

# Wittgenstein and Freud on Language

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The dialogue between Wittgenstein and Freud on use of language, which emerged from Wittgenstein's unusual appreciation of Psychoanalysis and later his comments against that and Freud's defense of psychoanalysis is well known in Philosophy. During the period of Blue and Brown Books<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein apprehensively states that Freud is "someone who has something to say" (Rees, Rush. 1967. p.41) and calls himself a "disciple of Freud". (Hoeisch, Steve.2006.p.8) During the same Blue and Brown Book period, however taking a 'U-turn', Wittgenstein rejects psychoanalysis as a harmful mythology.

Freud in return replies, 'of course I always knew that you 'admired' me only out of politeness and believed very little of any of my doctrine although I have often asked myself what indeed there is to be admired in them, if they are not true, i.e. if they do not contain a large measure of truth.'" (quoted by Jones, E. 1961.p.506)

From Wittgensteinian-Freudian days to date many critics and writers have studied this controversy between these two great thinkers and the facts behind that. However, little attempts has been taken to go beyond studying the similarities and differences of the two thinkers. Even the most serious philosophical analysis is restricted to Wittgensteinians language criticism on Freud. Since these analysis do not study the 'truth', of what Freud claimed. From the viewpoints of both thinkers they cannot be considered as philosophically satisfied.

Everyone agrees that Wittgensteinian criticisms on Freud are semiotic rather than epistemological. (Even though Freudian concepts are epistemological) Therefore, in this paper especial attention is given to evaluate Wittgenstein's arguments and to validate the significance of Freudian principles from an epistemological point of view.

Freud as well as Wittgenstein in their philosophy maintains a concept of language misusing and that misuse derives from the language structure that can be called the 'dual system' of language.

In Freudian psychoanalysis this dual system consists of two forms of language; conscious use of language and unconscious use of language. While the conscious use of

language is a logical (or rational) and socially recognized form of language, the unconscious use of language is an illogical and a personally expressed form or in other words a second dimension of language. For Freud, surprisingly not the illogical form but the logical form was the illusionary and misleading dimension of language.

The dual system in Wittgensteinian's philosophy consists of the ordinary use of language and the logical form of language. Though Freud says that the logical form is illusionary and misleading from Wittgensteinian's point of view, such characteristics belongs to the ordinary use of language. The words in ordinary language are unprecised, confused and vague. When philosophers use such words in their philosophy that becomes metaphysical and apriori. Wittgenstein maintained this general attitude even though there were diversions in the periods of his philosophy. He always considered as his philosophical goal to fight against illogical and illusionary forms of language.

Cavell analyses the difference between the two dimensions as 'expressed' and 'said'. The expressed words (unconscious and logical) coincide with presence and are not necessarily said (conscious and ordinary). (Cavell, S. 1969.P.21)

During Blue and Brown Books period Wittgenstein's war against illogical use of language takes a psychoanalytic form. He elaborates the illogical form of language as an illusion; a mental illness. According to his wordings, "...philosophy had become a linguistic illness, from the burden of which people needed to be relieved..." This linguistic illness should be cured in similar to a psychoanalyst curing, a mental illness. "I am the psychoanalyst, philosophy is the illness from which philosophers need to be cured by analyzing what they are doing with language". (quoted by Hanly, Charles.1972.p.94)

It is crystal clear that Wittgensteinian's exercise is not limited only to 'clean' the language. Thereby he needed to solve philosophical problems as well. Solving philosophical problems is similar to a psychoanalytical treatment. In Wittgenstein's words, "Treatment of a philosophical question is like the treatment of an illness..." (Wittgenstein, Ludwig.1953.p.98) This is not a mere mental illness, but a ..." battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. P.109)

As in Psychoanalysis to get cured, attitudes, behaviors and values should be changed. "The sickness of philosophical problems can get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life...." (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1956. P.57).

