A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE THEORIES OF MEANING OF ADVAITA VEDANTA INDIAN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This research is a documentary research based on information culled out from the relevant texts and works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta philosophy focusing on their theory of the meaning. This research has two objectives 1.) to study the theory of meaning of Advaita Vedanta Indian Philosophy of Language and Ludwig Wittgenstein Philosophy of Language 2) to compare the similarities and the differences between the theory of meaning of Advaita Vedanta Indian Philosophy of Language and Ludwig Wittgenstein Philosophy of Language. This research sought to elucidate and contrast the philosophical perspectives on language between Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. It aimed to provide a thorough and organized analysis to gain a deeper understanding of their respective views on language and meaning. Its objective was to utilize the prior examination of language and significance to enhance the utilization of language when depicting Reality, notably in the realms of philosophy and religion. Three methods are employed in preparing this research viz., analytical, comparative, and critical methods. These methods are used to systematically analyze meaning theory and problem, while also examining the merits and demerits of related concepts. The study reveals Wittgenstein's theory of meaning is based on logical analysis and linguistic philosophy, suggesting that language organization mirrors reality. Advaita Vedanta's theory, on the other hand, is a metaphysical and spiritual perspective, focusing on the essential identity between the soul and ultimate reality.

Introduction

Meaning is fundamental to human existence. Meaning is what provides life purpose, explanation, and fulfillment. This is why the search for meaning is a key preoccupation of philosophy and religion. The study of language is one of the occupations of philosophers both in the East and the West. Philosophers from the beginning have been discussing the importance of language and its problems since the time of Plato in the West and the Vedas in the East. Human thoughts are always represented by words. In other words, all thoughts are expressed by language. A thought, which is not expressed by language, is not a thought at all. This means that there is an inseparable relationship between language and reality.

Indian philosophers constantly concern about the relationship between language and Reality. Although, Indian philosophers do not have a common agreement however it is generally agreed that it is only through language at least something about the Ultimate Reality (the Brahman) can be said. Language is the only mode of communication by which we try to say about the nature of Reality. This means that if one desires to know the Ultimate Reality, then one must go beyond language (Goward, 1996). Hence, language is always transcended and is, thus, used in two different senses. Firstly, it is used to communicate all our ideas and thoughts thus, it is empirical. However, at the same time, it is also used to say something about the Ultimate Reality hence language is transcendental in this sense (Jha, 1981). Therefore, the phenomenal and the metaphysical are related by language. The phenomenal aspect of language deals with the outer aspects of language and the metaphysical is the inner aspects of language. In the West, language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. This means that language is a system of articulate sounds that have acquired meaning (Austin, 1962). Therefore, language according to the Western mind is naturalistic (Harrison, 1997). The words that we use in our daily life have meaning because we have assigned these meanings to the words. Language functions as only a mediator between man and the world (Katz, 1971). Understanding the world and its constituents is possible through language. Therefore, language for the Western mind is only man-made and language serves as the messenger between the world and man.

In summary, in the Western world, philosophy encompasses the systematic and logical exploration of the fundamental essence of reality. Indian philosophers perceive philosophy in the Western world as falling short of its full potential. It is often asserted that

Western philosophy is solely an intellectual pursuit and that religion and philosophy have become separated in the West. In Western societies, rationality is in direct opposition to faith. According to their argument, this division has not taken place inside the Indian culture. Numerous schools of thought among Indian religious traditions exhibit a lack of apprehension, shame, or self-awareness when engaging in deliberations concerning the fundamental essence of existence, surrounding both philosophical and religious viewpoints.

Objectives

This research aimed to explain and to compare the similarities and the differences of the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta philosophy by attempting to give a systematic and comprehensive exploration to gain insight into what both philosophers have said about language and meaning. It also aimed to apply the previous analysis of language and meaning to develop more effective use of language when describing the Reality particularly in the area of philosophy and religion.

Hypothesis

The meaning and the use of language according to Ludwig Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta can be explored and understood through the relationship of language, world, and reality.

Scope of the research

The scope of this research project will cover various concepts culled out from related texts and documents focusing on the theory of the meaning of Advaita Vedanta school of philosophy and Wittgenstein's two main works viz., Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and Philosophical Investigation.

