

# Wittgenstein: General Principles

1. Wittgenstein's work falls into two periods: the early and the late.
2. The early captures logical positivism (as such) and is rooted in his book **Tractatus Logico Philosophicus**, the only complete work published in his lifetime.
3. The Tractatus describes the '**Picture Theory**' of meaning.
4. The Picture Theory structures an isomorphic (one-to-one) relationship between human language and mental pictures. The imagined components of a pictured scene are analogous to the words we use to describe it.
5. Picture Theory postulates logically abstract components of meaning ('primitives').
6. It states that the world around us is made up of **meanings**, but not objects which are 'unknowable' to us. **"The world is all that is the case. The world is the totality of facts, not things."** (TLP)
7. Effectively then, we live within our own constructed worlds, made understandable only by shared linguistic conventions.
8. During the 1930's Wittgenstein developed further ideas about language and meaning, and then largely abandoned his former positivist stance. He repudiated the ideas in the Tractatus as being mistaken.
9. Over the wartime period he lived in Newcastle Upon Tyne, where he worked for the local hospital, but continued his philosophy in his spare time.
10. Upon returning to Cambridge as a professor, he began writing down his second period philosophy, which was published after his death in the **Philosophical Investigations** (an unfinished book).
11. 'Investigations' establishes the social origins of meaning. We make meaning together as a social order, through **language games** originating from our unique **form of life** as human beings.
12. He developed the famous '**no private language**' argument, which stated that all human communications are public and shared. Hence our conventions, concepts, meanings and understandings are also shared. Individuality becomes an aspect of the shared experiences of life.
13. He also asserted that we never see things in objective terms. We always **"see as"**.
14. His work remains both stimulating and controversial to this day. And also highly influential on modern communications theory, educational practice, and social psychology.

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