst, 2021, p. 153);

Ethics and Religion become manifest in all their complexity by virtue of the 'necessity' or 'tendency' to conceive the world as a whole. (Anscombe, 2001, pp. 168-169; Pears, 1970, p. 48; Fairhurst 2021, p. 152)

Second, *on what cannot be said*, the mystical in the *Tractatus*. The necessary account for the world as a totality: "The world is all that is the case." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §1) Not only implies a shift into describing the facts that configure the world, but also taking a certain stand regarding it. The perspective pointed out by W. as to the pictorial projection of the facts on the basis of the language entails both the reading of the logical space as well as the essential understanding of a world. (Anscombe, 2001, p. 44; Pears, 1970, p. 44) Thus, albeit the analysis of logic is the understanding of states of affairs, it also sets forth the understanding of the 'I' within the limits of my language, that is, the limits of my world, (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.62) according to Wittgenstein: "The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.632.) Thus, the self and the world remain coordinated: "The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality coordinated with it." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.64.) W. distances, therefore, from the problem of the nature of the world by seeking for an *a priori* sense of the world so as to root the problem of the sense of the totality of the propositions on the problem of the explanation of the world as a whole, that is, from the position of a 'self' in front of the world: "(…) The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the *metaphysical Subject*, the limit of the world-not a part of it." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.64.)

On the other hand, W. holds that tautologies and contradictions, which arise in the region of the limits of the thought-language relationship, mark the beginning of a different horizon for which reason, under the logical-philosophical perspective, they are nonsensical propositions as they do not express states of affairs, but they account for a determined essential character of the world, according to Wittgenstein: "The propositions of logic are tautologies" (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.1) and "Therefore the propositions of logic say nothing. (They are the analytic propositions.)" (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.11) Hence, the question about the world as a whole remains latent when considering the very limits of the thought-language relationship (Floyd, 2021, p. 109) and its formulation is understood, for instance, by virtue of tautologies which gather certain formal properties of language and the world, (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.12) in words of the Austrian philosopher: "The propositions of logic describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they represent it. They have no subject-matter." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.124) Ultimately, the generality of the tautological propositions expresses the limits of the world as a whole: "Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror-image of the world. Logic is transcendental." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.13)

Now, in this regard, the problem of the limit to the expression of thoughts involves the study of the possibilities that language itself has when conceiving the necessary human tendency to establish the world as a whole (Fairhurst, 2021, p. 160). Thus, the possibility of stating our position about the world entails the possibility of recognizing that thought as

a whole also implies that which we do not speak about the world. Hence, here the problem of human existence opens up in a different horizon, position which implies, therefore, the silence of the logical-philosophical thought. According to Wittgenstein: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §7)

According to this perspective, the limits set to the expression of thoughts about facts impose that which we do not speak about, that is, allow a different reading of thought that cause the disquietude of accounting for problems related to the fundamental issues of human beings, (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.52) those that cannot necessarily be described with the logical-philosophical language: "The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of *my* world," (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.62) consequently, W. states: "The world and life are one." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.621)

Reflecting on these matters brings us closer to a new and different determination, this time regarding the ultimate sense of all the propositions which inevitably lead us to the *metaphysical Subject*, limit of the world (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.63; Floyd, 2021, 116-117). Thus, new propositions arise. Albeit these propositions do not refer to the facts, in their generality they manifest a World and an 'I', wherein the human "tendency" to provide an explanation is evidenced. W. states that another type of propositions, the nonsensical propositions, are manifested, and through them a new horizon of language emerges: Ethics and Religion (Fairhurst, 2021, pp. 145-154). Consequently, ethics and religion lead the way to another horizon where propositions such as "Therefore that good and evil are somehow connected with the meaning of the world" or "The meaning of life, i.e., the meaning of the world, we can call God" (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 73) articulate the position of the *metaphysical Subject* in the world.