Literature review

1.   The Western and Indian Philosophy of Language

The problem of meaning has attracted the attention of philosophers of all ages. The problem of meaning is one of the most important unsolved problems of the philosophy of language. In the west, Language and thought are interdependent (Lamarque & Asher, 1997). The formal properties of language, such as word order and sentence sequencing, constitute

the medium in which our connected thoughts can be presented and organized. Language serves numerous functions for human beings. In the Indian context, the basic division within Indian philosophies of language understood in terms of particularism and generalism of meaning leads us to the central debate on the status of the meaning-relation, which goes in the direction of determining the very status of meaning in language. (Banerjee et al., 1988). He also said that the Indian philosophy of language, meaning taken as the ground for the use of language is given a communicative dimension (Banerjee, 1963).

2.   **Early And Later Wittgenstein's Theory of Meaning**

Early Wittgenstein's language philosophy aims to establish an isomorphic relationship between words (language) and the world. This endeavor is supported by the theoretical framework of picture theory of meaning. The early writings of Wittgenstein exhibit a clear manifestation of the direct impact exerted by Frege and Russell (Martin, 2018). According to Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, it is posited that our language possesses inherent constraints, which consequently impact our cognitive processes. If individuals possess the intellectual capacity to effectively employ language, the occurrence of philosophical dilemmas would be mitigated (Wittgenstein, 1992). Put simply, all philosophical issues stem from the improper use of language. According to Wittgenstein, the assertions pertaining to metaphysics and ethics are beyond the scope of ideal language. As a result, they lack relevance within the realm of empirical reality. He asserts that reality is inherently limited by its logical and quantitative nature.

On the later period of his work, Wittgenstein himself saw his early philosophy as fundamentally distinct from his later philosophical works. Undoubtedly, Wittgenstein's assessment of his circumstances is quite astonishing. The logical contradiction of Wittgenstein's rejection of Tractatus' stance that *'all philosophical propositions are meaningless'* (Wittgenstein, 1992) was challenged by these two works, therefore liberating metaphysics from the constraints imposed by language. From the inception of his Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein focused on the constraints of language and prioritized its practical application over its theoretical domain (Whiting, 2010). During his initial stage, he asserted that metaphysical and moral assertions lack any reference to empirical entities. Contrary to this perspective, he suggests a novel mode of thinking where philosophical and moral claims hold their own importance in the everyday lives of individuals, influencing their use of language. He expressed the view that a notion gains significance when it may be applied to life. They are inherent in specific life types.,

consequently, they own their own set of linguistic games (Wittgenstein & Anscombe, 2003). In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein contends that language serves various purposes rather than one immutable trajectory. The societal life patterns of individuals give significance to language games that align with these life patterns. In essence, each manifestation of existence functions as a logical component inside a certain linguistic game. Therefore, a multiple language game assumes the presence of several foundations (Wittgenstein, 1973).

3.   Indian and Advaita Vedanta Philosophy of Language and Theory of Meaning

The Advaita theory of knowledge is founded upon the theory of meaning, as comprehension of a scriptural sentence is contingent on the interpretation of its meaning (Datta, 1932). Furthermore, the meaning of a given sentence is derived from the individual meanings of its component words. The Advaita tradition postulates that the definition of an expression is defined by a universal quality (Potter, 1981). Thus, a differentiation can be observed between the definition of a term and its actual meaning. According to the renowned Advaita philosopher Sankara, as cited by Potter, a word by itself does not comprise the object and is distinct from the object it signifies. To illustrate, the term 'Brahma' refers to an individual who attains the status of Brahma (Potter, 1977). The Brahmasutrabhasya posits a persuasive contention concerning the universal theory of meaning (Badarayana & Radhakrishnan, 1968) that no entities or individuals are denoted by words; instead, they denote the eternal universal. A shared attribute, alternatively referred to as the generic attribute, serves to differentiate every individual belonging to a particular class. The generic attribute 'cow hood', for example, is universally present in all cows. By virtue of this universal characteristic manifesting itself in a specific animal, cows are differentiated from non-cows. Krishnasamy also noted that when the notion of universality functions as the core significance of an expression, it prompts an inquiry into the relationship between universality and the specific (Krishnasamy Aiyer & Tattvabhushan, 1950). This inquiry possesses substantial international ramifications. As a result, a distinction between a particular and a universal is imperceptible. Conversely, Advaita-Vedanta posit that universality does not constitute an enigmatic eternal being, instead, it encompasses the fundamental attributes that are common to a collective of beings.

