

Wittgenstein's Concept of Language Games

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Abstract: Austrian British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein is one of the greatest philosophers in the 20th century. He mostly works in analytic philosophical thought in topics as diverse as logic and language, perception and intention, ethic and religion, aesthetic and culture. Philosophers often create their own vocabularies by giving special meanings to ordinary terms and phrases. Wittgenstein coinages the term of "language games" and the 'private language argument'. His argument on the language is the rules of the use of ordinary language is neither right nor wrong, neither true nor false, the language is merely useful for the particular applications in which they are applied. Language is defined not as a system of representation but as a system of devices for engaging in various sorts of social activity, hence 'the meaning of the word is its use in the language.

Keywords: language game; philosophy; language interpretation

I. Introduction

Wittgenstein is known as an 'Ordinary Language Philosopher', for he purposes to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. Now it may be objected that the words just mentioned 'language games', 'form of life' are themselves not examples of everyday use. But Wittgenstein is not committed to excluding non ordinary uses from the category of 'use'. However what he says about meaning and use will also apply to non ordinary uses. Thus, if a philosopher uses such words as 'knowledge', 'being', 'object' and so on, in particular ways, then his usage will show what he means by them. The purpose of bringing these words 'back to their everyday use' is to remind ourselves that they have, such a use, and to contrast this with the philosophers' use, avoiding the temptation to regard the later as giving the 'real' meaning.

Wittgenstein's theory of language games can be instructive on several accounts when applied to semiotic discussion. Indeed, any interaction with signs, production of signs, or attribution of meaning owes its existence to its status as a move in a language game – that is, a conceptual architecture, a grammar that we must uncover.

Consider the Augustinian definition of the sign: something put in the place of something else (to which it is imperative to add: in a relation of meaning or representation). Wittgenstein tells us that of the elements that make up the semiotic relation (sign, modes of representation or signifying, the sign's referent, etc.), none exists outside a language game. In an interpretive act, nothing is "intrinsically" a sign: the grammar of the language game is what makes it possible to identify the sign, its way of being a sign and what it is a sign of. That very complexity of feelings and contradiction are the elements of American romance as they exist in social realities (Zarei, 24-37).

The grammar of psychoanalysis is what turns a failure of memory into a parapraxis, and the parapraxis into a sign of some unconscious desire; this justifies inferring desire from a failure of memory. The grammar of the language game of reading fiction is what makes it

possible to see a particular printed object as a fictional discourse, which then allows us to imagine the fictional world that this discourse represents. The grammar of psychological interpretation of facial expressions is what makes it possible to see a frown as a sign, and to read the frown as a dysphoric expression of incomprehension, disagreement or scepticism. Even identifying a sign, regardless of its degree of complexity, is a move in the language game that will lead to its interpretation; and a mere description of the sign cannot help revealing the grammar of the game being played.

On this concept of the philosophical enterprise, the vagueness of ordinary usage is not a problem to be eliminated but rather the source of linguistic riches. It is misleading even to attempt to fix the meaning of particular expressions by linking them referentially to things in the world. The meaning of a word or phrase or proposition is nothing other than the set of informal rules governing the use of the expression in actual life. The aims of language games.

Our clear and simple language games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of languages it were first approximations, ignoring friction and air resistance. The language games are rather set up as 'objects of comparison' which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities. My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense (78).

The idea is that if we think in terms of language games, that is, if we ask how our language games are taught and how they are used, then we will begin to see past certain myths in our culture that trap us in misleading pictures of language processes and communication. Getting past these pictures will enable us to see human psychology with fresh eyes, but what we see with fresh eyes is not predetermined. Wittgenstein does not tell us what we will see. He simply helps us see past these ancient pictures.

1. Fictional examples of language use that are simpler than our own everyday language. (e.g. PI 2)
2. Simple uses of language with which children are first taught language (training in language).
3. Specific regions of our language with their own grammars and relations to other languagegames.
4. All of a natural language seen as comprising a family of languagegames.

These meanings are not separated from each other by sharp boundaries, but blend into one another (as suggested by the idea of family resemblance). The concept is based on the following analogy: The rules of language are analogous to the rules of games; thus saying something in a language is analogous to making a move in a game. The analogy between a language and a game demonstrates that words have meaning depending on the uses made of them in the various and multiform activities of human life. (The concept is not meant to suggest that there is anything trivial about language, or that language is "just a game.")