It is true that once Wittgenstein had admired Freud and used Psychoanalytical and Psychotherapeutic terminology, the Philosophical reality is that not only the Wittgensteinian system but also the whole trend of analytical Philosophy cannot accept a system like Psychoanalysis.<sup>3</sup> As it shows earlier, the fundamental contradiction was with the second dimension of language by both systems.

In Wittgensteinian's system the second dimension was precise and accurate while in Freudian system it was vague and blurred. As Wittgenstein commented, "..... There can only be conscious thoughts and no unconscious ones.....", and "..... If they do not wish to take of 'unconscious thought' they should not use the phrase 'conscious thought'....." (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958. P.58).

Wittgenstein in the case of philosophical issue regarding the use of language and its relationship to the world order, belongs to Moore and Russell's Cambridge realistic tradition. In tractates he not only defends it but also contributes his labor to strengthen it<sup>4</sup>. Desmond Lee, for example, quotes from Wittgenstein as follows; "the world we live in is a world of sense data" (Lee, Desmond.1980. p.82. Note: 6)

According to this tradition, analyzing a concept is analyzing the meaning of words. From that point of view meanings to words are given<sup>5</sup> not based on a naturalistic phenomenon, indeed. The meanings are given based on factual information. Wittgenstein elucidated this point in tractates as follows: "If a god creates a world in which certain propositions are true, he creates there by also a world in which all propositions consequent on them are true. And similarly he could not create a world in which the proposition 'p' is true without creating all its objects" (Wittgenstein, Ludwig.1922.5.123)

Without a doubt, Wittgenstein in tractatus repeats what Moore and Russell say under logical positivism. For example Moore says, ".....rightly or wrongly, that the world is generally used to stand for what I want to discover is the nature of the idea or object." (Moore, G.E. 1922. P.6). And, Russell says, "every proposition is concerned with something that exists." (Russell, Bertrand. 1920. P.450) when combining these two ideas, on one hand language becomes meaningful if only it has the shape of logical form and on the other hand the logical form can be assured if only it represents the external things of the world. The obvious conclusion is, tractates aims to prove the existence of the external world. That external world is not the world analyzed by Hume (his skepticism) or Bekley (his subjective idealism)<sup>6</sup> but the mathematical world analyzed by Descartes – Newtonian system.

In order to avoid the resistance put forward by Hume and Berkley, Wittgenstein bluntly says that any word or sentence without a logical form creates a metaphysical jargon. In Blue and Brown books he says “.....words are used in a typically metaphysical way”. (Wittgenstein, Ludwig.1958.pp- 45-6)

To achieve his aim, Wittgenstein changed the purpose of philosophy as well. He said, “Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an actively...” and that actively is “... clarification of propositions.” (Wittgenstein, Ludwig 1922.pg.112)

Eventhough Wittgenstein, changed his approach and method in Investigation, he maintained his basic argument and purpose. He says in Investigations that his task was “... to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday usage.” (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. P.48) Kulasena Vidanagamage explains the reason for this difference is that Wittgenstein understood that, “language cannot be subjected to precise logical form. Language game has many meanings. Rules of the game is changing according to the way the game is done. “(Vidanagamage, Kulasena.1993.p.37)

Wittgenstein, in Investigations, changes his techniques and tools Instead of changing the purpose and objective of his philosophy. His new technique was ‘use of language’ instead of earlier logical form of language’. He says, “Misunderstanding concerning the use of words create metaphysical problems. (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. P.43) Under the new technique he developed several tools and one of them was “game of language”. His new argument was “....breaking the rules of the game....” Creates metaphysical problems, and such problems have been formulated “.....against the limits of language.....” ((Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. P.119)

In Investigation he accepts the need of several tools instead of the old tool of logical structure; he says, “there is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies”. (Wittgenstein, Ludwing.1953.p.133) However his purpose was the same; to bring back the words to their “original homes”.

