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Wittgenstein and Psychoanalysis: Freud's Dangerous Pupil

Summary:

In this paper I want to show in what sense Wittgenstein's later philosophy is an ethics and in what senses ethical and philosophical problems involve repression. However, there is a reason why it is not so easy to see how ethics and repression enter Wittgenstein's thinking. This is because what in my view gives Wittgenstein's remarks their illuminating power is not directly stated by him; probably he did not think explicitly of it. I try to show that this source of clarity is something I call the I-you perspective. Throughout his later philosophy Wittgenstein refuses to argue for or against general, metaphysical claims. Instead, he invites his reader to abandon the perspective where the metaphysical dichotomies "force" themselves on us. One could say that his general strategy is to invite the reader to imagine what it would mean to utter the claims under consideration to a particular person; to a "you". – The I-you perspective is central also to Freud even if he does not recognise this. Elaborating this perspective will show what the affinities between Freud and Wittgenstein are, in what sense ethics is fundamental in a non-metaphysical way, and why it is important to view philosophical and ethical problems as instances of repression.

Introduction

It has often been held that Wittgenstein's work is in an important way motivated by ethical and religious questions (Barrett 1991, Shields 1997, Arnswald 2009, Krebs 2010).[1] However, one cannot say that this rather wide-spread conviction would be reflected in a body of philosophical works that would clearly show how this ethical importance should be understood in philosophical terms. It is symptomatic of this state of affairs that Gordon Baker does not seem to give ethics any prominent role in his widely discussed account of Wittgenstein's later philosophy (Baker 2004). Another topic that is in need of clarification is the role that psychoanalytic thinking is supposed to have for Wittgenstein's methods. Wittgenstein's references to his own philosophy as a therapy have been widely discussed and variously interpreted, but most often they have not been brought in any closer connection to Freud's ideas. A further problem is that the relationship between the role of psychoanalysis and ethics remains obscure. Even if Baker discusses both ethics and psychoanalysis, he fails to see any particular connection between them.[2]

In this paper I will try to show how Wittgenstein's ethical thinking is intimately related to his idea that philosophy has an essential similarity with psychoanalysis. This task is connected to another, deeper one, namely to show how something I will call the I-you perspective (and sometimes I-you relationship or I-you understanding) is central for understanding in what sense ethics is essential to the later Wittgenstein. (There are some similarities between this and what Martin Buber says in *I and Thou* but when Buber speaks about two modes of engaging in the world he fails to see how the I-it mode is a repression of the I-you mode. See Buber 1996.)

I do not think that Wittgenstein thought about his later philosophy as an elaboration of the I-you perspective. He probably did not. Neither did Freud think of his theory as a theory about I-you relationships. What I want to show is how the illuminating power of Wittgenstein's and Freud's thought becomes clear if we consult the I-you perspective. In my view the thought of Wittgenstein and Freud utilises the illuminating power of this perspective to a striking degree.

I will begin the exploration of the I-you perspective by discussing the concept of instinct the way Wittgenstein uses it in one of his remarks. My aim is to show the sense in which both the way Freud uses this concept and the way some Wittgenstein scholars speak about moral necessity are for interrelated reasons acquiring their illuminating power from the I-you perspective. These issues lead us to the role of the I-you perspective and the sense in which ethics and certain Freudian themes are central to the later Wittgenstein's thought. What I say will also implicitly point to important differences between Wittgenstein and Freud; differences that may well explain why Wittgenstein later on did not want to associate his view with psychoanalysis. (See Hacker 2007, pp. 98-99.) My account of the relationship between Wittgenstein and Freud starts from the assumption that the basic features in Freud's theory are well-known and that what is in need of clarification is the way Wittgenstein's thought enters these kind of issues. I hope that it will become clear in which sense Wittgenstein not only followed, but also went beyond Freud.

The I-you perspective makes intelligible Wittgenstein's deep ethical concerns, the similarities between psychoanalysis and his way of doing philosophy, and the sense in which philosophical problems are not intellectual but must nevertheless be treated by philosophical analysis.