Thus, two distinct categories of meaning are posited within the Advaita tradition. The literary or primary meaning and the secondary or metaphorical meaning (Radhakrishnan,

1928). A word operates metaphorically when it signifies an object or subject apart from its literal one. A metaphoric usage occurs when a name or descriptive term is applied to an object in a way that is not literal, or when the expression's literal meaning would result in an unsuitable or meaningless sentence. Despite the fact that the literal referent to which the word is referred to is considered to be distinct from its typical one, the metaphorical meaning can be connected to the literal meaning in some ways. Then, Radhakrishnan concluded that the connection between primary and metaphorical meanings is established either by means of comparison or by another means. Therefore, when a word signifies a referent other than its customary or primary function (Radhakrishnan, 1989),   Sadananda advised that in order to comprehend the significance of the phrase "great saying" (*mahavakya*), **tattvamasi** (that thau art) requires abandoning incompatible primary meanings and determining the truth of the sentence based on the residual portion of the primary meaning (Sadananda & Ballantyne, 1850). The truth of the sentence cannot be determined by its primary meanings alone, as the primary meaning of both **tat** (that) and **tvam** (thou) is consciousness characterized by immediacy. In order to attain the true tatvamasi verse, it is necessary to abandon meanings that are incompatible with consciousness characterized by immediacy. The truth of **'tatvamasi'** is defined by its remaining primary meaning. The primary definitions of mediacy and immediacy should be eliminated in order to attain a state of pure consciousness that is individually experienced and where consciousness itself is of high quality.

Methodology

This research is a documentary research based on information culled out from the relevant texts and works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta philosophy focusing on the theory of the meaning of Advaita Vedanta school of philosophy and Wittgenstein's two main works viz., Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and Philosophy Investigation. Three methods are employed in preparing this research viz., analytical, comparative, and critical methods.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical and conceptual framework of this research are based on the Advaita Vedanta and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and the theory of meaning. The study of the philosophy of language is a subfield of philosophy that investigates the characteristics of language, such as its origins, its development, and the influence it has on human thought and interaction. The theory of meaning is an important part of this

study since it attempts to explain how words and sentences come to have meaning as well as how language is connected to the outside world. The Eastern and Western philosophical traditions have distinct philosophical foundations, approaches, and emphases in their conceptions of meaning. While both traditions are concerned with the nature of meaning in language and thought, their philosophical perspectives and the questions they prioritize frequently diverge. In this research, three concepts are applied to make a clear and distinct compare and contrast of both philosophical schools namely, Language and Reality, Meaning and Use, and the Limit of Language.
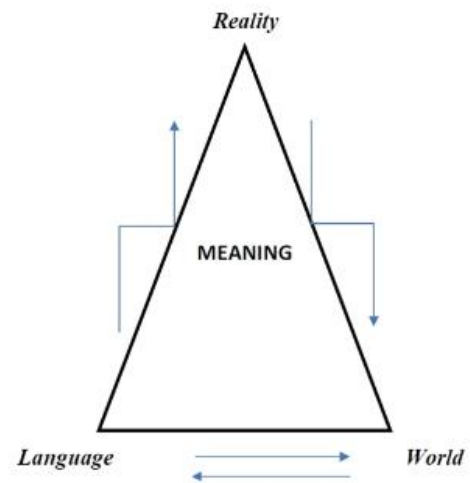
Results

1.   **Comparison of Relationship of Language, World, and Reality.**

According to early Wittgenstein, while examining the meaning of a claim, only elementary propositions can be found. The comprehensive understanding of propositions can be achieved by the utilization of elementary propositions. Consequently, if one possessed a comprehensive collection of all conceivable elementary propositions, it would be possible to express any conceivable statement. The non-elementary propositions might be understood as molecular statements that are formed by combining elementary propositions. Molecular propositions are constructed by combining elementary assertions to form truth-functional compounds. The entirety of knowledge regarding the world is contingent upon the truth-value of the fundamental premises. The entire description of the world can be achieved by listing all true simple propositions. As per Tractatus, there exist solely three categories of propositions namely, tautologous, contradictory, and descriptive.

