Wittgenstein's Musing on the Self and its Other Through Philosophy of Langugage

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Wittgenstein remarks:

> Not: " Without language we could not communicate with One another " – but for sure: Without language we cannot influence other people in such and such ways; cannot build roads and machines, etc. And also: without the use of speech and writing people could not communicate.[1]

It is clear that Wittgenstein in his later philosophy speaks of two sorts of language. The first one is ordinary language and the other is private language. The first one is colloquial and easily communicable to people. This sort of language he names ordinary language. His assertion is that ordinary language removes the difficulties involved in case of artificial language or symbolic language. He, therefore clearly points out that ordinary language is colloquial. His later philosophy revolves around the circle of ordinary language.

Wittgenstein advocates that ordinary language has its prime role in human life. We cannot ignore that it is indispensably related with our life. Human life will be stagnant without ordinary language. Although we are in the 21st century, we have easiest and cheapest kinds of instruments like mobile, computer etc. to communicate from distant places to the nearest one; still we are in the grip of ordinary language. The reason is that the medium which we use to communicate is ordinary language. If we do not know how to use it, it will not be easy for us to run our life smoothly. So, we will have to understand the technique of using ordinary language. We know very well that nowadays life is competitive, so, if we fail to be master of the technique of ordinary language, we know, what will be our situation in the near future. Therefore, Wittgenstein significantly writes, "To understand a sentence means to understand a language and to understand a language means to be master of a technique."[2]

Ordinary language has a social nature. Because it can unite people coming from different backgrounds. As a result we can exchange our views and become familiar to each other. So, ordinary language can create a congenial atmosphere among people. The most significant aspect of ordinary language is that it can create mutual understanding among different types of people, which is really a center of gravity of ordinary language. We know that society is a network of people, so to regulate our society in a well ordered manner we have to preserve our values like-Truthfulness, Honesty, love, Justice, Patriotism, Tolerance, Humanity etc. These values are cream of social life. If we do not carefully handle, society will vanish forever. The cardinal point is that these social values are brought into light by the media of ordinary language. Over and above ordinary language can spread the awareness of social values to masses. Therefore, it can be opined that ordinary language has a unique role in society.

Wittgenstein in his *Blue and Brown Book* writes that ordinary language is that 'which pervades all our life.' It entails that ordinary language is indispensably related with our life. Apart from this, life will be sterile. He mentions "Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments."[3] Just as instruments are used for various purposes, so also language can be utilized to perform different activities. As for instance we can utilize language in case of giving orders and obeying them, constructing an object from a description, reporting an event, forming and testing a hypothesis, making a story; and reading it, play acting, solving a problem in practical arithmetic etc. These activities are nothing but language games or different forms of life. Forms of life show that language is public. Because people can understand others nature through linguistic discourse.

Ordinary language indicates that there is an interrelation between language and activity. He holds that language game is meant to bring into prominence the fact the speaking of language is part of an activity or form of life[4.] Activities are performed through language. In society, human life is pursued through different activities. So, it is lucid that ordinary language is a media and through this media life is regulated. Nothing remains, if we left out linguistic media from human life. So, language has a unique role in social life, because it can create unity, co-ordination among people. Malinowski adds, "Speech is the necessary means of communication; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the instrument. Without which unified social action is impossible."[5.] Wittgenstein, through his later philosophy of language, time and again carries the picture of social nature of language. He emphatically views that language is part of an activity or form of life. H. R Smart points out that language is founded in the very life of people. The life of people is the ultimate ground which gives language its unity and significance. As language is essentially an activity, it can be understood only with reference to the moods of life people[6].

It can be stated that Wittgenstein in his later philosophy confirms the view that his language is ordinary language, which is easily communicable. We know that society is a center of living for different people coming from different backgrounds. People follow ordinary language because it is accessible or communicable. So, it can unite people or bring harmony or co-ordination among people. Again it can bring out the defects of society. People come out from the cave of egoism and can concentrate on society through ordinary language. Therefore, he implies that language is a social phenomenon.