Instincts and Philosophical Problems

Why are philosophical problems so difficult? If philosophical problems arise from prejudices as Baker holds (see Baker 2004, pp. 169-70), why are prejudices so hard to give up? These are important questions that have not been sufficiently discussed. In the context of Wittgenstein scholarship, part of the confusion about the difficulty of philosophy is tied up with the question whether the difficulty concerns personal and therapeutic issues or whether the difficulty is also universal and epistemological as Hacker claims (see Hacker 2007, p. 99). This question has become even more pressing when ideas about a "third", more epistemologically oriented Wittgenstein have been presented. (See Moyal-Sharrock 2004.) I think this conflict is misconceived in ways that have not been properly addressed. Consider the following seldom discussed remark:

People are deeply imbedded in philosophical, i.e., grammatical confusions. And to free them from these presupposes pulling them out of the immensely manifold connections they are caught up in. One must so to speak regroup their entire language. – But this language came about //developed// as it did because people had – and have – the inclination to think *in this way*. Therefore pulling them out only works with those who live in an instinctive state of rebellion against //dissatisfaction with// language. Not with those who following all of their instincts live within the herd that has created this language as its proper expression." (PO, p. 185.)

I want to explicate how the above remark (I will call it the herd-remark) casts doubt not only on the Hackerian reading of Wittgenstein but many others too. On the Hackerian view, philosophical problems arise because philosophers and scientists use common language in ways where words lose their familiar meanings. As a consequence, philosophers and scientists run up against unresolvable *intellectual* problems; they speak nonsense because they use language in grammatically improper ways. There are of course trains of thought in the PI that seem to speak for this interpretation. I will shortly address the problems with it towards the end of the paper. The way Wittgenstein characterises the problem of acquiring philosophical clarity in the above remark seems to say that the source of misunderstanding lies in something like an instinctual urge to misunderstand. Is this just an unfortunate choice of words that leads to internal tensions

in Wittgenstein's thought? I think that there are problems with speaking about an instinctive rebellion against language and about a herd-instinct but I do not think that we have here only a careless choice of word. Instead, we face a philosophical problem about the way the difficulty that Wittgenstein is addressing should be articulated. This problem is related to Freud's talk about instincts and their psychological representatives.

Freud's reason for talking about instincts could be articulated in terms of conceptual resources. He saw something inescapable in our "psychic" reactions at the same time as he realised that this necessity could not be accounted for in terms of logical necessity. Given the conceptual resources at his disposal, Freud could only conclude that the necessity has a biological source. In fact, the dichotomy between logical and empirical necessity still structures philosophical reflection. There is in other words nothing odd as such with Freud's idea that these responses are at bottom natural, i.e., biological.

But understandable as this idea is, it is nevertheless misconceived in claiming that emotions are symbolic manifestations of biological urges (see for instance Freud 1989, p. 13). The problem we face here is not a small one: the outlook at stake is basically Kantian and it still frames the way issues about emotions (for my purposes the distinctions between feelings, emotions and affects are not important) are discussed. Emotions are basically seen as alarm signals from the body; signals that urge us to drink, eat, flee, attack, be suspicious, have sexual intercourse, etc. (See Kant 1996, pp. 61 and 79; Brady 2011; and Tooby et. al. 2005.) In this outlook, objectivity is presupposed, for the only way of making sense of these blind, subjective prompts from the body is (i) to place them into some kind of rational framework (whether scientific or metaphysical); (ii) to oppose them, *à la* Kant, to practical reason or morality or; (iii) to assume that they somehow become intelligible within our common language. The problem with this way of conceiving the issue is not that we do not "yet" have a plausible objective account of these subjective prompts; the problem is, instead, that a typical opposition between the subjective and objective arises. One aspect of this paper could be described as trying to show how philosophical problems involve that one is driven to give accounts where the polarity between particularity or subjectivity and universality or objectivity arises. As I see it, every effort to try to reconcile subjectivity and objectivity is confused because the appearance of this dichotomy is a *symptom* of metaphysical confusion.

The problematic outlook that Freud adopted threatens to obliterate his most important insight, namely the fundamental importance of the I-you relationship. For instance, he tends to think that repression is a result of a "defect of our mental apparatus" (*ibid.*, p. 89; see also p. 103). This on the one hand subject-centred and on the other hand biological, and in this sense objective, outlook misconstrues the difficulty which, actually is about the terrible difficulty of being open with the other at the same time as this openness is intensely longed for. (I hope I can by and by clarify at least part of what I mean by this.) Still, virtually all of Freud's theoretical concepts as well as the whole "talking cure" as such is oriented at revealing and healing difficulties between an I and a you, even if Freud does not view it in this way. I hope this paper will be able to clarify some aspects of this internal conflict in Freud. I will approach the issue from the point of view of ethics, understood in a non-standard way that I will also try to clarify by and by.

