

Einstellung, Aspect and Hinges in Wittgenstein's Work

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1.

Imagine that Louis and Sarah are in a museum in front of an abstract modern picture, and Louis says to his mate: "Look at that lion!" or something very similar. Call this language game 1, what Louis and Sarah should have in common to understand this first utterance (cfr. PU II, xi: p. 174)?

Imagine now a second possible language game, for example imagine that Mary is a teacher in a school trip that gives to her students an order like: "Get on the Bus!". The sentence could be understood either as "Get a seat in the bus" and as "Sit on the top of the bus" (in Italian we have a more definite case of polysemous phrase as: "Siediti sull'autobus!", that is either "Siediti *sopra* l'autobus" either "Siediti sul sedile dell'autobus"). In this case what it means to take the order correctly? Suppose that a first student is sat on the seat while a second one is on the top of the bus, on the roof. One of the two students is evidently mistaking, what she lacks to have a correct understanding of her teacher's order?

The cases above could be described in terms of different ways of understanding, or misunderstanding, a language game in Wittgenstein's terms, but someone could say that we could have two different forms of understanding: the first one is of a theoretical kind (to understand the utterance Sarah should have to know the concept 'lion') while the second one is of a practical kind (the students should know how to get on a bus correctly, or at least how to sit in a general sense).

This first distinction brings with her a nest of other philosophical conceptions, like for example that between norms and rules of thumb, or that between learning and education, or between a kind of meaning that is transmissible only through verbal language and is subject to a specialized judgement, a literal one (Cappelen-Lepore 2004), and a meaning intrinsically connected to the acting in a context, and for this reason is extrinsic to the literal judgement, belonging to its pragmatic.

My aim in this paper is to argue against these conceptions, and the other philosophical ideas connected with these, by taking into account the concept *Einstellung* as Wittgenstein applies it in his later work. In particular my principal point is to show how the *Einstellungen*, that are embedded in our form of life, are like aspects of organizations about which Wittgenstein writes in the following remark taken from PU:

How does one teach a child (say in arithmetic) "Now take these things together" or "Now *these* go together"? Clearly "taking together" and "going together" must originally have had another meaning for him than that of *seeing* in this way or that. — And this is a remark about concepts, not about teaching methods.

One *kind* of aspect might be called 'aspects of organization'. When the aspect changes part of the picture go together which before did not. PU, II, xi: p. 177

Recall now our language games, in the first one Louis is sharing with Sarah a sort of common frame or

'aspect of organization' that enables them to recognize the picture in front of them as a picture of a lion. This is quite easy to acknowledge, but what about the second language game? How could we describe the act of getting on a bus in terms of seeing aspects?

In this second case we could suppose that to appreciate the order correctly the student, as any reasonable judge (Travis 1989), should take for granted a series of things, not all completely *sayable*: the existence of the bus, with all that follows from that (i.e. the existence of the door, of the seats, and so on), a series of grammatical presuppositions about the existence of the world, and, last but not the least, the knowledge of the correct way of sitting on a bus. This is a kind of practical knowledge and has two main characteristics: it is nonpropositional, because it lacks bipolarity (the way of sitting could be correct or incorrect, but is not evaluable as true or false) (Moyal Sharrock 2007), and is unsayable, or not completely expressible through verbal language (the chain of words lacks all the *tips* that only the direct experience of involvement in a practice could give to a learner, PU II, p: 193).

These two characteristics are the main features of an *Einstellung* that we could define as a practical disposition intrinsic to the everyday behaviour. *Einstellungen* are like frames or attitudes that are shown in any behaviour; looking at the different remarks in which Wittgenstein employs this concept we could work out the following list of features connected to it:

(i) *Einstellung* could be learned through a direct process of enskillment or, better, a process of growth of the organism in a certain environment constituted by the life of a community (Ingold 2000). For example, in LSPP § 203 Wittgenstein imagines a tribe [*Stamm*] in which is unknown the *misstrauische Einstellung*, distrustful disposition, towards the manifestations of pain, suggesting that a missionary could teach them the new disposition — in general this kind of teaching is like conversion or persuasion (UG § 92).

