

# Language-Use as a Grammatical Construction of the World

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"The inexpressible (what I find enigmatic & cannot express) perhaps provides the background, against which whatever I was able to express acquires meaning." (Wittgenstein 1998a: 23)

## The grammaticality of the world

Mental images are expressed through words. It is with words (but not only) that we can express something, i.e. it is with words that we can experience a meaning in association with a mental image. However, the connection between words and mental images or what is expressed and represented by words is complex enough to give a simple answer to the question "What is the content of the experiences of imagining and that of meaning?" (Wittgenstein 1996: 175).

Wittgenstein adds in § 292 of *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology-I* that words and behaviour related to the manifestation of pain sensation work as signs of mental processes. It is important to ask, as Wittgenstein says in § 370 of *Philosophical Investigations*, how the word "imagination" is used, since the essence of the imagination is its grammar. However, we can use the word "imagination" without any mental image in our head; thus, we can imagine things and express it by means of written words or drawings without seeing anything through our mental eye. We impute mental images to others considering their expression and behaviour. There are no criteria to first person utterances. A mental image is not a private entity, but is the way how we imagine something.

On the employment of the first person in psychological concepts, that is to say the expressive use of language, Wittgenstein has two perspectives: first, considering that utterances in the first person express a given emotion, as if the proposition "I am expecting a bang at any moment" was an expression of expectation (1993a: § 53); second, considering that utterances in the first person are part of a kind of behaviour, as if the proposition "I am expecting..." was a reference to my actions or thoughts of hope for something (1993a: § 65).

In the first perspective, related to expression, we can notice that the expectation that "someone will come" can be expressed in a variety of ways (working nervously about the room, glancing repeatedly out of the window, checking the appointment calendar, looking at my watch and saying "It's time!"). Expectation is expressed through behaviour in these ways.

In the second perspective, relating to behaviour, we can observe that saying "I am expecting..." is part of the expectation behaviour. The same can be said for all other first person utterances involving psychological concepts.

In the first case, the expressive capacities of language are recognized; capacities that permit an adequate and necessary exteriorization of the corresponding subjective experience, as if the words transported the inner-self from the emitter to the receiver (Wittgenstein 1993a: § 650; 1996: §§ 343, 585). This expressive capacity is heterogeneous, either by the verbal medium or by the behavioural medium (Wittgenstein 1996: § 444). The relationship be-

tween expectation and the event that it fulfils is entirely contingent, because to expect an explosion is to be in a mental state that will be fulfilled and satisfied, or not, when the explosion occurs. Then, the use of "I am expecting..." involves a relationship between a mental state (necessarily interior) and a common external event. Although Wittgenstein considered that an expectation and its satisfaction can be verified through language (1996: §§ 444, 445; 1993b: §§ 92, 95), the problem of knowing how it relates to the event which satisfies it is complex and escapes the linguistic scope that I have tried to attribute to the treatment of this problem.

In the second case, this mode is annexed to the clarification provided by context, because the circumstances of the observation determine its correct understanding. For Wittgenstein, we are disposed to attribute, in certain circumstances, a spontaneous expression to desires, either in a natural way or by training or education (1996: § 441). If, in accordance with § 65 of *Zettel*, saying "I expect..." is part of the process of expecting, then the same happens with all the other uses of elocutions in the first person that involve psychological concepts.

Nevertheless, the expression "I expect..." serves both cases (that is, "I expect..." whether as the expression of an expectation or as part of the process of waiting), and it reveals the proximity of its double use. Even though linguistic elocutions and behaviour can express experiences, Wittgenstein does not admit that both means of expression are simple expressions, because of the complex association between i) a linguistic statement concerning an experience, ii) reactive behaviour to the said experience and iii) the experience itself (1996: § 308). To have iii) does not only mean to utter i) or to manifest ii), because i) might not be expressively representative of iii) and ii) could be simulated. To have a pain is not only a question of saying "I've got a pain" or of behaving as such were the case.

## The use of public signs linked to mental images about the world

According to Wittgenstein, the application of psychological concepts in the first person typically constitutes part of a specific form of behaviour (cf Fogelin 1976: 175). If a speaker says "I have a toothache", he is expressing his pain by using a typical expression for these cases, but not by reporting on an internal event (Wittgenstein 1996: § 244). The statement "I have a toothache" is the expression of the pain experience.

Wittgenstein took into account that first person utterances, on the one hand, expresses a given emotion (an expectation) and, on the other hand, takes part in some sort of behaviour (the words "I am expecting..." as reference to the act of expecting). Pointing out to the case of first person utterances expressing expectations, I consider the unavoidable semantic relation between language and reality, that is, the signification of language.

The reality topic arises because Wittgenstein's investigation brings to light the nature of thought, understanding, language and, precisely, reality. In Wittgenstein's words: "a proposition was laid against reality like a ruler"

(1993b: § 85). This reveals the main theme-problem of linguistic expression as grammar status, for example, the relation between language and reality in the following case: saying “Here is a red patch” and there is or not a red patch in reality. When we take an image for reality, what we imagine and what happened may be different things.

