

# Wittgenstein, Metaphors, and Mental Concepts

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## 1. Introduction

Wittgenstein wrote the following, rather unsettling, remark towards the end of his life:

The "inner" is a delusion. That is: the whole complex of ideas alluded to by this word is like a painted curtain drawn in front of the scene of the actual word use (LW2 p.84).

My aim in this short paper is to place this passage in the correct context of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, and to suggest a fruitful direction in which a Wittgensteinian investigation of mental concepts may develop.

## 2. The Generation of Philosophical Problems

Let us start by clarifying Wittgenstein's general programme for philosophy. It is well known that he characterised philosophy as "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language (PI §109)." But *how* does language deceive our intelligence? Wittgenstein's answer is: by means of formal analogies among linguistic expressions. This view can be traced back to the *Tractatus* (cf. 3.323-5), and is more expressly stated at various places in the "Philosophy" chapter of TS213. The view that analogical expressions breed philosophical problems is found in the later philosophy as well:

Our investigation ... sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression ... (PI §90).

Wittgenstein also writes:

A Gleichnis that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance ... (PI §112).

"Gleichnis" is rendered "simile" in the English translation. But in the early draft of the *Investigations*, a paragraph identical to the above quote is followed by examples of *Gleichnisse* (TS220 §98), and they seem to indicate that "Gleichnis" as used by Wittgenstein refers to the analogies in the forms of words that are mentioned in PI §90. Wittgenstein's examples are divisible, I think, into two types.

(1) An example of the first type is the word "is". This word can be used as a copula as well as an identity sign. Thus, a particular rose is red in the sense that it has the property of being red, but it is not red in the sense that it is not the same as red. This is a case of formal analogy resulting from simple homonymy. According to Wittgenstein, the most serious philosophical confusion is produced by such an analogy.

(2) An example of the second type is the concept of time. Wittgenstein says, "Think of how the substantive 'time' can remind us of a medium, how it can mislead us and make us chase a phantom." Here the formal analogy lies in parts of speech. That is, "time" and "table" are analogous in that they are both nouns. The anxiety here is that the noun "time" misleadingly *objectifies* (or *personifies* (CV p.22)) time. Wittgenstein also refers to the fact that we speak of measuring time. This notion has an obvious analogy to spatial measurement. This creates the philosophical problem of how we measure time when it is not before our eyes. Inasmuch as these analogies reify time, they can be viewed as figures, especially metaphors, rather than as mere homonyms.

### 3. The Elimination of Philosophical Problems

What strategy should be adopted, then, in order to resolve philosophical problems arising from analogies and figures, so that we may attain a correct understanding of our language? Wittgenstein's overall approach seems clear enough:

Many of them [*Manche von ihnen*] can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another ... (PI§90).

For instance, the confusion caused by the homonymy of the sign "is" can be avoided by designating copula by "e" and the identity relation by "=" (TS220 §99; cf. LSD p.310).

This approach of replacing problematic analogies and figures is hinted at in other places in Wittgenstein's writings: "The resolution of the problem consists in the elimination of the disturbing aspect that is triggered by certain analogies in our grammar (MS 157(b) p.27); "If I correct a philosophical mistake ..., I always point to an analogy ... that was followed, and show that this analogy is incorrect (PHIL §87)."

## 4. Analogies and Metaphors in Mental Concepts

Wittgenstein is therefore on guard against the analogies and metaphors embedded in mental concepts. Let us look at three types of examples:

(1) Nominal terms for mental concepts: "It is the substantive 'pain' which puzzles us. This substantive seems to produce an illusion (LPE p.206)"; "In our primitive language most substantives relate to some physical object or other. When then we begin to talk of impressions, we have a temptation to use the same kind of grammar. This produces a puzzle ... (LSD p.356)."

(2) Analogy to descriptions: "The strange metaphor 'to have pain' (MS120 p.110v)"; "In 'I have [toothache]' the expression of pain is brought to the same form as a description 'I have a matchbox/5 shillings'" (LPE p.263)."

(3) The inner-outer scheme: "... '[I]nner' is a dangerous metaphor (RPP1 §824)"; "We must get clear about how the metaphor of revealing (outside and inside) is actually applied by us ... (LPE p.223)."

These are all expressions of critical concern regarding metaphors, i.e., *objectification* metaphors (cf. LSD pp.312-3), which, under the metaphorical, spatial scheme of inner and outer, liken such mental concepts as pain and mind to *things*. These metaphors are commonplace expressions, and are often called dead metaphors (in Wittgenstein's terms, "analogies which we did not recognize as analogies (cf. PHIL §87)"). When philosophers construct a theory of mind using those metaphors, their intelligence, Wittgenstein thinks, is prone to deception. It is likely to be this worry that caused him to write the remark quoted at the beginning of this paper.

## 5. The Elimination of Metaphors in Mental Concepts

When Gilbert Ryle points out the metaphor in the expression "in my head" (as in "the jingle running in my head"), and further makes the following statement, his thinking seems to resonate with Wittgenstein's: "The phrase 'in my mind' can and should always be dispensed with. Its use habituates its employers to the view that minds are queer 'places', the occupants of which are special-status phantasms (Ryle 1963, 36, 40)."