Freud fails to see the pervasiveness of the fact that repression is a moral phenomenon. Contrary to his assurances (Freud, *SE*, 19, pp. 35-39), there is a sense in which there really is nothing like morals in his theory. There is no concept of goodness in it; only of pleasure, restriction of pleasure and punishment. The ego ideal in fact has nothing illuminating to tell us about our moral ("higher") nature. (See Lear 2005, pp. 192 ff., for a critique of Freud's ideas about morality.) Freud thinks that he can give an account of repression without considering moral issues; that psychological research is completely independent of moral inquiry (Freud, *SE*, 19, p. 36). This misconception has consequences. For instance, when Freud says that love "establishes" the super-ego (see Freud 2002, p. 68) nothing in his description of how this happens shows why the super-ego should be understood in a moral light. In Freud's view the main function of the super-ego is punishing the ego but morality is not, not even peripherally, about punishment.

However, what Freud failed to see cannot be captured by the standard concepts of moral philosophy. In fact, some of Freud's observations, such as the one hinted at above, can be seen as pointing to the problems that the usual assumptions in moral philosophy (let me call it the standard view) are imbued with. A clarification of the critical potential as well as the problems in Freud's thought involves an explication of the I-you perspective. Showing how Wittgenstein's later thinking utilises the resources of the I-you perspective will, in its turn, make it easier to see the general significance of this perspective.[3]

Since the ethical character of the I-you relationship is not recognisable in the standard ethical terms, my attempts to account for it will seem strange from the point of view of the standard view; I will take up issues that may at first sight appear morally irrelevant while leaving out considerations that are taken to be essential. I hope that at the end of the paper some basic features of the I-you perspective and its relationship to the standard view will nevertheless become visible. On general terms, the relationship is one of repression: the general outlook of the standard view constitutes a repression of the I-you perspective or, more specifically; the I-you understanding. In showing what this means, there are certain central insights in the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein that are helpful. The importance of his later philosophy is, as I see it, that it in many respects utilises the "grammatical" resources of the I-you perspective (I do not know if it is illuminating to speak about grammar here) in such a powerful way that I can very well understand if someone thinks that he *was* quite consciously exploring this perspective.[4] I am thus trying to reveal the critical potential of Freud's and particularly Wittgenstein's thought by viewing their ideas from a point of view that is not theirs in any explicit sense. However, for reasons of space I will be able to address only briefly the important and big issue of collectivity that Wittgenstein touches upon in the herd-remark.

Instinct and Moral Necessity

How should one understand Wittgenstein's talk of instincts? Is it not seriously misleading when Wittgenstein's topic is what philosophical thinking is about? And how do moral questions enter the picture? The problem is complicated. The standard vocabulary of moral philosophy was of no help to Wittgenstein. For instance, the talk of duties and virtues could not have captured what he was thinking of. So he used a biological word to indicate moral responses. What is the point of contact between Wittgenstein's and Freud's talk of instinct? This would perhaps become clearer if we take a look at a certain theme in Post-Wittgensteinian moral philosophy.

In the Post-Wittgensteinian tradition the kind of observations of moral understanding that led Kant to his idea of a categorical imperative and, as I think, Freud to his idea about instinctual energies have been accounted for in an interestingly different way. Our feeling of inescapability of moral relationships has in this tradition been called "moral necessity" and the central point is that this inescapability is part of our moral understanding: it cannot be accounted for in any other way than by pointing to cases of moral understanding. (See for instance Winch 1972, pp. 151-170, Hertzberg 1994, pp. 220-237 and Gaita 1991, pp. 98-116.) The concept of moral necessity points to an interesting intersection between Freud's and Wittgenstein's thought. The point is that there is, for the better and the worse, something inescapable in human relations and this inescapability causes us problems that are not merely intellectual even if they also involve our thinking.

"Moral necessity" is a notion that points to the way we are personally involved in moral situations. We cannot at will distance ourselves from the situations. Even if one tries to put the issue out of mind, it will re-emerge. It is part of this agony-ridden understanding that one feels obliged to do something. The philosophers who speak about "moral necessity" make it clear that it cannot be accounted for in terms of rational reflection. This does not mean that they think moral necessity is a particular kind of feeling. It is rather, in Gaita's words, about the "internality of feeling and moral response" (1991, p. 148). But what does this mean?

Whatever else it is, moral necessity names a personal attitude; it is to take a moral attitude to what deserves to be respected, to who is an intelligible object of love, to who is worthy of love, to what is admirable, etc. (ibid., pp. 121, 148 ff.; Hertzberg 1994, pp. 227, 237). The interesting thing here is that we again have an account of an inescapable meaning. But this time it is all about moral relationships with other persons. The difference between the idea of moral necessity and Wittgenstein's herd-remark is that Wittgenstein seems to identify moral issues with philosophical problems: to cling to the herd is to give up one's responsibility and this is what philosophical difficulties are about.