Now it is clear what Wittgenstein had against Freudian psychoanalysis. The second dimension of Freudian psychoanalytical language is illogical, according to Tractatus and breaking the rules of the game, according the investigation.<sup>7</sup> Whatever the faulty with psychoanalysis it does not represent any external world facts. Thus it is not only illogical but illusionary as well.

As Wittgenstein mentions in Tractatus, "... We could not say what an illogical world would like." (Wittgenstein, Ludwig.1922.3.031) Psychoanalysis is a great myth. Freud explains that nothing exist. " How can we hang a thief who does not exist? ...I can't hang him when he doesn't exist; but I can look for him when he doesn't exist." (Wittgenstein. Lidwig.1958.p.31)

Though Wittgenstein harshly criticizes psychoanalysis as an illusion, one must not forget that Freud has advocated Philosophy for its independent development in a period that Wittgenstein has not joined the possession. Freud signed a joint manifesto with Einstein and Ernest Mach. As quoted by Ronald Clark the manifesto emphasises that, "Philosophy should grow natural manner out of the facts and problems of natural sciences." (Clark, Ronald.1972.p.197)

As it can be seen, Wittgenstein shifted his position from physicalistic standard to a pragmatic standard. Freudian concept of unconscious language is also a pragmatic analysis. Freud has raised a number of arguments to defend his concept of unconscious language. One of the main arguments was unconscious thoughts could not be studied by conventional scientific methods. He says, "The logical laws of thoughts do not apply to the Id and this is true about all of the laws of contradiction. Contrary impulses exist side by side without cancelling each out or diminishing each other; at the most the coverage to form a comprise." (Freud.s.1965.pp.73-74).

It is very well seen from Freud's argument 'comprising of contrary impulses' is a paradox. By this paradox Freud explains the dialectical basis of human mental life and knowledge related to that. Unfortunately Wittgenstein fails to understand this dialectical nature. Freud himself guesses the reason for Wittgenstein's failure and analyses as follows: "It goes astray in its method of over estimating the epistemological value of our logical operations and by accepting other sources of knowledge such as intuition." (Freud, Sigmund.1965.p.161).

The over estimation of the epistemological value of logical operations cause, as Freud analyses, "the overvaluation of the magic of words and the belief that the real events in the world take the course which our thinking seeks to impose on them." (Freud, Sigmund.1965.p.166). Thus they miss some essential features of the animistic mode of thought, Freud's this statement was a real hard slap to positivists and Empiricists in early twentieth century.

Both positivists and Empiricists needed to establish the logical and scientific basis of language and to confirm the existence of objective external world. Therefore finally Freud concludes, “It is an empty wrangle over the words to argue whether mental life is to be regarded as co-extensive with consciousness...” (Freud, Sigmund.1938.p.23)

Freud’s argument shows that unconsciousness is a part of mental life; accordingly, unconsciousness based on language is a mode of human thinking. Freud analyses the empirical basis of unconscious language as, “The verbal transformation in dreams are very similar to those which are known to occur in paranoia, and which are observed also in hysteria and obsessions. The linguistic tricks of children who at certain age actually treat words as objects, and even invent new language and artificial syntaxes, are common sources of such occurrences both in dreams and in the psychoneurosis.” (Freud, Sigmund.1997.p.189). Freud, to prove his theory took examples not only from clinical case studies but also from anthropological researches such as by Malinowski. (Freud, Sigmund.1997.p.62 & p.236).

Freud’s psychoanalysis is not a mere pragmatism, but a pragmatism with a social anthropological basis. Now the problem is why Wittgenstein, who is a pragmatist himself, opposes to Freudian system. The reason is Wittgenstein never became a real pragmatist; really was a in a shaking position in between; Tractatus physicalism and Investigations pragmatism.

Even in Tractatus, Wittgenstein is uncertain about physicalism and pragmatism. Kulasena Vidanagamage correctly analyses that, Wittgenstein, while rejecting the concept of a priori in Tractatus arguing for a necessary logical structure is contradictory. (Vidanagamage, Kulasena.1993.p.42) Kulasena Vidanagamage further quotes Carnap’s suspect about whether Wittgenstein really rejects a priori in Tractatus. (Vidanagamage, Kulasena.1993.p.54) Wittgenstein’s criticism over Carnap on the same matter is also famous.

