Some Thoughts on Wittgensteinian "Nonsense" and the Use of Metaphor

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There are already several general accounts of nonsense in the wittgensteinian literature, especially in the articles and books of J. Conant and C. Diamond concerning Wittgenstein's "resolute" reading.[1] My aim is not to offer some new general account of the notion of nonsense but to present a kind of relation between it and the notion of metaphor. Both of the above scholars use nonsense's notion against the substantial nonsense (i.e. showing but not saying) while introducing the term "austere nonsense" (straight or simple nonsense), that is when we realize through the philosophical procedure that there is nothing to say after such an intellectual – methodological effort – that everything is a simple frustration.

But if we feel that way, what's left? Contingently, it might be said that such an effort will be viewed as a descriptive route, in terms of philosophical grammar, which functions just as a possibility showing an impotence to express itself propositionally. Considering this fact one multiple and versatile possible solutions which comes before our eyes is that of literature. So many wittgensteinian thinkers have said that Wittgenstein's style of writing is that of poetical philosophy.[2] In this sense, I'd like to say that while we're coming to realize that nonsense is the strict nonsense, we inescapably resort to figurative forms (metaphorical) that running parallel to those terms, noticing Frege's distinction between "concept and object".[3]

Using these terms in our everyday speech – wittgensteinian speaking – we understand that the notion of meaning needs a literary procedure plus something else, in order to give an explanation of the notion. For no deictic condition could provide the sense of these concepts. So, using the predicates (figures of speech) in a phrase or a statement, we suppose of making many versions, even unconsciously, of the meaning such a phrase. In my opinion, where all the equipment of ordinary language is coming to the end of all explanations, it's the time of various expressive/figurative forms i.e. poetry (literature) to be in charge in order to secure the meaning of the expressions. For how else could we've been thinking of these wittgensteinian terms found in enormity in his text, such as: showing to, ineffability and the mystical?

Again, the nonsense in the tractarian literature, may be one issue of another in order to protect us from being lured by the charm of the language. Could it be that way? I'm not sure. Maybe the Viennese philosopher had something else in his mind. Language is the meaning – language as proto–phenomenon (Urphaenomen), language as an activity or the language both as meaning and agent in an interaction. What's left? To think of the function such a relation, which is not only function but a very essence (ontology) as well. Why not us think of the essence as an expression of possibility (kantian speaking) which in the world takes shape (form) and structure if not content? Many thinkers expressing loosely the notion of the possibility but only few are trying to analyze it (TLP 2.0123).

Probably the reason of talking nonsense is our frustrated effort to specify the meaning of a proposition or a word. And just tell me, if we come to realize such a frustration why not our actions lead us to the resort of literature? This is the situation of speaking and writing differently, loosely, tolerantly with hidden but not destroyed concepts, forming a variant and multiple reality but a very reality, at the point where someone says that is nonsense? I'm not quite sure, but for some reason the logical necessity of the possibility has to provide a so-called answer to the nonsense's notion.

Again, I'm not sure about using the right term "literature" or metaphor/figurative as I was mentioning in the above "readings", especially mine. I was trying to say that: showing towards something means the possibility of the expression plus the expression itself. Accordingly, the expression needs a medium or has to be the medium itself. Conclusion: If we look closely to the function of literature we will see that we´re facing with a new point of view. I mean the articulation of the variety of events. Too many things to be hidden too many things to be articulated. More or less it's the same way we're dealing with philosophy, but only according to the articulated form and not with the variety of meanings. The form that has also a use. All this charming mental enterprise needs some ways of expression. And if we say that the expression means a "real" gibberish showing nothing but real nonsense, at the same time, in my opinion the procedure of the expression in all the way down has been described by a discipline: philosophy or literature. If for any reason we temporarily doubt about philosophy, why not choosing the literature's example? Both disciplines are using versions to interpret or to exhibit the events.

