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## The World Is the Totality of Values: On How to Challenge Wittgenstein's Positivism



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What is reality? In a narrow positivistic or empirical vision, whose expression can be found in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, facts are the whole reality. He declares: "The world is the totality of facts ...". These declarations can serve as an example of how positivism, which declares itself an antimetaphysical program, formulates a metaphysical thesis. For the positivists, reality, what-exists, is sensible facts, denoting what can be observed. Values and other qualitative attributes of the world that cannot be observed and classified as facts, are considered the domain of subjectivity, the matter of personal preference, and as such are excluded from reality and scientific inquiry. Statements about them are denied any sense. This is why for Wittgenstein, as well as for other positivists, ethics, a domain of values, cannot be meaningfully expressed. Positivism in social sciences excludes the possibility of a rational, theoretical discussion of a morally and politically good life, and of making meaningful value choices.

However, positivism conceals an implicit subjectivism that is present in the cognitive process. It does not understand that its description of reality as facts is only an interpretation that takes facts to be reality itself and derives from this view practical consequences related to the possibility of thinking and speaking meaningfully about values. Values can be defined as the qualities that human beings appreciate because of their usefulness or their role in the satisfaction of human needs. If we agree with the positivists that values cannot be known by direct observation like physical phenomena, this does not mean that values cannot be known at all, or do not exist, or are merely subjective. Since in knowing the world, our subjectivity is always involved—or there is always a knower and what is to be known—facts are essentially subjective. Further, just as it is possible to communicate facts to others and agree on statements concerning them, because if we practice impartiality and neutrality, they can be made inter-subjective, and in this sense, also objective, so also it is possible to express values with sense, agree on them, and implement them in our lives. Hence, rationality and meaningfulness are not merely limited to factuality. We can speak rationally and meaningfully about values as well. They are the essential part of our human reality.

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### Biography:

Prof. W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz is one of Poland's most renowned philosophers and political thinkers. He has had an extensive and distinguished career as a government official, educator, and scholar. Brought up in the city of Gdansk, he was a student leader in the Solidarity movement. He was then elected Deputy Mayor of Gdansk and served as an Expert for the European Commission. He has received his doctorate from the University of Oxford and has taught at many universities. Currently, he is a professor at Collegium Humanum in Warsaw and Anglo-American University in Prague. He is the author of several books including *Tractatus Politico-Philosophicus* (Routledge 2017). He has also contributed to world-recognized online reference sources, having authored articles on "Political Realism in International Relations" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. He is the recipient of the Personality of the Year Poland 2020 Award in Science.