But if moral necessity and personal responsibility are taken to be deeply personal, how can they avoid being dependent on some kind of psychic processes *à la* Freud? To say, as Gaita does (ibid. pp. 5, 99), that moral necessity is *sui generis* is of no help for unless we understand what this means it will be just a metaphysical claim. The main-problem is that we are still within the subject-object dichotomy: we have not escaped the perspective where we are forced to ask how subjective reactions and responses should be objectively accounted for. Someone might here wonder how else it *could* be. In fact, the above discussed ideas of Freud, Wittgenstein and Post-Wittgensteinians contain an "element" that is not an instance of the subject-object dichotomy, namely the curious, inescapable "effect" that the other has on us. I will try to show that this effect is really no effect but rather an aspect of what it means to understand another person in the sense of an I understanding a you.

If one thinks that understanding between persons presupposes language (in the sense of "use of symbols") then moral responses will inevitably appear as cases of a curious necessity that must ultimately be accountable in terms of psychological processes (naturalism) *or* as psychological processes that are intercepted by "transcendental thinking" (transcendentalism). As I see it, this perspective; the traditional perspective of philosophy, is the target of Wittgenstein's criticism.

Before I start discussing the I-you perspective I want to make a few very general points about the aspect of collectivity in Wittgenstein's herd-remark. Collectivity is a big issue and quite essential for understanding morality so Wittgenstein's discussion is important. Introducing collectivity will reveal that the question of repression and instincts as well as of "moral necessity" is more complicated than is usually thought. (For more of this, see Nykänen 2014.)

The herd-remark becomes clearer if understood in association to the "Remarks on Fraser's *Golden Bough*" particularly since Wittgenstein here too uses the concept of instinct. I take Wittgenstein to mean that since we have difficulties with enduring moral agony, it becomes part of our common language that we distort the meaning of the agony and repress it also by way of certain forms of language usage. One invents the usages "from their common spirit" (PO, p. 151) which means that everyone immediately but unconsciously recognises something that is at the same time repressed: "[T]he deep and the sinister do not become apparent merely by our coming to know the history of the external action, rather it is *we* who ascribe them from an inner experience (PO, p. 147)." The concept of honour is one striking example of this. There is a language-game of honour which those who share it see as moral in a positive sense; killing one's daughter for the sake of honour is a moral act. The repressed "sinister" aspect is the very motivation for the language-game. Here, the unconscious fear of shame becomes intertwined with language, together forming a collective spirit. Those who "following all of their instincts" live within the language-game of honour will have difficulties to open their minds for philosophical *and* moral reflection.

There is a pressure that is very much like an instinct that urges us towards a language use that *apparently* mitigates our moral agony but that involves a misrepresentation of the way things are. Specific meanings of words that hide our agony acquire an absolute character; they "must" mean such and such, "cannot" mean such and such, etc. Otherwise the repressed aspect might make itself felt. The source of metaphysics is repressed agony. Needless to say, collective language use, and collectivity generally, constitutes one important aspect of our efforts to repress moral agony.[5] Thus, to "regroup" language is not only about how one uses words. There are strong "instincts" that incline us to stay within metaphysical language. I have been paraphrasing Wittgenstein just in order to show how using his expressions furthers the understanding I

try to sketch out. When we try get sight of the way language enters moral and philosophical issues, it will be helpful to keep the above reflections in mind.

The later Wittgenstein's view on ethics cannot be captured by the concepts of the standard view. The remark "(w)ords can be *hard* to say" (PI, §546) is a remark that addresses ethical difficulties but it is not related to concepts such as virtue, duty, pleasure, pain, normativity, etc. but, rather, to repression. To say that Wittgenstein does not speak about ethics in PI amounts to nothing more than looking at ethics in the classical way that Wittgenstein was deconstructing. Given this, philosophers tend to think that there is an ethics only in the early Wittgenstein.[6]

It is important to realise that the above remark does not only concern "saying" but equally much "thinking" and "feeling". In his diary Wittgenstein says that when one is sick in one's soul, thinking hurts.[7] One avoids saying, feeling and thinking things that hurt and thus tends to repress them. It has been said that Wittgenstein rarely speaks about repression, the unconscious and psychoanalysis in general. (Hacker 2007, p. 96.) But if one simply counts occurrences of words one misses the point. The whole issue is to see how the various things that Wittgenstein says are related to psychoanalysis. The remark that we are presently discussing serves as a good example of what I mean.