It is worth mentioning that Wittgenstein's silence in the *Tractatus* is not meant to omit other type of human problems, but rather to draw a limit on how the question on the logical-philosophical relationship is going to be formulated. Thus, the logical-philosophical relationship does not exhaust the entire dimension of the human thinking due to the search for an explanation of the sense of human life, which reveals from the view of the world as a whole. From this standpoint, W. recognizes that the ancients had a clearer understanding on these matters: "(…) though the view of the ancients is clearer in so far as they have a clear and acknowledged terminus, while the modern system tries to make it look as if *everything* were explained." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.372) In view of the foregoing the propositions of the *Tractatus* can be understood as a mirror-image of the world, (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.13)that is, when we contemplate them, we can see the world as a whole in them and thus understand our very existence: "The sense of the world must lie outside the world" (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.41) and, also, "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.44)

In other words, only from the nonsensical propositions the *metaphysical Subject* who contemplates the world becomes evident. Thus, what is essential to human beings cannot be expressed in the propositions of the *Tractatus* since its propositions say nothing, they mean nothing for the one who thoroughly examines the multiplicity of facts; the one who analyses them, must transcend these propositions (Fairshurst, 2021, pp. 162 y 165). Hence, these propositions merely indicate the spectator that in them they can contemplate the world aright, (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.54; Kenny, 2006, p. 81) that is, their world and, in doing so, their existence. From this perspective W. reveals the general nature of thinking which is manifested in all its complexity where, surprisingly enough, nonsensical propositions play a crucial role, especially, those which, under the pretense of necessity and generality, outline the problems of human life: those are the efforts of Ethics and Religion.

3. Can machines think?

The purpose of this section is to examine whether machines can think[3]. In this stage the Austrian philosopher explores the nature of thinking in direct relation with a descriptive conception of thinking as an activity of operating with signs. This analysis is divided into two parts: first, language games and forms of life and, second, machine thinking as operation with signs

First, language games and forms of life. In his post-*Tractatus* stage, accounted for in his writings compiled into *The Blue and Brown Books*, W. analyses thinking by examining the different uses of language which configure different systems of language. (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 78) Wittgenstein's new position strengthens in the *Philosophical Investigations*, where he names the systems of language as language games (Wittgenstein, 2009, §130). The Austrian philosopher holds that the reading of the thought-language relationship on the basis of the reference to the existence of an ideal and crystalized meaning, is a central obstacle. In this regard, W. states that: "Understanding a sentence means getting hold of its content; and the content of the sentence is *in* the sentence." (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 167) The language semantics framework posed by W. conceives the decisive role of the different usages of the terms and propositions as game languages; thus, W. determines the "use" (Lensk & Skarica, 2001, pp. 20-21, 54 y ss.) as a criterion or general rule that determines the sense of the signs, that is, their meaning: "The use of the word *in practice* is its meaning." (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 69) Therefore, there is no reason for following a rule about the usage of signs, we just use them.

Consequently, the problem of the nature of thinking is within the logical-philosophical analysis of the *use* of the terms and propositions manifested in the most diverse "language games." In line with this reading, we must recognize that the problem about the "nature of thinking" lies in altering the "use" of language by attempting to fix its meaning into a pure

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[3] In regard to the discussion between Turing and Wittgenstein, see (Floyd, 2021, p. 126).

ideal understanding (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 81, 92). In this regard, the classical philosophy has addressed the examination of terms and propositions through the necessity of establishing a certain ideal and axiomatic relationship to guide the course of our language.

In this scenario, the logical-philosophical analysis by the later W. reveals that a certain hierarchical order in language that would attempt to establish a sense beyond itself is not possible. On the contrary, W. argues that language is rather articulated like a city where old houses give way to new ones, which allows us understand the dynamism of thinking reflected in the very dynamism of language. For the Austrian thinker, our terms and propositions vary on the basis of the different references guiding their meaning but that depend on a diversity of forms of life, reflected in terms and propositions that express our way of conceiving the world: "What has to be accepted, the given, is -one might say- *forms of life.*" (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 345; Lensk & Skarica, 2001, p. 57) Hence, language, in its ordinary everyday use is logically arranged by virtue of that which gives it life, which W. names as forms of life (*Lebensformen*); in the words of the Austrian thinker: "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? -In use it *lives.* Is it there that it has living breath within it? -Or is the *use* its breath?" (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 432)

From these questions we can recognize that the use of the language puts forward the conception of the dynamic aspect of thinking, that is, the language-thought relationship is not established out of a determined structure, but it is rather similar to what W. calls "family resemblances." (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 67; Lensk & Skarica, 2001, p. 51) According to the Austrian thinker, language: "(…) is a family of structures more or less akin to one another." (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 108) Said family of structures not only manifests their usefulness, but also reveals different ways of understanding the world in relation to the use of the language.