A fuller account of the relevance of our grammatical system is given by the fact that a proposition (like “This afternoon N went into the Senate House”) is not just a series of sounds, because it evokes images and has meaning (1993b: § 104). The image evoked is only a single representation or perspective of the sense. If, instead of a particular clear image of N called to my mind by such a proposition, I had painted it and shown it to someone else as a means of communication (instead of the proposition), he might say that it expressed a thought and needed to be understood. For Wittgenstein, “what he would think of as an act of understanding would probably be a translation into word languages” (1993b: § 104).

According to Wittgenstein’s example, if I say “I arrive in Vienna on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December”, this proposition cannot be just a series of sound or words, because various things happen inside me in addition to the perception of these words and mainly because the proposition has a definite sense and I perceive it. From this grammatical view, Wittgenstein draws the conclusion that the aim of this kind of linguistic expression is to perceive a definite sense, that is, to move around in the grammatical background of words and to understand their transformations, moves and consequences in a given game (1993b: § 104). This is the main point of Wittgenstein’s argumentative strategy. “I said that it is the *system* of language that makes the sentence a thought and makes it a thought *for us*.” (1993b: § 104).

The system of language is also a chain of mere symbols, applications and consequences and it is what makes us able to express the understanding from an image in a proposition. Through replacements of mental images by public signs or common words we constantly get different interpretations and understandings of what is meant and said. However, the images and the signs, *per se*, are meaningless, since “only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning” (1998c: § 504; 1993a § 173). Otherwise, we become conscious of the nakedness of the words: “in ordinary circumstances these words and this picture have an application with which we are familiar. – But if we suppose a case in which this application falls away we become as it were conscious for the first time of the nakedness of the words and the picture” (1996: § 349).

The perspective of Wittgenstein on the theme-problem of exteriorization is also marked by a psychological (and not just anthropological, linguistic or sociological) aspect, because it reverts to the mental exercise of intending the linguistic expression of sensations and of choosing the words that can best satisfy the coding, that is, by using public signs that correspond to effective mental images.

How can mental images be referred to or represented through the use of public signs? The importance of this question originates in presupposing the understanding of the underlying exteriorization. In other words, the question calls for the explanation of the meaning of a word or expression, based on a given existence, which forms an identical image of something in people. Consequently, it is necessary to try to understand how a certain mental image has the meaning or content that it presents, for example if somebody utters the word “cube”, the speaker knows what it is meant because something comes to mind when they understand that word (Wittgenstein 1996: § 139).

According to Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word is not its image, but it is determined by its use, as if an image of the cube came to mind and suggested a certain use to us. In the interpretation of mental images, the problem lies in the use and not in the creation of the said images. In § 366 of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein affirms that it makes sense to speak of a method of projection, according to which the image of a sign constitutes the representation of the sign itself. In the following paragraph, it alludes that the mental image is the image that is described when somebody describes what is imagined. In this case, the problem of the privacy of mental images is dissolved with the use of public signs that substitute, describe or represent them.

### Concluding remarks: the grammatical construction of the world

The position of Wittgenstein on exteriorization is, thereby, circumscribed by a compass eminently designated as linguistic psychology, philosophy of the psychology or conceptual investigation. The psychological conception of exteriorization began to form, starting from the moment in which the philosophy of Wittgenstein turned towards linguistic concerns (1996: § 111), that is to say, for the use and understanding of concepts and psychological themes.

Wittgenstein conceived the idea of language-games as a reaction to the psychological theory of meaning. Instead of the mental effects of words, he sought the contexts of meaning provided by the referred games. When proposing these games, he understood that the meaning was not determined by its effects.

Wittgenstein conceived the meaning of a sign as the sum of the rules that determine its possible moves (applications), by analogy to chess. In § 23 of *Philosophical Investigations*, he provided a list of language-games, to reaffirm the language as instrument (or tool), that can be used in multiple activities and introduced in varied contexts.

According to S. Hilmy (1987: 110 ff.), Wittgenstein knew the psychological theory of meaning (e.g. that of Bertrand Russell), but he did not accept it. On the contrary, he based his definition of meaning as use (cf. Wittgenstein 1996: § 43; 1998d: § 12), that is, the meaning of the concepts does not lie in the conscience, but in the practice of language-games and forms of life (cf. Hark 1990: 27-30). This practical perspective about the meaning sustains the thesis of the language-use as a grammatical and social construction of the world.

If, on one hand, we do have indescribable aspects of mental images and, on the other, we do have the same uses of public signs that mean different things, how is it possible that one given expression on an expectation is understood by my interlocutor, when I transmit it to justify my anxiety behaviour, for example? This subject is omnipresent in the discussions of Wittgenstein, although not in a very clear and conclusive way, because it necessarily involves the confrontation between the interior and the exterior domains as well as the fields of what we usually mean by “private” and “public” aspects and contents of experience, language, experience and, consequently, the linguistic exteriorization of the experience itself, usually understood as such and wanting to say something specific.

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