As it was seen earlier, Wittgenstein’s pragmatism is limited to Russell’s theory of sense data and even in investigation he does not give up his philosophical goal to bring the language back to its logical form. (or if in a domino game to come back home).

Wittgenstein’s failure to become a real pragmatist (or to understand the paradox of conscious and unconscious thoughts) is due to his intention to provide a logico-mathematical analysis to the world order; if more specially saying, it is due to his intention to confirm the objectively existence of the external world.

## Notes

1. The historical development of Wittgenstein's philosophical thought is divided into three periods; i.e. Tractatus Logico philosophicus period (1916-1929), The Blue and Brown Book Period (1930-1936), and philosophical Investigations period (1937-1957). Many critics and followers including G.H.Von Wright, the successor to Wittgenstein's chair in Cambridge and one of the editors of Wittgensteinian literature, have expressed their reluctance to accept the Blue and Brown Book as a period of continuation of Wittgensteinian philosophy due to its 'non Wittgensteinian style'. They have analysed it as 'not real Wittgensteinian'; a period of false philosophy; and 'thirteenth floor which the elevator need not stop.'
2. Many critics have pointed out that Wittgenstein's stand point on world order and use of language has been diverted from his Tractatus to Investigation. It is said, comparing to Investigations the stand point in Tractatus had a more physicalistic tendency. However at the same time, there are clear evidences to prove that Wittgenstein never became a real physicalist, as Carnap. His solipsism in Tractatus (ex.5:64) was similar to Cambridge philosopher's theory of sense data.

In the Blue and Brown Book, Wittgenstein confirmed his Tractatus position, He said, "misdescription of ordinary language to be corrected by resources to the actual use of terminology". (Wittgenstein, Ludwig.1958.p.28) Wittgenstein's position of logical form of language, in Tractatus and Blue and Brown Book, diverted to a more flexible position, a position of contextual meaning, in Investigations. He accepted that "every sentence in our language is in order as it is...where there is sense there must be perfect order." (Wittgenstein, Ludwig.1953.p.98). And he agreed that language is not intrinsically misleading or deviant but problems are created by its misuse. However, either in Tractatus or in Investigations he never gave up his duty to bring the language back to its correct form.

3. Vienna thinkers and Karl Popper also rejected psychoanalysis as not scientific. (Frankel- Brunswik, E.1954.p.273).
4. Desmond Lee who edited Wittgenstein's lectures during 1930-1932 says that Wittgenstein's solipsism in Tractatus more close to theory of sense data rather than physicalism. Lee, further says, that Tractatus even had a touch of phenomenological

thinking pattern. He quotes from Wittgenstein's lectures as follow. "The world we live in is a world of sense data." (Lee, Desmond.1980.p.82.Note 6)

5. According to Wittgenstein and most of contemporary philosophers, language is a product by people; i.e. thinkers, writers and average persons, but not a product of social relationships and social activities of a specific social context, as Vygotsky, the Marxist psychologist analysed.
6. Wittgenstein struggle in Tractatus is clear, to solve the old philosophy problem, the gap between subject and object, regarding our knowledge on the external world.
7. However Wittgenstein had used different, apart from language context, type of arguments as well. For example, Stephen Wilson quotes a Wittgensteinian argument and answered himself in the Introduction to one of the Freudian Classics. 'The Interpretation of Dreams. "As the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein remarked, 'Freud very commonly gives what we might call a sexual interpretation. But it is interesting that among all the reports of dreams which he gives there is not a single example of a straightforward sexual dream. Yet these dreams are as common as rain.'" (Willson, stephe.1997.pg 9) This argument, which has been developed without a logical basis, shows only Wittgenstein's rivalry of Freud and his ignorance of psychoanalysis.

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