Tautologous propositions are universally true, contradictory propositions are universally false, and only descriptive statements possess the ability to be either true or untrue. The limitations inherent in language impose equivalent constraints on the extent to which reality may be articulated. The constraints of language are analogous to the constraints of reality.

Wittgenstein, in his later works titled 'Philosophical Investigations', argued that his previous comprehension of language was insufficient since he regarded language as monofunctional rather than multifunctional. The individual held the assumption that the primary purpose of language is to describe facts, and furthermore, they held the belief that sentences obtain their meanings by presenting factual information. In this work, he also argued that language serves numerous tasks beyond the mere representation of facts. According to Wittgenstein, the meanings of words are derived from their usage, and each word possesses a meaning within a specific context that may vary when employed in a different context. In the later period, he refuted the presumption of a singular linguistic pattern.

The nature of language in India can be discussed from the two principal traditions. Firstly, the Brahmanical traditions stemming from the scriptures, which hold the view that language is divine and secondly, the Naturalistic tradition which holds the view that language is an arbitrary and conventional tool. The Advaita Vedanta comes under the Brahmanical tradition. The school aims to explore the nature of reality, awareness, and ultimate truth. The concept of Brahman, the ultimate reality that transcends all limitations and is non-dual, infinite, and unchanging, is central to the Advaita Vedanta. The distinction between duality and non-duality is important to Advaita Vedanta. Duality refers to the perception of the world as a collection of distinct objects, beings, and experiences. It is the realm of distinctions, divisions, and limitations. Non-duality, on the other hand, emphasizes the intrinsic unity and interdependence of all things. It is the knowledge that at the ultimate level, there is no separate self or individual existence aside from the all-encompassing reality of Brahman. Language, by definition, performs in the world of duality. It is based on words and thoughts that distinguish and divide.

According to Advaita Vedanta, language operates largely within the sphere of empirical reality or the phenomenal world. Language serves as a medium of communication on this conventional plane of reality, allowing us to utter thoughts, convey information, and engage in dialogue. It allows us to manage our daily lives and engage with others. It is critical,

however, to note that these language exchanges take place within the context of duality and should not be mistaken for ultimate reality.

In the Advaita Vedanta tradition, two sorts of meanings are proposed: the primary meaning, which refers to the literal or surface level of the text, and the secondary meaning, which pertains to the metaphorical or symbolic level. A term is said to possess metaphorical functionality when it signifies a referent that deviates from its conventional meaning. A metaphoric usage refers to the act of applying a name or descriptive phrase to an object in a manner that deviates from its literal or primary meaning, resulting in a sentence that lacks proper meaning. The word's true referent is considered distinct from its typical one, yet there exists a connection between the metaphorical meaning and the primary meaning. The connection between metaphorical meaning and primary meaning can be established either through the process of comparison or through alternative forms of association. The term "*Laksana*" refers to the function of a word that signifies a referent that is distinct from its typical or primary meaning, but nevertheless connected to its fundamental meaning.

2.   Comparison of The Theory of Meaning

The philosophical frameworks of Advaita Vedanta and Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of meaning are two independent approaches that engage with the fundamental aspects of reality and the significance of language in comprehending it. The primary objective of this study is to do a comparative analysis of their respective viewpoints pertaining to reality, language, knowledge, and self.

Reality: Advaita Vedanta posits that reality, as per its philosophical framework, is fundamentally characterized by non-dualism. The concept asserts Brahman as the ultimate, immutable truth that embraces the entirety of existence. Advaita Vedanta posits that the empirical realm is perceived as an illusory manifestation of Brahman. The objective is to attain an understanding of the non-dualistic essence of Brahman and surpass the deceptive elements of existence. According to Wittgenstein, the concept of reality can be understood as a compilation of language games, in which the significance of words is established through their application within particular contextual frameworks.

