From 'essentialism' to 'family resemblance': a philosophical journey of Wittgenstein's analyses of language from *Tractatus* to *PI*

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to investigate Ludwig Wittgenstein's two different approaches of philosophical analyses of language as of whether they are completely antagonistic, or the later analysis is just a continuation of the early analysis with no contradictions. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein attempts to unveil the essential one-to-one correspondence between the structure of language and the facts. He maintains that language pictures what is actually the case; that is, the facts. However, in his later works particularly in the *Philosophical Investigations,* he argues that there is no one meaning of a language as the meaning of a language changes from context to context, from place to place, and from time to time, like the rules of the game change from one game to other. Later Wittgenstein maintains that only criss-cross similarity which he called 'family resemblance' is what exists between the languages, and no essential identical features are there. But the later analysis is not anti early-analysis since the former deals with the structure of the language which represents the thought and the facts (world), and the later analysis deals with the 'use of language (ordinary used of language that we used)'. If the languages of the thought have no one-to-one correspondence with the facts that are going to represent, then, representation is not possible and even communication will be collapsed down. Again, the way how we use a language (conventional or ordinary use of language, not the language of thought-structure) has multiple ways and no fixed meaning for all the time. There must have to be a structure of language that represents the thought which subsequently representing the facts, and within this essential structure multiple sub-structures (rules) can be founded, and these sub-structures are how our ordinary language is working.

KEYWORDS: Essentialism, Family resemblance, Picture theory and Language game.

Introduction:

Ludwig Wittgenstein occupies a towering figure in 20th-century analytic philosophy movement. P.M.S Hacker writes, "Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein dominates the history of twentieth-century analytic philosophy somewhat as Picasso dominates the history of twentieth-century art."[1] *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (hereafter refers to as *Tractatu*s) which was published in 1921, the only book of him published during his lifetime, and *Philosophical Investigations* (hereafter refers as *PI*), published in 1953, shortly after his death, most dominantly represent his entire two different philosophical analyses of language.

Philosophical analysis of language in *Tractatus*:

Tractatus is generally regarded as the greatest work among Wittgenstein's writings. This early work of Wittgenstein makes him occupy a dominant figure among the analytic philosophers of his time. He was advised by Gottlob Frege to study with Bertrand Russell, who is also regarded as one of the intellectual genius, not only in Philosophy but also in several fields. In 1911, he left his early career of aeronautic engineering and went to Cambridge. Here in Cambridge he met Bertrand Russell and entered into the world of Philosophy. The influences of Frege and Russell, to some extent, have been seen in *Tractatus* and his later works. His main aim is to remove the vagueness in our languages thereby helping the puzzles that are encountering by Philosophers. He regards all philosophy is a critique of language in the *Tractatus*.[2]

Apparently, in the prime of his philosophical career, he is very much influenced by the 'logical atomism' of Bertrand Russell. Russell attempts to develop a formal language which is free from all vagueness which we encountered in our ordinary languages. He regarded our ordinary language has full of vagueness and it can't be taken as a proper vehicle to address philosophical problems. Russell logical atomism tries to deal with the smallest unit of a language or a proposition, in a similar fashioned with how a chemist divided an element into smallest units and deal with them. Wittgenstein's approach of philosophical analysis in *Tractatus* is also a form of logical analysis of language. Here, he is hunting the logical structure that persists between the language and the world.

Wittgenstein starts his book *Tractatus* with the thesis, "The world is all that is the case."[3] He maintains that the world is constituted by facts and not by things. When there is an organisation or configuration of simple objects, it constitutes a fact. For example 'an apple' is not a fact, but an object. When I say, "There is an apple in the table", is a fact, which is constituted by the objects 'an apple' and 'the table', in a particular state of affair.

> He postulated, in particular, that the world must itself have a definite logical structure, even though we may not be able to determine it completely. He also held that the world consists primarily of facts, corresponding to the true atomic sentences, rather than of things, and that those facts, in turn, are concatenations of simple objects, corresponding to the simple names of which the atomic sentences are composed.[4]

He maintains that language pictures the reality, that is, propositions mirror the facts. And, in any picture, the structure of the language and the structure of the facts must have to be a one-to-one correspondence, that is, it must have to be isomorphic. Without this isomorphism, representation is not possible. But he states that all the propositions can't be pictured. Only the propositions which are related to what is the case can be pictured. What is the case- a fact- is the existence of states of affairs.[5] Those things which are related to ethical, aesthetic, religious and mystical experiences etc. do not represent any facts, and can't be pictured. The main aim of Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* is to bring out 'what can be said', 'what can be shown' and 'what can't be said'. Only which are factual, that is, related to the state of affairs can be said, but,

those things which are related to ethical, aesthetic, religious and mystical experiences etc. can't be said. They are at least can be shown.