All the levels of the modes of being and perception are governed by the same law of unity, which at the level of the intelligible world is the unity of intellection, of the intelligizing subject, and of the Form intelligized the same unity as that of love, lover and beloved. Within this perspective we can perceive what Sadra meant by the unitive union of the human soul, in the supreme awareness of its acts of knowledge, with the active Intelligence which is the Holy Spirit. It is never a question of an arithmetical unity, but of an intelligible unity permitting the reciprocity which allows us to understand that, in the soul which it metamorphoses, the Form—or Idea—intelligized by the active Intelligence is a Form which intelligizes itself, and

that as a result the active Intelligence or Holy Spirit intelligizes itself in the soul's act of intellection. (Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal, 1 February 2020) Raoufzadeh in his article believes that believe that the most important point about getting a good insight of our present reality is at the same time that we accept it. This means that although we live in present and accept its reality, we do not have to give up to it. (Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal, 1 February 2020).

II. Research Methods

The nature of language dominate modern Western thought: Language as a cultural product and investigation into its nature and Language as a strictly philosophical considerations incorporating anthropological, sociological, and historical perspectives. Questions about the relationship and implications for philosophy between mind, word, and world. cultural considerations are bracketed out in the name of a more 'scientific' perspective and the object of study is not so much language itself as the relationship between language and the world. The principal philosophical task in this tradition is to examine the various ways indicative sentences establish a truthful relationship between the minds of the speakers and language's referents.

Language is less to do with naming the world than the power of the word, as Herder realized, to bind a culture and a people. The second view, on the other hand, depends upon designation. Descriptive language, on this view, provided it is used with logical rigour, grants access to the mind of the user and gives an accurate picture of the world and its contents. Virtually a sub-discipline of philosophy of mind in the eyes of many contemporary practitioners, philosophy of language works on the assumption that attention to propositional truth is revealing from two different directions: a subjective (mind-dependent) route leads to disclosure of the nature of mind and cognitive 'processes', the other way offers an accurate representation of the 'external' world.

The Kantian subordination of linguistic competence to the overarching structures of rational thought, running from Kant's foremost contemporary critic Johann Georg Hamann to Gadamer, includes the prominent luminaries in the history of modern German philosophy: What unites them is not simply affiliation to a geographical region with a common cultural heritage but participation in an approach to language and a style of philosophizing. the expressive power of speech overshadows its communicative reach. The word rather than a token for thought is thought itself in all its imaginative and world-disclosing and world- (or at least linguistic community-) uniting potency. The expressive dimension of the word reaches well beyond its power to bridge mind and world. The power of speech is also the power to create a world, and make possible the intricacies of social life.

Wittgenstein is more usually associated with the Anglophone analytic philosophy of language tradition but his work has many points of contact with the Continental tradition. He begins to look in many ways like Gadamer. There are crucial stylistic and thematic differences, there are many more similarities and a surprising degree of overlap in their treatment of language emerges. Analytical thought has been rather unreflective about its own self-understanding and generally ignored genetic and historically relevant questions.

Although the concept of the language game is central to Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the notion is still an elusive one to define and to grasp, for at least two reasons. Firstly, from *The Blue Book* to *On Certainty*, one can pick out several distinct usages of the term "language games". Sometimes it refers to the fictive examples that Wittgenstein invents

to explain how language ordinarily functions, sometimes it refers to children's language-learning games, and sometimes to semiotic practices, that is, the socially shared ways of using signs, of signifying and of representing. Secondly, the notion is never explicitly defined. Wittgenstein preferred to proceed by example, using fragments of short, dense analyses to convey what the language games are.

In this chapter we will present the language games in their later acceptance, the one that began to emerge in the *Philosophical Investigations*, then moved to the foreground in *On Certainty*: language games as semiotic practices. Although we cannot directly solve the problem of not having a definition, we will nonetheless try to present an analytical trajectory that will help convey the key concepts – language game, move and grammar –, which are all related. In order to have a complete picture, we would also have to introduce Wittgenstein's "form of life" concept, which is the cultural environment in which the language game occurs, the "community which is bound together by science and education" (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. 38e). For reasons of brevity, we will leave it aside.

III. Discussion

3.1 Postmodernist interpretation

Jean-François Lyotard explicitly drew upon Wittgenstein's concept of language games in developing his own notion of metanarratives in *The Postmodern Condition*. However, Wittgenstein's concept is, from its inception, of a plurality of language games; their plurality is not taken to be a feature solely of contemporary discourse. Lyotard's discussion is primarily applied in the contexts of authority, power and legitimation, where Wittgenstein's is concerned

3.2. Wittgenstein's concept of Language Games

Language Game is the key term in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Many ordinary readers misunderstand and presume that language game means 'word game', in the sense of people playing words tricks, but they make a mistake.