By virtue of the reading of language games as forms of life a close connection between our language and our world can be established, all of this configured from the collective construction of language. The view of language as a form of life[4] entails an aspect that W. had addressed in the *Tractatus*, that is, considering that which *pervades* the use of language[5] (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.43; Anscombe, 2001, p. 166) as a horizon different to the logical-philosophical one, which is described as the Mystical.[6]

In this regard, both in the early and the later W. a certain "living breath," (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 432) which represents the human being's *attitude* to the world, can be recognized in the very use of language.

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[4] See (Pears, 1970, p. 29) for a different reading on this matter.

[5] See Autor 2018, pp. 84-85.

[6] Regarding Kant's influence on Wittgenstein, Pears asserts: 'The Kantian solution, or rather a late romantic development of it, is to be found in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: the central truths of religion and morality cannot be caught in the network of language, but they can be apprehended through it, and so the way to see beyond the limits of factual discourse is not to look beyond them, but to look back on the world of facts and see it as a whole.' (Pears, 1970, pp. 28-29).

Consequently, the framing of these nonsensical propositions reveals different forms of life which are a crucial element articulating the human culture[7]. On the basis of the examination of culture emerges a fundamental horizon of thought which is related to the sense of belonging and identity of the individuals regarding their respective communities which manifests in different uses of language through accounts, stories and common customs[8]. Hence, Ethics and Religion are the result of a collective construction that accounts for the world, by virtue of the language, which embraces ways of seeing the world as a whole and that makes the position of a *metaphysical Subject* possible.

Second, machine thinking as operation with signs. In his work *The Blue and Brown Books,* W. begins the language analysis and the analysis of thinking as operating with signs. (Martínez, 2018, p. 89) The Austrian thinker puts the nature of thinking in direct relationship with the use of language, that is, he conceives the activity of thinking as operating with signs, according to W.: "It is misleading then to talk of thinking as of a 'mental activity.' We may say that thinking is essentially the activity of *operating with signs.*" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 6)

In his work, the Austrian philosopher illustrates us with a few examples regarding the activity of machines that might denote aspects unique to thinking, wherein we could recognize the usefulness of different human functions represented in, let's say, activities such as reading. From this standpoint, the description of the activity of thinking as operating with signs, which is so far exclusively linked to human beings, could apply to the activity of the machines insofar as its inherent function is based on the activity of operating with signs. From this perspective, Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* work seems to take the activity of thinking to a merely functional context. In other words, if the activity of thinking entails operating with a language, then it is clear that the use of a language, as in the case of the logical-mathematical language in machines, would denote a trait so far only unique to humans, hence, it would be possible to say that machines can "think."

Nonetheless, it seems that this is a rushed judgement since as we continue reading *The Blue and Brown Books*, W. refers to the aforementioned issue by posing a question which brings our assumption down: "Is it possible for a machine to think? […] The trouble is rather that the sentence, 'A machine thinks (perceives, wishes)': seems somehow nonsensical. It is as though we had asked 'Has the number 3 a color?" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 47) In this regard, we can point out that the issues related to the nature of thinking arise when disregarding the variety and complexity of the uses of the word "thinking." The problem lies, therefore, in our attempt to establish a uniform position in relation to the activity of thinking when seeking for the essence of the human thought.

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[7] See (Floyd, 2021, pp. 112 y ss.)

[8] For an interpretation on the conditions of use in the construction of meaning see (Lensk & Skarica, 2001, p. 103).

In this regard, we wish to delimit the use of language in a certain sense, especially when we make a logical-philosophical analysis, reference of which is the imposition of an absolute meaning in relation to the variety and complexity of aspects that denote thinking. This becomes evident in our tendency to compare different facts in order to outline a similarity which establishes a meaning; in other words, we interpret facts so that a single "common feature," (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 87) crystallizing the meaning of a certain term, emerges. However, this reading of the thought-language relationship leads us to an analysis with a severe essentialist bias which is the result of shrinking the human rationality to a uniform unfolding of human thought. W. describes the search for essentialist answers with the following example:

> The subject-experimenter is observing a correlation of two phenomena. One of them he, perhaps, calls the *thought*. This may consist of a train of images, organic sensations, or on the other hand of a train of the various visual, tactual and muscular experiences which he has in writing or speaking a sentence. The other experience is one of seeing his brain work. Both these phenomena could correctly be called 'expressions of thought; and the question 'where is the thought itself?' had better, in order to prevent confusion, be rejected as nonsensical. (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 8)

