



# THE PROBLEM OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

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## Abstract

This article examines the problem of intersubjectivity in the philosophical views of Ludwig Wittgenstein, focusing on the transformation of his ideas from early logical atomism to later linguistic philosophy. The study analyzes how intersubjectivity is implicitly articulated through Wittgenstein's concepts of language-games, forms of life, and rule-following practices. Special attention is given to the rejection of private language and its implications for understanding shared meaning and mutual comprehension among individuals.

The research employs a hermeneutic and comparative methodological approach, examining primary texts such as *Philosophical Investigations* alongside relevant secondary literature. It argues that Wittgenstein's later philosophy provides a non-metaphysical foundation for intersubjectivity, grounding it in socially embedded linguistic practices rather than in transcendental or purely subjective structures.

**Keywords:** Intersubjectivity, language-games, forms of life, rule-following, private language argument, meaning, communication, social practices, philosophy of language, Wittgenstein.

## Introduction

The problem of intersubjectivity occupies a central place in contemporary philosophical discourse, as it directly concerns the conditions under which mutual understanding, communication, and shared meaning become possible among individuals. In the context of the philosophy of language and social epistemology, this issue gains particular relevance, since the relationship between subjectivity



and the collective dimension of meaning formation determines the very foundations of human cognition and interaction. In this regard, the philosophical legacy of Ludwig Wittgenstein offers a distinctive and methodologically original approach to the problem of intersubjectivity.

Wittgenstein's philosophical evolution from the logical structure of language in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to the ordinary language analysis in *Philosophical Investigations* marks a significant shift in understanding the nature of meaning and its social grounding. While his early philosophy sought to establish a correspondence between language and reality through logical form, his later work emphasizes the practical use of language within specific social contexts. This transition provides a fertile ground for examining intersubjectivity not as a transcendental or metaphysical construct, but as an immanent feature of linguistic practices embedded in shared "forms of life."

The relevance of this study is determined by the growing need to reinterpret classical philosophical problems within the framework of modern interdisciplinary research, particularly in the fields of philosophy of language, cognitive science, and social theory. Despite extensive scholarly engagement with Wittgenstein's thought, the problem of intersubjectivity remains insufficiently systematized, often being treated indirectly through concepts such as language-games, rule-following, and the critique of private language. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of intersubjectivity within Wittgenstein's philosophy represents both a theoretical and methodological necessity.

The aim of this article is to analyze the essence and structure of intersubjectivity in Wittgenstein's philosophical framework, with particular attention to his later works. The study seeks to identify the conceptual foundations that make shared understanding possible and to clarify the role of communal linguistic practices in shaping meaning. To achieve this aim, the research employs hermeneutic, comparative, and conceptual analysis methods, drawing upon both primary texts and contemporary interpretations.

It is argued that Wittgenstein's approach to intersubjectivity challenges traditional dichotomies between subject and object, individual and society, by demonstrating that meaning arises within the public and normative space of language use. Consequently, intersubjectivity is not an external addition to subjectivity, but



rather its constitutive condition, grounded in the collective practices that define human forms of life.

The philosophical legacy of Ludwig Wittgenstein has been extensively studied within the domains of philosophy of language, epistemology, and social philosophy. However, the problem of intersubjectivity in his thought is rarely treated as an مستقل and systematically structured category; instead, it is often analyzed indirectly through related concepts such as language-games, rule-following, and the critique of private language. Therefore, a critical review of existing literature reveals both the richness of interpretations and the absence of a unified conceptual framework for understanding intersubjectivity in Wittgenstein's philosophy.

In classical interpretations, scholars such as G. E. M. Anscombe and Norman Malcolm emphasized the anti-metaphysical and ordinary language orientation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Their analyses focused on the practical and everyday use of language, highlighting that meaning is not an internal mental entity but a function of its public application. These interpretations implicitly support the intersubjective dimension of meaning, though they do not explicitly conceptualize it as such.

Later developments in Wittgensteinian scholarship, particularly in the works of Saul Kripke and Peter Winch, introduced new perspectives on rule-following and social practices. Kripke's skeptical interpretation of rule-following raised fundamental questions about the possibility of shared meaning and objective standards, thereby intensifying the debate on intersubjectivity. In contrast, Winch emphasized the inherently social nature of understanding, arguing that meaningful action is grounded in communal forms of life. These approaches significantly contributed to framing intersubjectivity as a socially constituted phenomenon.

Furthermore, comparative philosophical studies involving Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger provide an important background for analyzing intersubjectivity. While Husserl approached intersubjectivity through transcendental phenomenology and the constitution of the "Other," Heidegger reinterpreted it in terms of being-in-the-world (Dasein) and shared existence. In contrast to these approaches, Wittgenstein avoids both transcendental and



ontological abstractions, offering instead a linguistic-pragmatic account of intersubjectivity grounded in everyday practices.