The meaning of a word is no longer its relation to some anomic fact; the meaning of a word is in its use. We use language in a variety of way; to talk about science, religion, art and so on. He does not agree with the logical positivists that only scientific statements have meaning; science is only one way to talk about the world; only game. A language games reflect a human activity; a form of life. Words derived their meaning from the function they perform within the language games such as scientific language game, religious language game, an aesthetic language game and many others. A word may have a variety of usages. What these different usages have in common, Wittgenstein calls a 'Family resemblance'. Member of family bear a resemblance to each other, but no two members of family look exactly alike. The same is true for the use of words.

'The individual word of language name object- sentence is combinations of such names. In this picture of language we find the roots of following ideas; every word has meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands' (Wittgenstein, 1953).

It may be thought that there must be some such correlation between words and objects, language and reality, language is the way it is having the kind of structure and vocabulary that it has for these would be determined by the reality to which language corresponds. The *Philosophical Investigations*, the book that Wittgenstein used to introduce the concept of a "language game.

"Let us imagine a language ...The language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones; There are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words 'block', 'pillar', 'slab', 'beam'. A calls them out; B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such and such a call. Conceive of this as a complete primitive language.

A model of language in which everything is simplified. We sometimes use language more or less like this in our own culture as a complete primitive language.

We could imagine that [language]... was the whole language of A and B; Even the whole language of a tribe. The children are brought up to perform these actions, to use these words as they do so, and to react in this way to the words of others.

Wittgenstein says that the people are trained to "react in this way" to the words of others. People seem to be using language to prompt people to do specific things. Imagine, as might be the case in our world that the workers worked on different jobs on different days. And when the work supervisor on one day called out "beam" the worker was to take the beam behind a fence, and on another day the task was to crush the beam with a big stone. In our language, at least for normal adults, words and phrases have multiple purposes, and the listeners must interpret the context to know what to do.

In the practice of the use of [thatlanguage] one party calls out the words, the other acts on them. In instruction in the language the following process will occur: the learner names the objects; That is, he utters the word when the teacher points to the stone. And there will be this still simpler exercise: the pupil repeats the words after the teacher both of these being processes resembling language.

Wittgenstein has just given us two different training exercises that could be used to assist children in learning this primitive language game. In one of these, the adult points to objects and names them and in the other the adult simply says the word (such as "beam") and the child repeats the word mechanically after the adult. These are familiar exercises for teaching children any language. Notice, however, that teaching a child how to pronounce a term or name an object does not thereby teach the child how to use the term.

When one shows someone the king in chess and says: "This is the king", this does not tell him the use of this piece unless he already knows the rules of the game up to this last point... We may say: only someone who already knows how to do something with it can significantly ask a name.

And when the child first learns to speak a simple word like "dog" the term does not necessarily fit into its schema of things so that he can use the term as more mature language users do. We can imagine that the child's word "dog" might initially be applied to a range of inappropriate things, not only cows and pigs, but it might be used to mean I want to go outside (where the child encountered the dog.) And this may happen more than we realize because we are so familiar with the concept "dog" that we could well presume that the child was using it within the rules of our language when the child is not doing so.

We can also think of the whole process of using words in (2) as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games 'language games'

and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language game. And the processes of naming the stones and of repeating words after someone might also be called language games. (55)

And children learning English are taught such mechanical responses before they understand the meaning of what they do and say. "How old are you?" the adult says, and the child holds up three fingers without knowing that each finger stands for a year or even what a year is.

I shall also call the whole [of language], consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language game.'" (18)

Ask yourself how are these individual games are similar to (2)? Like (2) they each have their own unique rules. The words "A large bear came upon the scene" is understood differently if one thinks of it as a description, a reporting of an event, a forming of a hypothesis, or the telling of a story. This means, there are different rules for interpreting words in the different language games.

But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question, and command? There are 'countless' kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentence'. And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence and others become obsolete and get forgotten.(99)

Complicating matters further, we soon learn that we can organize a whole language into its component language games using various schemes just as we might organize a collection of stones according to their size or according to their color. We organize them one way for one purpose and another way for another purpose. Here the term 'language game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the 'speaking' of language is part of an activity, or form of life.

V. Conclusion

The term "language games" has a family of related meanings. It refers to models of primitive language that Wittgenstein invents to clarify the working of language in general. It refers to games that children play that enables them to learn language and it refers to a multiplicity of language practices in our ordinary languages as well as the whole of any ordinary language. Learning a language is much more than just learning words. The way language works to prompt a desired (or perhaps undesired) response. The way in which these language games can be learned before we have mastered the individual concepts used in the game. The way in which we can confuse language games and become muddled, how this is a natural and inevitable part of any philosophical attempt. And, finally, the concept presents itself as a way of analyzing those muddles so as to dispel them. to mark distinctions between a wide ranges of activities in which language users engage.

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