According to Wittgenstein, the notion of meaning is a crucial factor of doing philosophy. We mean something despite some obscure or implicit factors. These factors could probably be explained or exposed by other fields of knowledge, for example by that of literature. There are times that meanings provided by non philosophical activities becoming later familiar with philosophical concepts or many versions about concepts. There is an enormous intellectual procedure showing to these activities, by incorporating them being part of themselves. This is by no means to abolish philosophy, it is just to strengthen its function. If we say there is nothing but nonsense, what's going to be left? Would it be a method for a conspicuous and honest ignorance or would be something like the swan – song of a quasi traditional philosophical activity that of trying to determine rigidly the meaning. It must be an answer …

The scholar community finds this fact as having an enormous interest and examines the wittgensteinian dealing of concepts and meaning with great profundity. Sometimes escaping the strict philosophical matters we end up in an interesting narration using the figurative speech usually combining the Wittgenstein's personal deeds with his philosophical deeds. This could be a way to the metaphor.

And if you say like in the language games: it's a sort of habit and nothing else … you're right. We're making moves – searching the meaning etc. – on the solid ground of the familiar language game. Let us notice, this action we take under consideration the so called ethical factor relat-

ing the subjectivity to that of objectivity. For, in the Tractatus the solipsistic "I" is the limit of the world. To paraphrase: It participates in an interaction of pleasure in relation to cosmos for it is a cosmos itself.

An afterthought …

To keep going with Diamond's another famous article: "Wittgenstein on ethics and mathematics",[4] I kept in my mind one of my closest friend's last words about the article while we were staring at the Acropolis's Museum: "Diamond's thought is like a smooth stream ending to a waterfall." I think he *was* right. To be more specific:

The crucial issue is about realism. Professor Diamond's aim is that of Wittgenstein's aim: Not just to give a profound and well formed content which could be different in other occasions but to raise questions, on the philosophical procedure itself. Historically speaking, philosophy deals with the origins of the meaning via language. Doing this way, language gives all the linguistic media to fulfill this purpose. What's philosophy in the analytic tradition?

i) The search for the use of meanings. ii) The overview of the use which is the description of the meaning. What we don't know it is the kind of use. The notion of use has a historical meaning. In the wittgensteinian epoch some uses were of a different kind as we now know of using them. Equally, in the same epoch the reduction to behaviorism was equal to empiricism. In our days cognitivism is the reduction to a full blooded naturalism. What's left to be consistent to the spirit of philosophy? In my opinion: *realism.* It's hard to say but a very fact that the use of the meaning of realism is different now as it was before. Perhaps, it is the central theme that Wittgenstein was questioning about.

With all of my due respect, Professor Diamond is doing her best to make this clear. She avoids to call Wittgenstein as a realist and prefers to use the philosophical term/attribute in methodological reasons (purposes). Her aim is to use the term *"proverb"* in order to give a clear description of the meaning without the indicative connotation which is necessary but not the only one.[5] Using the term "proverb" means that Wittgenstein is preparing us to see some kind of the uses of meaning but not the nature of meaning itself. That is unspeakable, like logic and ethics. We do know something of them using proverbs or narration about their use in our world. The kind of use is sometimes before our eyes in the language that we're participating with the others. Is this true or it's the other way around? We're preparing ourselves to see the differences or the nuances in the meaning through the uses of proverbs. Through the function of them we could see things with a clearer way. It's like the true role of metaphors.[6]

So, what's new in the Wittgensteinian theses? To describe the aim of philosophy, which could mean: An acceptance upon: To search, to hide, to reconsider or to reveal the meanings, and the sense of quieting about them as well. This is just an activity and such an activity needs a stable foundation or a base to be acted upon it. The activity of some kind is surely the linguistic function with all of its performances.

Gradually, we're coming to the hard bedrock of the forms of life. If we see the things under the prism of realism, there is nothing which can be used as a foundation in order to explain the meaning of them. I'm not talking about the other philosophical theories. I'm referring to realism because I consider myself being a realist as well. There are times whereas I'm convinced that Wittgenstein is a realist and some others that he is not. But it could be an

anachronistic view on treating the wittgensteinian theory in the recent terms of a full blooded realism. I agree with Diamond's thesis. Maybe this could be the reason we use the term "proverb", by using the method of analogy. The crucial matter is how we could attach the term "realism" to some of wittgensteinian statements about the sense of meanings in the language. What's the kind of use he is making of? Is it obvious or not? Questioning about them means at the same time that we eventually realize their presence. If I'm reading her in right way, the term "synchronic criterion" which she's using in the text could be an answer to the problem. To be synchronic means to be in terms of the language games (my complement). Surely, it seems to me that we deal with two fields, the realism and the metaphor: the meanings on the surface, in order to be overviewed with multiple if not complicated versions as well.