(ii) It is not completely expressible in language. Recall what Wittgenstein says in UG about our attitude of certainty with which we say to know something — for example, Moore's absolute certainty to have two hands or that the Earth existed for many years before our birth. Wittgenstein defines this kind of certainty as "something animal" (UG § 358), as a kind of certainty that is not 'rationally' based or inferentially determined, but nevertheless is necessary for our actions as human beings; specifying: "perfect certainty is only a matter of their attitude [*seine Einstellung*]" (UG § 404). The correct disposition is taken not towards a single aspect of our life or single issue, but towards the entire mythology or framework of our life (UG §§ 95, 211). In short to *have an Einstellung* means to maintain a religious belief taking a stance towards an entire system of practices (Kober 2007).

(iii) For this reason a disposition is not something that gives us information [*Mitteilung*] about the world, it is not directed towards a state of affairs or a specific event in the world. For example, surprise or dismay are not di-

rected to supposed internal feelings (BPP I, 836), instead they are dispositions shown in a way of acting in a specific environment (*Umgebung*).

(iv) *Einstellung* is not localized in a specific area of the body neither in a specific moment: it is instead contained and expressed in the time of the entire sequence of actions and by the entire sequence of *Handlungen* that comprises the body as a whole. To make an example consider the case of excuses: to have success in the act of finding excuses we should take the right or correct behaviour in all the sequence of our apologizing towards someone else. In this case the time of *Einstellung* is the grammatical time of all the process: to make a mistake or damage someone, to say "Sorry!" and wait for the answer and so on. (We realize that the grammatical time is something different and informs the so-called material time, result of the measurement by clock and other stuff).

(v) Consequently the disposition is not a kind of sensation or internal state, because it could not have duration. It would be senseless to ask someone for how long he took the right attitude in the act of excuses, as should be considered senseless to ask someone for how long he takes the right *Einstellung* towards the fact that the earth existed for many years before his birth. The principal preoccupation for Wittgenstein is to distinguish the *Einstellung* from any kind of attempt to reduce it to an internal state or mental attitude that precedes the action, for this reason he writes as follows:

Die Einstellung ‚etwas in ihm‘ zu nennen, ist irreführend. Es ist, als gerändert hat und ‚die Einstellung‘ genannt wird. Während alles klar zu Tage liegt – die Worte „eine neue Einstellung“ aber eben nicht eine Empfindung bezeichnen. BPP I, 1110.

We are now in the condition to realize that in the second game the students behaving in different ways are showing different dispositions or *Einstellungen*, and, in more general terms, they are showing to have a different mythology or to live a different form of life. The first one has learned to sit rightly getting a sit on the bus and she embodies the correct *Einstellung* of 'getting' on the bus, correct in the "accustomed context [gewohnte Umgebung]" of our life (UG § 237); the second one shows a misunderstanding of the *Abrichtung* in which she was involved, or at least to have lived in a different form of life, one in which is normal to sit on the roof of a bus (consider how people sit on the roof of trains in many countries of the World).

The point is that these dispositions are intrinsic to the language game number 2 and function like hinges of the game (UG §§ 341-344); because the understanding of the student turns around the *possession* of the correct way of 'getting on the bus', it presupposes it.

That is to say, the questions that we raise and our doubts depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn. UG § 341

But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just can't investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. UG § 343.

My life consists in my being content to accept many things. UG § 344

We could paraphrase the last sections saying that the meaning of our language game (2) consists in showing the acceptance of a way of getting on the bus: if I want to get there correctly, the hinges must stay put.

Now we need to go back to the first language game, what it matters with our talking of hinges and dispositions? The same Wittgenstein seems to answer to this doubt in the following remark taken from PU:

"To me it is an animal pierced by an arrow". That is what I treat it is; this is my attitude to the figure. This is one meaning in calling it a case of 'seeing'. PU II, xi: p. 175

And in the manuscript of LSPP he argues with the same tone:

So seh ich es, in diesem Sinne, also nur so lange so, als ich diese Einstellung dazu habe? Man könnte es sagen. LSPP § 667

These remarks let no doubt on the relation between *Einstellungen* and aspect of organization, and let us go to the conclusion that the grammar of our language game is intrinsically constituted by practical and behavioural aspects that are unsayable and nonpropositional. The second point is a consequence of this first one: we couldn't distinguish between practical judgement and a rational one. To judge means to understand a certain process as a whole employing a series of beliefs embedded in our life. Third and last conclusion: the analogy between aspect of organization and behavioural dispositions shows the coincidence of action and perception in human knowledge.

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