Considering the aforementioned, we can establish that albeit it is possible to recognize in machines a thinking activity in terms of operating with signs, it is not possible to reduce the variety of elements implied in the human's thought-language relationship to this activity. In other words, it is worth mentioning that the question whether machines can think does not consider the queries inherent to the human species as it omits complete dimensions of the language, especially, those regarding our "tendency" to express an *attitude* to the world, for which reason W. considers language as a form of life. Consequently, the question as to whether machines can think attempts to restrict the understanding of thinking as a mere operation with signs, to delimit it as a functional reading without recognizing that the different uses of language entail a strictly human aspect, that is, the forms of life. Finally, the use of language determines our position toward the world: our world is built in the use of language! Under no circumstance this dimension of language can be mimicked by a machine or any other species since these are the aspects that constitute our understanding of the human being, that is, constitute our language.

It has been held that the role of the use of language in the later W. determines the meaning of terms and propositions, as he states: "But if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its *use*." (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 4) In point of fact, the forms of life which, in my view, are unnoticed at first sight, *permeate* the ordinary everyday use of our language, that is, in the use of language meaning a culture (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 134). On the other hand, we notice that other type of propositions, which W. calls the nonsensical propositions, which are mainly uttered in the human culture from the

narratives both of Ethics as well as Religion, attempt to reveal this dimension of language as form of life. From these narratives arise the need for an explanation of the relationship between the 'I' and the World as a whole.

From this approach it could be argued that in the very use of language two different dimensions *coexist*: one that allows us communicate the functional aspects of our everyday life and another one which entails the view of the human being on the world; the need for an explanation of, e.g., the sense of the human life underlies in the latter one. Furthermore, these dimensions are learned and developed by different cultures and establish the complete thought-language relationship given that they not only shape the horizon of facts[9], but also lead us to discover the position of the 'I' toward the World; all of these elements converge in constituting our human species.

Now, on the basis of this reading it can be stablished that what W. depicts as "that which cannot be put into words" in the *Tractatus* is initially posed as "form of life" in *The Blue and Brown Books* and is then developed in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Thus, throughout his philosophical work, the Viennese gives ground to the conception of an 'I' toward the world from the analysis of language, which is a thesis that underlies in the first proposition of the *Tractatus*, (Wittgenstein, 1963, §1) there is a world because there is a subject, the *metaphysical Subject*. Hence, the questions about the nature of language entail those questions regarding what is strictly human; in them we can recognize the human being's position on the world, aspect from where we can recognize that thinking is inherent to human beings as it involves human life.

4. Ethics, religion and technology. Reflections on Wittgenstein' work

It has been argued that the problem of the nature of thinking as operation with signs involves the analysis of language. Nonetheless, in the thought-language relationship not only the logical understanding of the facts is unveiled, but also that which *permeates* and denotes the particular *attitude* of the 'I' toward the World, which will be examined next.

The *attitude* toward the facts where life itself develops is, according to W., what cannot be put into words from the logical-philosophical field, but what we can notice in the configuration of nonsensical propositions expressed in the accounts of Ethics and Religion, therefore, in said *use* of the language we can see a different human horizon under which the individual attempts to express a valuation of the world. Propositions such as "To pray is to think about the meaning of life" (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 73) emerge from this human "tendency"; thus, the valuation of life expressed in a different use of language is what cannot be put into words (Fairhurst, 2021, p. 158) from the empirical propositions dimension. In this regard, in *Lectures on Ethics* W. holds: "To say 'I wonder at such and such being the case'

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[9] On Ethics and the relationship with culture in Wittgenstein, see (Floyd, 2021, pp. 118 y ss.)

has only sense if I can *imagine* it not to be the case." (Wittgenstein, 1965, pp. 8-9) In the use of ethical and religious expressions, the Austrian philosopher recognizes the "tendency" to search for an absolute value, however, distant from thinking conceived as a proposition with sense. The use of language also implies a way of considering the facts on the basis of the setting up of nonsensical propositions (Wittgenstein, 1965, pp. 9, 11). Nonsensical propositions consider the fundamental human problem by seeking, as has been stated, to comprise the totality of the 'I' toward the World; these propositions are distant from the mere description of state of affairs. According to W.: "But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it." (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 12)

Through nonsensical propositions we can go around the World and the 'I' in its totality, position claimed by W. in his *Notebooks* when stating: "To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life" (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 74) or in the *Tractatus*[10] by asserting: "*How* things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world." (Wittgenstein, 1963, §6.432) Briefly speaking, Ethics and Religion wish to address the enormous challenge of explaining the 'I' and the World in its totality within a framework different from the logical-philosophical one.