How, then, does Wittgenstein remove the object metaphors and spatial metaphors in mental concepts? He says, regarding the grammatical analogy between "I have pain" and "I have a matchbox": "I want to say the words are used in an entirely different way (LSD p.330)." According to Wittgenstein, "[i]n one form it replaces a moan." This well-known view, which compares the use of "pain" to a cry rather than to the use of

"matchbox", gives support to the claim that the similarity between the nouns "pain" and "matchbox", and the similarity between the verbs that collocate with those nouns, are only superficial. And as long as the use of "pain" is explained with reference to outward behaviour, one need not think of pain as something inner. The elimination of the dangerous power of analogy with regard to mental concepts is intended in such a manner.

## 6. The Role of Metaphors

It is important that Wittgenstein refuses to be called a behaviourist. To explain this, interpreters emphasize, among other things, that, for Wittgenstein, pain is not just behaviour, but what is expressed by behaviour (cf. PI §244). *Expression* is therefore an important notion. Now when the concept of pain is understood through behaviour and the concept of expression, how, in turn, is the concept of expression to be understood? How does one try to explain this concept to a child? May not one make use of an analogy of pressing out, e.g., of "expressing" juice from oranges? It seems that the important notion of expression, *Ausdruck* or *Äußerung* also contains "an analogy which one did not recognize as an analogy (PHIL §87)", or a dead metaphor of inner and outer.

Thus metaphors keep popping up. Are we to eliminate misleading analogies altogether and hope that we can thereby achieve an overview, *Übersicht*, of mental concepts? It is nowadays often pointed out that metaphors play a special conceptual role. According to the cognitive semanticists G. Lakoff and M. Johnson,

Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time, etc.), we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms (spatial orientations, objects, etc.) (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 115).

What makes this sort of cognition possible, they say, is metaphors. If they are right, the misleading metaphors in mental concepts are also ones that shape and hold those concepts, and we cannot have the desired overview if we remove the metaphors that constitute the conceptual landscape in question.

## 7. Toward an Overview

To regard Wittgenstein as an unyielding critic of metaphors is too simplistic. He concedes, for example, "To say that we are trying to express the idea which is before our mind is to use a metaphor ... which is all right so long as it doesn't mislead us ... (BB p.41)." What is still wanting, however, is a further investigation on the use, and the nature, of such ordinary metaphors.

I want to show, very briefly, how a positive investigation of analogies can be accommodated in Wittgenstein's philosophy. My suggestions are: (1) many analogies embedded in mental concepts can be treated under, or in connection with, the notion of *secondary sense*; (2) an understanding of a secondary sense is a *primitive linguistic reaction*.

(1) Examples of words having a secondary sense are "fat" in "Wednesday is fat", "yellow" in "The vowel e is yellow", and "calculate" in "calculating in the head" (PI p.216). Wittgenstein characterizes this notion in several ways. First, it is only when one knows the primary sense of a word that one can use it in the secondary sense. Secondly, one can only "explain" the secondary sense by explaining its ordinary sense. That is, in explaining the meaning of "fat" in "Wednesday is fat", one can only point out its normal sense. Thirdly, whatever sense conveyed by the use of a word in a secondary sense cannot be conveyed by other words.

Wittgenstein says explicitly that "[t]he secondary sense is not a 'metaphorical' sense (*ibid*)." His reason is that, whereas a metaphorical expression can be substituted by a literal expression, "yellow" in "The vowel e is yellow" cannot. However, whether a metaphorical expression is always replaceable with other, literal, expressions is a long-standing question in rhetoric. Therefore, it would be best to leave this particular remark of his on the shelf.

My point is that Wittgenstein's ideas regarding the secondary use of "calculate" in "calculate in the head" can be applied to the latter half of the same phrase, namely, "in the head." Or, if "fat" used for a day of the week has a secondary sense, so does the word "inner" used when we speak of the mind. In this way, the analogies and metaphors embedded in mental concepts can be treated in a Wittgensteinian manner under the conceptual framework of the secondary sense.

(2) Some words in a secondary sense are used and understood only by people with special sensitivity to words. Others are not so. What mediates the gap between a primary sense and a secondary sense? How does an understanding of a primary sense lead to an understanding of a secondary sense? I want to say: the gap is filled by a primitive reaction. Wittgenstein's remarks taken from different contexts may be useful here: "What is the primitive reaction with which the language-game begins ... How do people get to use these words? The *primitive reaction* ... *may also have been a word* (PI p.218, italics added)"; "... after having been taught to use the words in the ordinary way, the child then *uses* the words in this new way *without* being taught (LSD p.326)." I want to suggest that the use of a word in a secondary sense is similar to this. That is to say, the secondary use of a word is a primitive reaction of a language user, that arises naturally, if at all, based on the mastery of the basic senses of words.

I have sketched how metaphors in mental concepts could be investigated in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Without such an investigation, I fear, an overview of mental concepts is yet to be gained.

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