Having limitations is being human. Language serves the boundary of our understanding of this world. Since our language has its own limitations, it is nonsensical to talk about those things which are beyond the boundary of our language. Our language has enough strength to mirror the facts in this world, but it has nothing to do so far as the things which are beyond the facts are concerned. Those which are in the realm of the mystical transgressed the boundary of our language and are nonsensical. In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein insists us to limit the philosophical analysis of language only with the facts by keeping silent those which are beyond the world of facts. Thus he concludes *Tractatus* with the thesis: What we can't speak about we must pass over in silence.[6]

In the preface of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein sums up the whole concerned of the book in only one sentence. He writes, "The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we can't talk about we must pass over in silence."[7]

Philosophical analysis of language in *PI*

After Wittgenstein completed his work *Tractatus* he has a strong sense of confidence that all philosophical problems have been solved and time has come for him to abandon philosophy. He left Cambridge and spent some years as a school teacher teaching young pupils. During this time he happened to acquire some new philosophical insights which have been prevailing on the way how we used our ordinary languages. He has come up with a different approach to the philosophical analysis of language unlike the approach in the *Tractatus*. He came back to Cambridge in 1929 with his new approach to the philosophical analysis of language. The *Philosophical Investigations*, published shortly after his death in 1953 more or less contained his new approach to the analysis of language.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is concerned with two principal topics: the philosophy of language and philosophical psychology.[8] But, here in this paper, I would like to dwell only on the philosophy of language in the *PI*. In *PI*, Wittgenstein maintains that language does not carry a fixed meaning beyond context and place. In other words, language does not serve its purpose beyond historicity. Language according to him is making sense only when we used it. He proposed 'use theory of meaning', and appeals us not to search for meaning, but have to bother first for usages. Wittgenstein offered the key analogy of linguistic activity to the playing of games.[9] Here the term "language game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.[10] Like the rules of the game changes from one game to other, the meaning of a language undergoes a change from one context to context, place to place, and from time to time.

So, language according to Wittgenstein is rule-following. Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order.[11] Rules keep on changing in course time since rules are not like natural laws, which are based on cause-effect relationship. Language represents or misrepresents, but, it can't escape from following the rules. The traffic signal RED signifies to STOP. However, the rule that governs to this particular language can be changed in course of time. Now, if we agreed to signify RED means GO, then, in course of time the earlier rule would become extinct, and the later will keep on working. This follows that language is driven by cultural and social aspects of life. He further maintains that there is no essential identity between languages, and only criss-cross similarities, which he called 'family resemblance', is existing between the languages.

Since language is rule-following and multiplicity of meanings can be generated, Wittgenstein maintains that 'ostensive definition' can't completely furnish with the meaning of a language. Last but not least, he argues that language should not be private, and always be public. He is not ready to believe the existence of a private language. Even though language is rule following, he maintains that rules that are governed by the language are not private rules, and because of this, language can be shareable.

When I order to 'bring the apple' to my nephew, he may think for a while, and based on the situation and time, he may notice which apple that I wish to at that particular context. If it is breakfast timing, the more chance is he may take out the apple (the fruit) that I keep on the breakfast table and give it to me. But, if I order him when I am about to leave for my office, the chance is more on the APPLE laptop that I keep on my reading table. Again, when I say "You are my apple." to my Crush out of love, it carries a different meaning. Only lexical definition, therefore, does not completely signifies the meaning of a word or language. But based on how we used a word, a multiplicity of meanings can be generated.

A comparison between the two analyses:

Wittgenstein's *PI* can't be read alone without the *Tractatus*. There are many continuities and linkages between the two as far as the analysis of language is concerned, as well as in respect to many other concerns. P.M.S Hacker writes:

> Wittgenstein is unique in the history of philosophy as the progenitor of two profoundly opposed comprehensive philosophies. To be sure, there are continuities of theme between the two: the nature of linguistic representation, of logic and laws of thought, of the relation between thought and its linguistic expression, of the intentionality of thought and language, of metaphysics and of philosophy itself are topics examined in detail in the *Tractatus* and then re-examined in the later philosophy.[12]