Wittgenstein in his later philosophy holds that private language is impossible in the sense that it cannot take any role to spread the social aspect of language in society. He means by private language a typical language, which is only accessible to the speaker. He defines it as "The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking to his immediate private sensations, so another person cannot understand language"[7]. Wittgenstein does not accept it because it is not communicable to others. Again people do not share it. Language becomes communicable when others share it. Therefore, it can be opined that private language is not entertainable in the context of society. He views that

> Let us imagine a table (something like a dictionary) that exists only in our imagination. A dictionary can be

used to justify translation of a word X into a word Y. But are we to call it an imagination if such a table is to be looked up only in the imagination? Well this is subjective justification. But justification consists in appealing to something independent. But surely I can appeal from one memory to another. For example, I do not know if I have remembered the time of a departure of a train right and to check it I call to mind how a page of the timetable looked? Is not it the same here?– No; for this process has got to produce a memory which is actually correct. If the mental image of the timetable could not itself be tested for correctness, how could it conform the correctness of the first memory? [8.]

The above assertion implies that Wittgenstein makes an implicit distinction between private language and ordinary language (self and other). Private language is private in the sense that it is not justifiable or correctable, while ordinary language is public in the sense that it is correctable or justifiable or sharable. So, ordinary language has a great demand in society. D.W. Theobald mentions, "A Private language as Wittgenstein pointed out is inconceivable because there would be no possible check upon whether it was being used correctly or not. The use of language is after all public – it can be checked."[9] Wittgenstein's view is that language needs criteria or grammar. As for instance, in respect of pain we cannot exactly comment in which place the person is feeling pain. Even a doctor fails in this context because at first he wants to know about the symptoms of pain. So, Wittgenstein asserts that without outward expression private language has no role in public life.

In the context of discourse between private language and ordinary language Wittgenstein mentions that "I have toothache" "I" does not "denote a possessor," he pointed out that when I talk of "my body," the fact that the body in question is "mine" or belongs to me," cannot be verified by reference to that body itself, when I say "This body belongs to me," is used in the second of senses which he distinguished for "I", which does not "denote a possessor." He said, "If there is an ownership such that I possess a body, this not verified by reference to a body," i.e. "this is my body" cannot possibly mean, "this body belongs to this body." He said that, where "I" is replaceable by "this body", "I" and "he" are "on the same grammatical level." He said that the word "I" or "any other word which denotes a subject" is used in "two utterly different ways," one in which it is "on a level with other people", and one in which it is not. This difference, he said, was a difference in the "the grammar of our ordinary language." He again points out that "I have got a match box" and "'I' have got a bad tooth," which he said "on a level" with "skinner has a match box" and "skinner has a bad tooth." He said that in these two cases "I have …" and "skinner has …" really were values of the same propositional function, and that "I" and "skinner" were both "possessors." But in the case of "I have toothache" or "I see a red patch" he held that the use of "I" is utterly different [10.]

Wittgenstein's main attempt in his later philosophy is that how language can be communicated to each and every people. So, private language would be confined, if people embrace it. Therefore, he insists on ordinary language, which has a public demand in the context of society. And the most important aspect of public language is that it maintains unity among human beings, because people come together through different activities. So, it is a bond of connection among human beings. Therefore, it can be highlighted that ordinary language brings out social perspective through the technical concept of language games or forms of life.

Notes and References

[1] Wittgenstein, L 1953: *Philosophical Investigations*, trans.G.E.M. Anscome (Basil Blackwell, oxford) sec-491

[2] Ibid: sec-199

[3] Ibid: sec-569

[4] Ibid: sec-23

[5] Malionowski- *The problem of meaning in Primitive Language* p-310

[6] H.R Smart 1957- *Language Games* (The Philosophical Quarterly, vol-7, no-28) p-232

[7] Wittgenstein, L 1953: *Philosophical Investigations*, trans.G.E.M. Anscome (Basil Blackwell, oxford) sec-243

[8] Ibid: sec-265

[9] Theobald, D.W: *An- Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (Methuen & CO. Ltd) p-8

[10] Ammerman, Robert R (ed) 1965: G.E. Moore *Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-1933* In *Classics of Analytic Philosophy* (Tata Mc Grew –Hill Publishing Company, Bombay- New-Delhi) p-275.

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