However, in our times the transcendental dimension of language has blurred under the urgency of the continuous progress of the human life aimed at creating a welfare society where the very concept of happiness can be verified on the basis of quantifiable outcomes, that is, categories that attempt to empirically describe how happy we are. Nonetheless, the role of technology in solving everyday problems exposes a fundamental problem of the subjects, that is, leaves out the personal position of the 'I' toward the World which cannot be merely described. What happens, then, with the happy life? In the words of Wittgenstein:

> The happy life seems to be in some sense more *harmonious* than the unhappy. But in what sense? What is the objective mark of the happy, harmonious life? Here it is again clear that there cannot be any such mark, that can be *described*. This mark cannot be a physical one but only a metaphysical one, a transcendental one. (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 78)

Albeit the new language of technology and AI predicts the solution of several aspects of human life, the fundamental human problem, that is, the problem of life itself accounted for both by the examination of the sense of all human action as well as the way in which the progress of humanity is conceived, remains unaddressed. In this regard, on delimiting happy life to the problem of functionality, W. states: "We feel that even when *all possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course, there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer." (Wittgenstein, 1965, §6.52)

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[10] On the Ethics in the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's letter to Von Ficker, regarding this problem, see (Fairhurst, 2021, p. 155). See more (Stadler, 2010, pp. 438 y ss.)

However, the development of technology disregarding the people's wisdom, that has been reached by mankind experience throughout centuries, may dislocate us from our position toward the world, as it does not consider the dimensions entailed in the different uses of language; that is, it may curtail the unfolding of a fundamental dimension of the thought-language relationship which implies the erosion of our own will and, hence, of the entire *metaphysical Subject*. All of the aforementioned with serious consequences, for instance, for its Ethical dimension, from which humans roll out the sense of their human action: "If the will did not exist, neither would there be that center of the world, which we call the I, and which is the bearer of ethics." (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 80)

In this regard, within the last decades the studies on W. by Prof. Cora Diamond have been fundamental, especially those regarding the close relationship between Wittgenstein's concept of ethics and human imagination (Diamond 2000, pp. 161, 163). Based on Diamond's study, Wittgenstein's ethics is not about *ought to be*, but the subject's personal *attitude*, (Diamond 2000, pp. 153-154) for which reason human imagination has an important role for the development of culture and ethics.

Thus, I consider that it is possible to recognize in the very human culture the close relationship between ethics and what we may socially name as popular imagination, that is, the structuring of a social attitude to the world built not only by virtue of a certain capacity for self-understanding, but also collectively, according to Wittgenstein: "Let the use of words teach you the meaning." (Wittgenstein, 2009, II, §303; 1963, §5.47321) W. claims that this feature of language cannot be described on the basis of the empirical analysis as ethics comprises a dimension different from the use of language, which can be recognized in Wittgenstein's proposition "a will that wishes to be happy." In other words, this ethical dimension of the language cannot be subject to an empirical examination since Ethics is learned in the language inherent to the culture, that is, in a language expressing and revealing actions that make up a worldview.

Likewise, in his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* W. puts forward his critical stance against the empirical analysis of Ethics and Religion by the Scottish anthropologist Joseph Frazer's (XIX-XX). He openly rejects reducing the religious or cultural activity to an exclusively empiric language[11] (Wittgenstein, 1979, p. 62) since it is evident that there is a different dimension in the very use of language which is a fundamental human aspect guiding our thought and action. In the later Wittgenstein, conceiving language as form of life (*Lebensform*)[12], allows us appreciate other uses of language, such as those put forward by the religious symbolism through which a certain lost "community of life" (*Lebensgemeinschaft*) is to be reestablished (Wittgenstein, 1979, p. 73). All in all, this dimension of language is

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[11] From Wittgenstein's stance, the difference between propositions with a sense and nonsensical propositions should be recognized in order to not to exhaust the understanding of nonsensical propositions (such as the ethical or religious propositions) under the empirical analysis.