Hacker regarded the two analyses as dramatically opposed to each other even though there are continuities in terms of subject matters of analyses. But the two analyses are not opposing with each other. The difference is on the languages that were dealing with in the *Tractatus* and in the *PI*. The language that represents thought and the facts of the world is not rule-governed, and it is not determined by how we used it. It is

independent of ordinary uses of language. Unless, there is a correspondence between the thought and the fact that the thought is going to represent, representation is not possible. Wittgenstein acknowledges the logical relation between the thought and facts. Language is the medium where we can study the thought in relation to facts. This structural relationship of language between the thought and facts is what Wittgenstein had studied in the *Tractatus*. However, Wittgenstein shifted from structural language to conventional use of language in day to day life as the matter of analysis of language in the *PI*. Thus the difference between PI and *Tractatus* is not on the basis of two dramatically opposed analyses of language on the same language in which one analysis assassinates over the other. Rather, Wittgenstein brings out two different languages and their respective different analysis in his two different major works *Tractatus* and *PI*.

We give the name APPLE to signify a particular fruit for a conventional purpose. This Word APPLE can be again used in different ways not only the one to signify a particular fruit. But the structure of thought that represents a particular fruit apple is one. This structure is not limited to a particular context and time, and to a particular group of people, but for all. The structural-language that represents the fruit APPLE is not the word APPLE but a structural thought-language that has one to one correspondence to the state of affairs where the apple fruit belongs to. The word APPLE is for conventional uses of language, but the language which operates through thought-structure is implicit and hidden. This structural language in relation to a particular state of affair is what Wittgenstein is talking about in *Tractatus*, and the conventional uses of language, or what we called 'ordinary language' is what he is talking about in *PI* and other later works.

"The world of the happy man is different from that of unhappy man" (*Tractatus* 6.43)[13]. Being happy or unhappy depends on my attitude to the world.[14] It follows that depending upon how we play a language, the meaning is generated. The factual world that is given to us is one and same for all. But we have different worlds based on how we play our languages. The world that I share with my parents is different from the world I share with my teachers, and it is different from the world I share with my friends, and so on. By maintaining that the world of the happy man is different from that of unhappy man in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein already acknowledges different ways of life or different worlds that we can be created depending upon the languages we made in our lives. Thus the germ of which *PI* is born is already being there in the *Tractatus*.

In *Tractatus* Wittgenstein argues that language concerning ethical, aesthetical are not sayable, meaning they are not factual and can't be pictured, but at least they can be shown. Again those which are mystical and religious experience transcend the world of facts, meaning they are beyond the boundary of our language. They are unspeakable and have to maintain silent since no language of we, human beings have the strength to capture these mystical and religious experience. Throughout his entire later works after *Tractatus*, be it *PI* or other works, he always comes back again and again to the *Tractatus* whenever he likes to talk about ethics, aesthetics, religion, and mystical. The importance of *Tractatus* is, therefore, not assassinated by his later writings, but it can be regarded as the life-blood of his other writings.

Conclusion:

Apparently, it seems like Later Wittgenstein analysis of language in the *PI* refutes his earlier analysis in the *Tractatus*. He is shifting from 'essentialism' to 'family resemblance' as far as the analysis of language is concerned from *Tractatus* to *PI*. But the two analyses are not a refutation of one another. *Tractatus* deals with the structure of the language of the thought and its one-to-one correspondence to facts; and, its limitations to represent realities. Whereas, *PI* deals with how ordinary languages that we use are working in multiple numbers of ways. There are instances where we can see the germs of *PI* in *Tractatus*. Last but not least, his later analysis is going back again and again to the *Tractatus* on many issues.

Notes and References

1. P.M.S Hacker, "Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)", from *A companion to Analytic Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishers, 2001, P-68.
2. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* translated by D.F Pears and B.F McGuiness, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, revised edition 1971, (4.0031), P-23.

3. *Ibid*., P-5.

4. *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, edited by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern, Cambridge University Press, 1996, P-10.

5. See Ludwig Wittgenstein's second thesis or proposition in the *Tractatus*, P-5.
6. *Ibid*., P-89.
7. *Ibid*., P-3.
8. Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*, 1997, Routledge. P-9.
9. William G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language a Contemporary Introduction*, second edition, 2008, Routledge. P-77.
10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M Anscombe, Second edition, Blackwell Publishers, 1958, P-11.
11. *Ibid.*, P-82.
12. PMS Hacker, *opcit*., P-70.
13. *Tractatus*, P-87.
14. Hughes Liam, "If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. (*Tractatus* 6.41)" from, *In search of Meaning, Ludwig Wittgenstein on Ethics, Mysticism and religion*, (2009), edited by Ulrich Arnswald, Universitatsverlag Karlsruhe p.56