Language: Regarding the language perspective, the philosophical tradition of Advaita Vedanta posits that language is inherently constrained in its ability to fully articulate the profound nature of Brahman, the ultimate reality. Language is perceived as a tool for facilitating individuals' direct engagement with the divine, rather than serving as a mechanism for delivering an exact depiction or comprehension of it. Wittgenstein's philosophical inquiry

centers on the examination of language and its application within diverse contextual frameworks. He places significant emphasis on the notion that meaning is formed via language games, which refer to specific forms of language employed within distinct social practices.

Knowledge: Advaita Vedanta posits that the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to the ultimate reality, Brahman, is not solely achieved by intellectual investigation. The non-dualistic character of Brahman is realized through the emphasis on direct experience or intuition. The objective of scriptural teachings, contemplation, and spiritual practices is to foster an experiential comprehension, as opposed to the mere acquisition of conventional knowledge. Wittgenstein's philosophical framework does not place explicit emphasis on the process of knowledge acquisition. Nevertheless, he places significant emphasis on the significance of comprehending the use of language within many settings as a means of acquiring a pragmatic comprehension of meaning.

Self: Advaita Vedanta posits that the individual self, known as Atman, is essentially indistinguishable from Brahman, the ultimate reality. The genuine essence of the self is obscured by the perceptual deception of personal distinctiveness and isolation. Self-realization entails the acknowledgment of one's identity with Brahman, thereby beyond the constrained concept of the individual self. Wittgenstein's philosophical stance is the rejection of the notion of a stable and inherent self. The individual perceives the self as a dynamic and mutable entity that arises from the use of language and engagement in social customs.

3.   Comparison of The Nature and Function of Language

Regarding to language and its limitations in capturing the Ultimate Reality, Advaita Vedanta posits that language is inherently constrained in its capacity to fully apprehend the ultimate reality of Brahman. Brahman is commonly perceived as transcending linguistic depiction or understanding. Language is commonly regarded as a means by which persons might be directed towards the understanding of non-dualistic reality. On the other hand, Wittgenstein argues that the function of language is not to accurately depict an external reality, but rather to serve as a pragmatic instrument for communication within particular contextual frameworks. Consequently, there exists no imperative to pursue an immutable, universally applicable relationship between words and the objective world.

Regarding to the meaning and utilization, Advaita Vedanta is a philosophical school that places emphasis on the immediate apprehension of Brahman, a transcendent reality that surpasses mental comprehension. Words and concepts are commonly seen as

provisional and approximate instruments that might serve as guides for individuals in their journey towards the attainment of non-duality. In contrary, Wittgenstein's philosophical framework places significant emphasis on the notion that the meaning of words is contingent upon their use within specific contextual frameworks. The semantic significance of a word is not rigidly established or dictated by an inherent essence or referential basis, but rather by its participation in linguistic activities and the particular purposes it fulfils within those activities.

In connection with the reference and objectivity, Advaita Vedanta does not place emphasis on the reference to an external reality. Conversely, the emphasis lies on the attainment of direct experiential understanding regarding the non-dualistic essence of Brahman. The ultimate reality is perceived as transcending the constraints of language and cognition, hence diminishing the significance of referencing an external reality. Wittgenstein's philosophical stance is a rejection of the concept that language functions as a reflective representation of objective reality. The determination of a word's reference is contingent upon its function within the social practices of a particular language community, rather than an external and objective reality that exists independently of language.

Conclusion

This study aims to compare the theories of meaning put forth by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta. It explores multiple aspects, such as their fundamental principles, perspectives on language, comprehension of reality, epistemological consequences, and practical implementations. The following is a comprehensive analysis of each dimension:

Wittgenstein's theory of meaning is grounded in the fundamental ideas of logical atomism and the picture theory of language, as expounded in his seminal masterpiece "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus." He suggests that significant statements replicate fundamental realities in the world, and the organization of language mirrors the logical arrangement of reality. The theory of meaning in Advaita Vedanta is based on the fundamental premise of non-dualism (Advaita), which posits the essential identity between the particular soul (atman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman). The concept of meaning, within this particular context, is closely intertwined with the comprehension of ultimate reality rather than being solely a representation of language.