When things are hard to say, this does not mean merely that one avoids saying something. Of course there are occasions where one can think "I probably should say that..." and yet one does not say what one thinks one should. The *hard* thing, however, is when one distorts one's feelings and thoughts about an issue and says and feels something else, in order to cover over one's awareness of the hardship. What happens here is repression and it results in thoughts and feelings that are unconscious. What one does say, think and feel is motivated by the hardship that one avoids. What one says, thinks and feels is therefore distorted while one refuses to acknowledge the way things really are. It is significant that Wittgenstein makes the remark quoted from PI in a context where he discusses how feelings give words truth, how a cry and a laugh can be full of meaning and about longing for and desiring the other. (PI, §§543-546.) It is hard to say, think and feel certain things because longing and desiring the other is the most difficult thing there is. But of course it is not only difficult. Other people are at the same time what is most important to us – to express it very poorly. This is why we have *constant problems* with these issues: "The incurable illness is the rule, not the exception." (LW, I §110.)

The psychoanalytic perspective on Wittgenstein's remarks is important in many different ways. When Wittgenstein says for instance that prejudice stands in our way of seeing how words function (PI §340), we should pay attention to the fact that being prejudiced involves something that one does not want to acknowledge and that there is an unconscious aspect to it; it is not just about having an arbitrary, preconceived opinion.

Finding out what significance psychoanalysis has in Wittgenstein's philosophy is a demanding task. The task is to get hold of the illuminating power of his remarks. It is neither here nor there if an interpretation just seems to fit certain remarks. This comes out clearly if we reflect upon the passage in Hacker that I referred to above. The passage goes like this: "Far from these 'diseases of the understanding' being exclusively person- (or patient-) specific, as Baker claims [...], they are, Wittgenstein suggested in 1946, either rooted in the very nature of language itself or characteristic of our civilization". In my view, Hacker here totally misses the point even if his account seems to fit some remarks of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein does speak about "diseases" that are bound to language and civilisation but the question is what it means to say these things. Hacker seems to think that according to Wittgenstein we have problems with using symbolic representation as such. It is as if we, as it were because of our intellectual apparatus, perceive analogies in a misleading way (for instance, we confuse "is" as a copula and "is" as a sign of equity). This is supposed to give rise to philosophical problems. One could say that this Hackerian interpretation brings Wittgenstein quite close to what I take to be the problematic aspects of Freud, namely when he speaks about repressions being mental dysfunctions. On this view, Wittgenstein's remark that philosophical problems are not intellectual appears to be a thoughtless slip. The remark on philosophical problems being problems

where one should free oneself from the herd by rebelling against language (PO, p. 185) appears not only unintelligible but completely confused on Hacker's account. The perspective on Wittgenstein that I am exploring can, it seems to me, account both for this herd-remark and the one Hacker referred to. Also, the psychoanalytic, or rather: I-you oriented, view gives us tools not only for understanding what "individual", "collective", "meaning", "moral", etc., mean, but for deepening our understanding of these concepts; and deepening our understanding for them not only with respect to the role they have in Wittgenstein's philosophy but for philosophical understanding generally.

The I-you Perspective

What then is the underlying I-you perspective in Wittgenstein's philosophy? There is a great number of remarks in the works of the later Wittgenstein that utilise the illuminating power of the I-you perspective, and except for some problematic remarks, everything in his later works is more or less connected to this perspective. For the sake of brevity I will discuss only a group of remarks where the I-you perspective is obvious. One could call this group of remarks "primitivity-remarks". Their common theme is to point to the fact that human beings understand each other without the mediation of linguistic expressions: "Anyone with a soul must be capable of pain, joy, grief, etc. etc. And if he is also capable of memory, of making decisions, of making a plan for something, with this he needs linguistic expression." (LW II, p. 67.) What does this mean? That pain, joy, etc. are private mental states and that language somehow enters this privacy when we remember, plan, decide, etc.? That would once again push us towards the unintelligibility of the subject-object dichotomy. Consider the sense in which the following two remarks dissolve that dichotomy:

The origin and the primitive form of the language-game is a reaction; only from this can the more complicated forms develop.