Wittgenstein undermines deliberately every philosophical procedure by the same means of doing philosophy. Of course, this is too risky because he may fall into. Perhaps he fails preparing us in order to avoid the danger, although he tries doing it by sending signals. This is his honest gesture to us: understanding the moment and judging it plus the transforming, fitting if not surviving the meanings.

I would asking while I'm talking about metaphor, whether this is going to have the same sense with Diamond's thesis. She is using proverbs in order to make clear some kind of use. A proverb which is probably a synoptic and metaphorical narration about the essence of things in the world. In using a borrowed phrase by the common sense context we make facts and state of affairs more obvious, far more lucid. The answer might be in a far process …

By doing this philosophical move, Wittgenstein invites us to a game. The game is a rule-guided activity and is being performed for our pleasure. In any case, it's a much serious enterprise. Dealing with the meanings of the words and propositions means that we are aware of the crucial philosophical problems and their legitimate subversion by the vast philosophical literature as well. None the less, he is also waiting for the contingent if not legitimate answers. In the Tractatus he is holding the philosophical and pedagogic role to prepare us simply for the use of the expressions, by denoting the determinate meaning of the words and showing towards the ineffability of Ethics, Aesthetics and Metaphysics. In his later period of writing he employs the meaning of use, giving the more exegetical and descriptive version for the meaning in general inside the context of the everyday affairs. "What the words mean" depends on the common language, not on how they are taken or how the speaker intends them to be taken. How they ought to be taken is a matter of what the result of maximization of agreement among the utterances of the language community.[7]

Perhaps, in doing so, there will be no absolute need of a systematic academic research filled by literal expressions. On the contrary, could be metaphorical terms making the sense and the use of linguistic expression more obvious and transparent. If this is going to happen by narrations, i.e. reasons in order to explain the facts in the familiar language game, we may accept them. Notwithstanding, if we consider this strategy as a tough procedure, let give ourselves a break waiting some other moment, in order for the meaning to be revealed on us – not them to be imposed. This is by no means a superficial quietism. Most of the time the meaning is open to us on the surface – "before our eyes".

Using the figurative language Wittgenstein is claiming to denote the significant changes in his philosophical work, by subverting any attempt to create a so called systematic philosophical theory. He denies of doing any kind of dogmatic doctrines, or giving additional meaning to the meanings we already have at hand.[8] Wittgenstein is doing a decent, a human effort in providing us with a respect for the meaning of life. This is a human, a true human practice.

Endnotes

[1] J. Conant, "Elucidation and Nonsense in Frege and early Wittgenstein" and C. Diamond, "Ethics, Imagination and the Tractatus" in *The New Wittgenstein*,(2001) A.Crary and R.Read (eds), London: Routledge, pp. 149 -217. C. Diamond(1991), *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*, Cambridge Mass: MIT Press.

[2] *The Literary Wittgenstein*, (2004) J. Gibson and W. Huebner (eds), London: Routledge, pp. 1-13.
[3] J. Conant, ibid, pp.205-13, H. Sluga(1980) , *Gottlob Frege*, London: Routledge.
[4] C.Diamond, "Wittgenstein, mathematics, and ethics: Resisting the attractions of realism.", in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (1996), H.Sluga and D. Stern (eds), Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press,pp. 246-56.
[5] Ibid.
[6] A.Stroll, "Wittgenstein's Foundational Metaphors", in *The Third Wittgenstein*, (2004), D. Moyal – Sharrock (ed.), Hampshire, U.K.: Ashgate, pp.13-24, see also J. Gill, *Wittgenstein and Metaphor*, (1981), Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.
[7] S.C.Wheeler: "Wittgenstein as Davidson on Metaphor", in *Wittgenstein und die Metaphor* (2004), Arnswald, Kertscher and Kross (eds.), Berlin: Parerga Verlag, pp. 195-220.
[8] Doing so, Wittgenstein, is partly compatible with Davidson's idea about metaphor: "The central mistake against which I shall be inveighing is the idea that a metaphor has, in addition to its literal sense or meaning, another sense or meaning." D. Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean.", in *On Metaphor*,(1978), Sheldon Sacks, ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp.29-46.