[12] A comprehensive explanation of the form of life as norm of elucidation, see (Floyd, 2021, pp. 111 y ss.).

crucial for us to understand the 'I'-World[13] relationship, as has been argued all through this article, as the use of language not only entails a dimension related to the horizon of facts, but also a culture comprising an Ethics and a Religion. Consequently, this position toward the language-value[14] relationship not only involves the use of language as it configures a personal experience, but also guides and determines the empirical analysis of the facts insofar as the analysis of the world is conducted by the *metaphysical Subject*. Therefore, from the use of language I not only recognize the world, but also an *attitude* (Diamond, 2000, pp. 164, 168).

In this regard, the entire symbolic aspect of human culture expressed by the human *tendency* to explain the world is not a language trap but it is rather the singular desire of the peoples and cultures to set forth their worldview, that is, symbolism *permeates* their world. Hence, the use of language by our ancestors unveils an *attitude* to the world handed over from one generation to the next: 'the use of the language keeps a culture alive.'

Thus, the different human cultures configure different worlds where the diverse language games represent diverse *attitudes*. Inadvertently, the different languages gather that which cannot be put into words in their ordinary everyday use by projecting the sense of the human life in a variety of forms of their own made up by the accounts of Ethics and Religion. Consequently, from the different languages the entire sense of our human actions, built from different forms of life, unfolds. The different forms of life are deeply rooted in our own will and are evidenced in our actions which somehow denote our *attitude* to life, as W. states: 'That life is the world. That my will penetrates the world. That my will is good or evil. Therefore, that good and evil are somehow connected with the meaning of the world.' (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 73). Hence, the subject and their language determine the value of the world.

However, the human transcendental views are at risk of being displaced, and with them the issues stemming from the framework of the Ethics and Religion, as they rise as arguments lacking of useful purpose. This is a sufficient reason to point out the risk of a technological development that promotes a standard view of the understanding of humans in the world by virtue of a mere functionalism. This way of technological development will impose a significant distance between human life and its most valuable asset: freedom. In this regard, it should be recognized that understanding the role of culture in the use of language will allow an integral view of Science, Ethics, Religion and Art as fundamental dimensions of the thought-language relationship, which will open us up to conceive the role of description and explanation as aspects inherent to human life, according to W.: "Only from the consciousness of the *uniqueness of my life* arises religion, science and art." (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 79)

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[13] According to W., "In the ancient rites we have the use of an extremely developed gesture-language. And when I read Frazer, I continually would like to say: We still have all these processes, these changes of meaning, before us in our verbal language (…) we recognize herein a familiar linguistic occurrence". (Wittgenstein, 1979, pp. 70-71). See (Floyd, 2021, p. 115).

[14] On the notion of value, see (Floyd, 2021, p. 122).

In summary, the controversy about the nature of thinking cannot be raised within the AI world, since AI is strictly focused on the solution of the living conditions and does not account for the entire relation between the 'I' and the World which is only expressed in human thinking and in the ongoing "tendency" to seek for an explanation of the sense of all human actions, matter to be examined in future studies. W. argues, therefore, that the examination of the thought-language relationship at the logical-philosophical level has enabled us to approach the *metaphysical Subject*, "point without extension" (Wittgenstein, 1963, §5.64) and limit of the world where Ethics and Religion burst into by virtue of the will of the individual who wishes to contemplate the 'I' and the World as a whole; the path of the logical description of the facts inextricably leads us to the I. Consequently, from logic, as a logical-philosophical horizon, a different region can be recognized, that is, the horizon of the Ethics and Religion, according to W.: "My work has extended from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world." (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 88).

5. Conclusion

W. upholds that the thought-language relationship consists in "operating with signs". However, different forms of life can be noticed in the use of language from which arises our *attitude* to the world. Consequently, the term "thought" entails accepting the problem of life by way of searching for the nature of God, Human Being or the World, that is, by way of searching for the meaning of life from the mystical point of view. The rapid development of technology gives rise to a paradox: on one hand, it provides a solution to practical vital matters but, on the other, it does not account for the human problems, for instance, those pertaining to ethics or religion.

To sum up, the human thought-language relationship entails expressing an *attitude* to the world, which is an aspect that machines cannot develop. Hence, even all the daily life problems were to be perfectly solved in a future world, human beings, if we still exist the way we are today, will freely demand for an explanation of the sense in the forms of fear, hope, faith, love, passion, etc. In that future time, our *attitude* will manifest itself forcing us to seek an answer: we are human beings and our *attitudes* are constituent parts of our thought-language relationship.

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