Language – I want to say – is a refinement; 'in the beginning was the deed' (CV, 31).

and this:

What, however, is the word 'primitive' meant to say here? Presumably, that the mode of behaviour is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*: that it is the prototype of a mode of thought and not the result of thought. (RPP I, §916)

These and similar remarks cannot be made sense of within the subject-object dichotomy. Subjective reactions can by definition not find language for such reactions would be inaccessible to anyone else. Neither could such reactions be objective for this would presuppose that they have an established, i.e. public, meaning, which of course is impossible without linguistic expression. I take it that Wittgenstein's aim is precisely to point out this. But he does not seem to realise how his point utilises the resources of I-you understanding. In the preceding remark (§915) he says that responding to another person's pain is a primitive reaction and in PO, pp. 381-83 he speaks about sympathy in order to clarify the meaning of primitive responses. In fact, I-you understanding has the form of sympathy. (Actually "love" – but not "empathy" – would be the most suitable word but I use sympathy because I believe that it will raise fewer questions than "love".) This too is part of Wittgenstein's point: a mother who acts as if she were sceptical about whether her child can feel pain cannot be understood as a philosophical sceptic. Rather, her behaviour "would strike us as queer and crazy." An intelligible form of doubt about the child's pain would be if the mother "expresses annoyance and lack of sympathy" (PO, p. 383). Either way, fully understanding the child's pain involves a sympathetic attitude to it: "the game *doesn't* start with doubting". Wittgenstein's emphasis aims at rejecting the question of justification that would enter the issue if he had said: "the game *can't* start with doubting" (PO p. 381, emphasis added).

To have a soul means that you stand in a relationship to the other. You feel joy, grief, etc., because the other matters. These reactions are primitive in the sense that they must be there if we are to be able to develop

linguistic expressions. It is the fact that we stand in a relationship to each other that makes it possible for us to create a language with concepts such as “grammar”, “meaning”, and “criteria”; it is not concepts that make language possible. The relationships between human beings are there before any concepts. The fact that the other matters is what gives things meaning. One can experience this fact very clearly when one feels joy, for it is as if the joy would not really come off if it cannot be shared with someone else. And the more the other matters, the greater the joy.[8]

“But there nevertheless is joy even without the other.” This objection is characteristic in its forgetfulness. It assumes that if I happen to be alone with my joy then any conception of the other is absent. But such an assumption would be gravely mistaken. Even in trivial cases of joy such as, say, the joy of winning at lottery, other persons are important, and they can be important in many different ways. For instance, your joy may become corrupted so that you “enjoy” the envy of others. But there is no such thing as a purely subjective joy which would be “only about you”. – It is things such as these that I take Wittgenstein’s primitivity-remarks to be hinting at.

When repression, instinct and moral necessity are viewed in the light of the I-you perspective they come out differently. We are not dealing with intra-psychic dysfunctions or with private moral concerns (whatever that means) but with difficulties with understanding each other; with difficulties of being sympathetic towards each other. Even a mother can have such difficulties with her child; something Freud was witnessing all the time. We cannot simply put such problems out of our minds without facing them. This is part of what it means to speak about “problems of conscience” and about the inescapability of conscience.

My Wittgensteinian response to Freud’s ideas about instincts, object cathexis, love or *eros*, etc., would be that Freud has no good account of the sense in which people matter to each other and consequently his account of the difficulties that people have with each other is inadequate. As I see it, Wittgenstein’s main problem with Freud was not his scientific aspirations but that Freud, like philosophers in general, did not see that language is not a rational communication system which on the grounds of its rationality enables human beings to encode their subjective thoughts and feelings into language and communicate them to others.

The basic or “primitive” ground of language is rather more like a smile or an expression of fear. Thus, though psychic disorders change the scope of things, it is part of the very nature of language that we invest words with feeling: “When longing makes me exclaim ‘Oh, if only he’d come!’, the feeling gives the words ‘meaning’.” (PI §544.) Language works in fact in a quite specific way in the I-you perspective:

“This is important: I might know from certain signs and from my knowledge of a person that he is glad, etc. But I cannot describe my observations to a third person and—even if he trusts them—thereby convince him of the genuineness of that gladness, etc.” (LW II, p. 86.)

