

“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”

L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus logico-philosophicus

It is well known that like almost every other philosopher of the 19th century, also Ludwig Wittgenstein tried to find a new, innovative way of explaining the world's big questions about understanding. He broke with old traditions, the Hegelian system and its speculative way of reasoning and found his way in a very radical kind of thinking. The opening lines are not more than an example of this radical movement of the 19th century and how Wittgenstein wanted people's habits to be. But is this how the modern world should be? Is this how we want the modern world to be?

To understand what Wittgenstein exactly wanted to say, we first need to understand what he is actually saying. “The limits of my language”, meaning something I cannot describe. “Limits of my world”, something beyond reachable. So if you cannot find any words for something, it is beyond any reasoning and not worth it to go there any further. Or as Wittgenstein put in other words, “what you cannot describe in words, you should remain silent about”.

What could that be, something, not even humans can describe? Religion with its supernatural spirits? Metaphysics with its unexplainable assertions, which are beyond any reasoning?

If it would have been ever since like Wittgenstein wanted it to be, humanity would not have reached its current level of knowledge. People of all times tried to prove old unproven thesis, going against common believes, and said out loud, what was believed to be heretical. They wanted to put their suggestions into mathematical equations, because somehow Mathematics was (and still is) believed to lead to ultimate understanding and truth. But is Mathematics really the right way to reach absolute understanding?

Starting in the 16th century, Copernicus and Galilei tried to prove the heliocentric system mathematically. In the 18th century Immanuel Kant wanted to make philosophy a science as secure as Mathematics. Auguste Comte and his positivism claimed, that nothing, if not proven with facts, is true. In the 19th century also religion was highly questioned and at the end of this century, Nietzsche even claimed that “God is dead”. Hence, all the old believes were not so true anymore. Everything people relied on was questioned and therefore nobody could be sure about anything anymore. But thinking still evolved and fortunately is still evolving today. And why is that so? Because people share their ignorance to form knowledge together. Knowledge rises from ignorance.

There has to be ignorance at the beginning to reach knowledge. The natural state of humans is to defeat the own ignorance, to reach a higher level. Ever since the very beginnings humans brought up new thesis just to get a feeling of satisfaction for their own ignorance.

Every human being should be free in his thoughts and his actions, as long as it does not cross the line of justice. Hence, every single one of us is free to make up his own mind, to form own opinions, to create his own world of understanding. Wittgenstein and his thoughts try to build up new borders to us where there aren't any yet.

Nowadays we know that there is so much out there in the world, beyond our solar system that people cannot think about, not to mention describing it. But why remain silent about it? Trying to explain something, the attempt of finding a way to understand is human.

What about individuals who didn't have the chance of an efficient education? Possibly they just don't know as much as others because their situation didn't allow them to attend school. Shouldn't they communicate with others to reach new knowledge?

In what a world would we live in today, if Wittgenstein's opinion would have become the norm? There wouldn't be any interacting relations between people.

Hegel, one of the greatest philosophers of all times, inspiration for so many others after him, once said that progress is the result of conflicts. If people would have remained silent about things they did not know for sure (like Wittgenstein has suggested), maybe there wouldn't have been any discussions about difficult topics and possibly we wouldn't have made any progress towards the modern world we are living in today.

It is philosophy which has to clarify indescribable tasks and put into words, what cannot be put into mathematical equations. Science is one part, but philosophy is something complete different. Humans are meant to explore new ways of thinking, share their opinions and create common knowledge.

With Wittgenstein's suggestions the world would not be there where it is today. Knowledge would not have evolved and passed along to the next generations. Therefore his quote has to be corrected:

“The limits of my language mean more possibilities to my world.”