UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

WITTGENSTEIN'S THEORY OF SEMIOTIC SYSTEMS AND ITS APPLICATIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTATION AND COMMUNICATION

BY

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C80/81601/2009

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

2013
ABSTRACT

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This study is an attempt to establish the semiotic theory of Wittgenstein as it can be discerned in his two major works namely, the Tractatus and the Philosophical Investigations. The specific problem of the study is to investigate the theory of representation and communication in the philosophy of Wittgenstein. The core task of the study consists in determining the necessary and sufficient conditions for the adequacy of representation and efficacy of communication of a sign system in the philosophy of Wittgenstein.

The study is based on three basic assumptions which hold that Wittgenstein’s philosophical insights include a semiotic theory; that all semiotic systems can be formalized recursively from a finite set of components and rules and finally that communication constitutes the pragmatic aspect of Wittgenstein’s theory of language. Concomitant with these assumptions are three basic objectives that the study has attempted to achieve namely, determination of the semiotic theories in the Tractatus and the Philosophical Investigations, interpretation of the communicative theory of Wittgenstein and lastly, indication of the relevant areas where Wittgenstein’s ideas can be applied relative to the chief philosophical goals of semiotic activity identified in the study which are representation and communication.

Consequent to the analysis of the semiotic theories in the two chief works of Wittgenstein, the study has attempted to synthesise the two works by employing the theoretical framework of model-theory as proposed by Tarski but extended by Henry Hiz in order to formulate a unified semiotic theory of Wittgenstein. The study concludes that the philosophy of Wittgenstein gleaned from the two major works implies a semiotic theory in which signs are given a much richer conception as a four term relation whose variables are the users, the sign, the object signified and the context of use. This semiotic theory is further applicable as a basis for reconciling the logical and the social semiotics, elaboration of philosophy of communication as well as a framework for developing a methodology for multidimensional textual analysis.