This remark connects to the primitivity-remarks. Wittgenstein here notes that the *understanding* that shows itself in primitive reactions and responses, that is; what I call I-you understanding, “cannot” be represented in language, even if the corresponding behaviour can of course be represented and talked about.[9] Again, it would be better to say “is not” than cannot, for one can of course use the *word* pain in the third person perspective. This use presupposes commonly agreed upon ways of using the word. We must agree about the kind of things that the word refers to. But the fact that I *understand* that you are in pain is not based on a representation; it is about my understanding you and this understanding is the basis also for understanding concepts and representation. The I-you understanding cannot be further specified for it does not consist in anything; or not in anything else except what goes with standing in an understanding relationship with a you. What Wittgenstein says about the sensation of pain is apt here too, for the I-you understanding is “not a Something, but not a Nothing either!” (PI §304.) We do not understand each other because we would have, say, some kind of genetically created dictionary of facial expressions, etc. Rather, understanding facial expressions is part of our understanding each other. But this is hard to accept:

A wish seems already to know what will or would satisfy it; a proposition, a thought, to know what makes it true – even when there is nothing there! Whence this determining of what is not yet there? This despotic demand? (“The hardness of the logical must”.) (PI §437.)

Meaning something and understanding what another person means cannot be accounted for in linguistic terms. Rather: “[...] meaning something is like going towards someone.” (PI §457.) But going towards someone; meaning something, can also be very difficult: “(w)ords can be *hard* to say” (PI §546). To account for cases where words are hard to say is no easier for the philosopher than for the ordinary person. Philosophers too, are “deeply imbedded in philosophical, i.e.. grammatical confusions” (PO, p. 185). What Wittgenstein tries to do is describing philosophical problems in a way where they dissolve. This involves seeing in what sense they are inseparable from moral problems. It involves seeing in what sense they are “problems of the will” and require “resignation of feeling” (PO, p. 161).

The Urge towards Metaphysics

It seems to me that Wittgenstein’s use of the word instinct is at once less rigid and more illuminating than both Freud’s use of this term and the Post-Wittgensteinian use of “moral necessity”, the former being tied to an empirical hypothesis while the latter is dependent on common moral ideas and so, on the moral mythology in our language.

Wittgenstein’s use of “instinct” points to what he calls primitive reactions and to our difficulties with them. He seems to think that primitive reactions are in a certain sense unambiguous; for instance in the sense that a game cannot start with doubt. But this is not only about logic, for he also characterises primitive utterances as “genuine” in a moral sense (LW II, p. 39). My compressed account of the points discussed above would be that we have difficulties with this genuineness and so, because words are both hard to say and to hear, we create a whole web of sinister rites and language-games that have the purpose of trying to hide our inner (ibid., p. 36). But even if I can close myself in a terrible way, I cannot after all hide my inner (ibid., pp. 21, 33, 92). One could say that Freud is focusing on certain aspects of the way we try to hide ourselves and on the way what is hidden not only re-emerges but is never actually hidden.

The radicalness of Wittgenstein’s thinking lies in the way he shows how what underlies both the problems of philosophy and the problems that Freud struggled with show themselves as ways of looking at language. The problem of repression is then not only about parapraxis but about a whole conception of language: “We must plow though [sic!] the whole of language.” (PO, p. 195.) This is because “[t]he incurable illness is the rule, not the exception” (LW I §110).

He tries to make us see that the problems of understanding are not about psychical mechanisms or energies, instincts, brain-states, processes, principles, algorithms, propositions, grammatical rules, common concepts, representations, or about any kind of criteriality, but about understanding and refusing to understand each other.

In the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein a certain concept of repression, of philosophical problem, and of moral difficulty are inseparable from each other. This inseparability can be understood only from the point of view of the I-you perspective while avoiding the difficulties that acknowledging this perspective involves takes the form of depersonalised ideas about “independent causes” of meaning, truth, psychic disorder, etc. The I-you understanding that makes language possible very obviously is not ineffable. Neither is there anything mystical about it. This is only how it may seem from the point of view of a basically rationalist metaphysics – to use a pleonasm.[10]

The way I have presented *Philosophical Investigations* and many other later texts, they are *directly* ethical, only, ethics does not here mean “to argue for valid moral norms”, “to put forth a theory of justice”, “to assess or dismiss a metaphysical, moral imperative”, or the like. Rather, it means gathering the courage to

realise what kind of things one can really make sense of and take responsibility for when one is saying them to another human being. One could say that the general outlook of the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein involves that he declines to discuss the validity of a general claim and instead says: “Try to say that to someone and see what sense it makes.”

If the importance of the I-you perspective in Wittgenstein’s philosophy is not recognised even implicitly, then interpretations of it will collapse into classical philosophy, with its characteristic dichotomies. This can be clearly seen in many cases; for instance in John Canfield’s discussion of fear. He thinks that third-person utterances about fear (“She is afraid”) are “logically prior” to first-person utterances (“I am afraid!”), because criteria for correct use must have evolved before the non-observational, first-person *Aussprechung* can make sense. The primitive reaction must be, on his view, cultured by criteria before it can be part of language. Also, he thinks that third-person utterances are “other-directed” (Canfield 2007, p. 19).