Despite the diversity of interpretations, a common feature of the literature is the recognition that intersubjectivity in Wittgenstein's philosophy is inseparable from the public and normative character of language. However, the lack of a focused analytical synthesis necessitates a more systematic methodological approach, which this study aims to provide.

From a methodological perspective, this research is based on a combination of hermeneutic, comparative, and conceptual analysis methods. The hermeneutic method is employed to interpret Wittgenstein's primary texts, particularly *Philosophical Investigations*, in order to reveal the implicit structures of intersubjectivity embedded in his arguments. The comparative method allows for the examination of similarities and differences between Wittgenstein's views and those of other major philosophers, thereby situating his thought within a broader intellectual context.

In addition, conceptual analysis is used to clarify key notions such as language-games, forms of life, and rule-following, which serve as the foundational elements of intersubjectivity in Wittgenstein's philosophy. This approach enables a precise articulation of how shared meaning emerges from collective linguistic practices.

The analysis of Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy demonstrates that the problem of intersubjectivity is not explicitly formulated as an independent category, yet it is fundamentally embedded in his understanding of language, meaning, and social practice. In contrast to classical epistemological approaches that derive intersubjectivity from the relation between individual consciousnesses, Wittgenstein reorients the discussion toward the public and practical dimensions of language use. This shift allows intersubjectivity to be interpreted as an immanent feature of linguistic interaction rather than a transcendental condition.

A central element in this framework is the concept of language-games, which reflects the idea that meaning is constituted through use within specific social contexts. Language-games presuppose a plurality of participants who share certain rules and conventions, thereby establishing a common horizon of understanding. The analysis shows that without such shared participation,



linguistic expressions would lose their determinacy, making communication and mutual comprehension impossible. Thus, intersubjectivity emerges as a necessary condition for the functioning of language itself.

Another key aspect is the notion of “forms of life,” which provides the broader socio-cultural background within which language-games operate. Forms of life encompass the habitual practices, traditions, and modes of behavior that shape human interaction. The results of the study indicate that intersubjectivity, in Wittgenstein’s sense, is grounded not in abstract structures but in these concrete, historically conditioned practices. This implies that understanding is always situated and context-dependent, yet sufficiently stable to allow for shared meaning.

Particular attention has been given to the rule-following problem, which plays a decisive role in clarifying the normative dimension of intersubjectivity. The analysis reveals that following a rule is not a purely private mental act but a socially regulated practice that requires public criteria of correctness. In this regard, the interpretation proposed by Saul Kripke highlights the potential skepticism concerning the objectivity of meaning, while alternative readings emphasize the communal grounding of norms. The findings suggest that Wittgenstein resolves this tension by situating normativity within shared practices rather than in individual intentions or external metaphysical standards.

Equally significant is the critique of private language, which directly addresses the limits of subjectivity. Wittgenstein argues that a language understandable by only a single individual is incoherent, as it lacks the possibility of verification and correction. The results of this analysis confirm that this argument has profound implications for intersubjectivity: it establishes that meaning necessarily depends on publicly accessible criteria and, consequently, on the existence of a linguistic community. In this sense, intersubjectivity is not an additional feature of language but its constitutive foundation.

## Conclusions

The conducted study demonstrates that the problem of intersubjectivity occupies an implicit yet structurally central position in the philosophical framework of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Unlike traditional philosophical approaches that ground intersubjectivity in the relationship between individual consciousnesses or in



transcendental conditions, Wittgenstein reconceptualizes this problem within the sphere of language, practice, and social interaction. This shift allows intersubjectivity to be understood not as an abstract theoretical construct, but as a concrete and dynamic feature of human communicative life.

The analysis confirms that Wittgenstein's later philosophy provides a coherent foundation for interpreting intersubjectivity through the interconnected notions of language-games, forms of life, and rule-following. These concepts reveal that meaning is neither purely subjective nor entirely objective, but emerges within a shared normative space sustained by communal linguistic practices. In this context, intersubjectivity functions as the constitutive condition of meaning, ensuring the possibility of mutual understanding and coordinated action.

Particular significance is attributed to the critique of private language, which establishes the impossibility of purely individual meaning detached from public criteria. This argument reinforces the thesis that language inherently presupposes a community of speakers and that understanding is grounded in socially regulated practices. Consequently, intersubjectivity is not secondary to subjectivity; rather, it defines the very structure within which subjectivity becomes meaningful.

The study also highlights that Wittgenstein's approach overcomes the limitations of both radical subjectivism and strict objectivism by proposing a pragmatic and socially embedded account of meaning. This perspective contributes to contemporary discussions in philosophy of language, social epistemology, and philosophical anthropology, offering a viable alternative to metaphysical and reductionist interpretations of human cognition and communication.

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