Wittgenstein perceives language as a well-organized system that is regulated by logical principles. The author underscores the significance of employing precise and lucid language in order to faithfully depict factual evidence and logical connections. Wittgenstein's subsequent writings, specifically in the Philosophical Investigations, delve into the realm of language games and the interpretive significance of context. In Advaita Vedanta, language is regarded as a means of communication and education, but it is ultimately deemed insufficient for articulating the indescribable essence of Brahman. The nature of language is intrinsically dualistic, resulting in the formation of distinctions and divisions that hinder the recognition of the fundamental unity of existence.

The foundation of Wittgenstein's comprehension of reality is rooted in the principles of logical atomism, which posits that the world is comprised of atomic facts. Meaningful propositions serve as a reflection of reality, whereas the structure of language mirrors the logical structure of reality. In contrast, Advaita Vedanta asserts that the ultimate reality, known as Brahman, is distinct from dualistic and transcendent, surpassing the constraints imposed by language and conceptual comprehension. Reality is comprehended as the inherent coherence of existence, wherein differentiations and dualisms are deceptive.

When considering the transcendental nature of language, Wittgenstein accepts the inherent limitations of language. However, his methodology centers on the refinement of language in order to faithfully depict empirical truths and logical relationships. Advaita Vedanta promotes the idea of surpassing the constraints of language entirely in the quest for ultimate truth. In order to attain a comprehensive comprehension of Brahman, it is imperative to transcend language and conceptual frameworks by engaging in various disciplines, including meditation, self-inquiry, and direct spiritual experience.

Wittgenstein's notion of meaning has profound ramifications for epistemology, influencing our comprehension of knowing and justification, both in terms of epistemology and practicality. The foundation of knowledge lies in the precise depiction of factual information using language and logical connections. Advaita Vedanta presents a critique of prevailing epistemological frameworks by positing that superior truth surpasses the limitations of language and conceptual comprehension. The acquisition of knowledge pertaining to Brahman does not occur through empirical observation or logical deduction, but rather through direct realization.

Furthermore, the philosophy of language proposed by Wittgenstein possesses practical implications within other domains, including logic, philosophy of mind, and

philosophy of science. His concepts regarding language games and the boundaries of language have had a significant impact on diverse fields of study. Moreover, Advaita Vedanta provides pragmatic implications in the realm of spiritual and contemplative endeavors, with the ultimate objective of attaining an understanding of the non-dualistic essence of existence. Advaita Vedanta emphasizes the need of meditation, self-inquiry, and devotion as fundamental practices for surpassing language and conceptual constraints.

In summary, it can be seen that Wittgenstein's theory of meaning is grounded in the principles of logical analysis and linguistic philosophy, but Advaita Vedanta presents a metaphysical and spiritual viewpoint that surpasses the limitations of language and conceptual comprehension. A comparative analysis of these theories offers valuable insights into the varied interpretations of meaning and reality within several philosophical traditions.

Suggestion

One might explore the ideas of meaning put out by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta through many approaches. For instance, the examination of the historical and intellectual circumstances surrounding the emergence of Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta is encompassed within the historical background and development. Examine the impact of earlier philosophical traditions and present controversies on the development of their theories of meaning. A comprehensive examination of primary texts, including Wittgenstein's "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" and "Philosophical Investigations," as well as significant Advaita Vedanta texts such as the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and works by renowned Advaita philosophers like Shankaracharya, can be undertaken to analyze the fundamental arguments, concepts, and methodologies utilized by Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta in elucidating their theories of meaning. The assessment of the practical implications of Wittgenstein's and Advaita Vedanta's theories of meaning for contemporary philosophical discourse, as well as their relevance to issues in ethics, politics, aesthetics, and religion, could be undertaken through the examination of their practical applications and contemporary relevance. The examination of these theories can provide valuable insights for interdisciplinary investigations, encompassing cognitive science, psychology, anthropology, and literary theory. Through active participation in additional scholarly inquiry, academics and researchers have the opportunity to enhance their comprehension of the profound philosophical lineages embodied by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Advaita Vedanta, as well as their significant contributions to the wider philosophical conversation.

Acknowledgements

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