There are several problems with Canfield’s interpretation of Wittgenstein. Firstly he ignores the properly other-directed I-you relationship and misconstrues the observational third-person perspective as being other-directed. Secondly, he wants to secure the rational order of things and, typically, asserts that the objective and criterial perspective must be logically prior to the subjective and expressive. We see here how ignoring the I-you perspective is internally connected to the appearance of the classical subject-object dichotomy. This gives rise to further problems. For one, Canfield’s idea that third-person, criterial utterances must be learned before first-person utterances, is obviously false. It is this kind of ideas that I believe Wittgenstein tried to reject with his primitivity-remarks. The child does not learn to speak by observing what we from the third-person perspective say *about* other persons. Neither does the child learn what pointing is by observing the structure of a pointing hand and connecting it to sentences uttered. Rather, the child learns to speak by *being addressed* by particular persons and by learning to address them.

Only in the I-you perspective does it become clear in what sense saying “I am afraid” is neither a description of an observation of a first-person mental state nor a first-person expressive *Aussprechung*. [11] My saying “I am afraid” can be said just “because” I stand in a relationship to you, i.e. there is no “because”. Our relationship consists, among other things, in our talking to each other for no particular reason. The I-you relationship is implicitly present in Wittgenstein’s discussion:

I say “I am afraid”; someone else asks me: “What was that? A cry of fear; or do you want to tell me how you feel; or is it a reflection on your present state?” – Could I always give him a clear answer? Could I never give him one? (PI, p. 187.)

The “context” of speaking is the I-you relationship; what I say to the other and how she understands what I say – and vice versa. A little later Wittgenstein notes that if we ask what “I am afraid” really *refers* to, we will find at best inadequate answers. This is because this kind of speaking has its home in the I-you relationship; it is not about trying to pick out a unique, criterial description of “fear” in order to assess what it refers to (see PI, p. 188).

Where It All Goes

It may seem that what I say both about the I-you perspective and the connected theme in the herd-remark goes against a widely accepted interpretation of Wittgenstein’s ideas of form of life and the way the meaning of our words are entrenched in the way we live, of the so called private language argument, and of the centrality of the idea of ordinary use of words. However, I think that introducing the I-you perspective actually clarifies certain internal tensions in Wittgenstein’s thinking. I will try to address these issues shortly.

The idea of form of life and the way it is constitutive of the common use of words should not be confused with the fundamental importance of the I-you perspective. [12] In this connection it might be useful to introduce a distinction between a concept of *meaning* which refers to the logico-grammatical criteria of use

and meaning of words and a concept of what is *meaningful* which points at the way words, gestures, facial expressions, etc. are aspects of the, as it were, clamant importance of the I-you relationship.

The meaning of words must be *established*. We must be able to as it were point to or in some other way single out *what* we are trying to symbolise with a certain sound. This establishing cannot of course be made privately for it is all about giving publicly observable criteria for uses of words. The *meaning* of the word pain is thus based on the kind of commonly observable pain-behaviour that the concept is taken to denote.

However, what is meaningful cannot be assessed and is not something that the community of language-users can determine. Neither is it something private. The short reflection of joy above, shows *how* meaningfulness enters our lives. The sense in which human beings matter to each other can be understood and accounted for only in terms of the I-you understanding. Thus, the meaningfulness of pain, the way it matters to us, is not (“cannot be”) dependent on the established meaning of the concept of pain. Instead, we learn and understand what pain is from the way we react to pain and respond to each other’s pain. But this is not the result of observing one’s own and other’s pain behaviour, for that presupposes that the meaning of the concept of pain is already established. We understand each other’s pain because we already understand *each other*. If we overlook this I-you (or “primitive”) understanding we run into the problem of subjectivism: “‘If my personal experience is all I know how can I even assume that there is any other besides?’” (Ms. 149.37r.)

It is important to see that “understanding what is meaningful” cannot be accounted for in terms external to the I-you relationship: religion, ethnicity, belonging to a social class, etc., cannot account for what is meaningful for these social phenomena are themselves *responses* to difficulties with as well as hopes and prejudices about I-you relationships; they take form *within* what is already meaningful.

One can form a *conception* of something only when a number of interrelated aspects of what is meaningful have been given a common meaning, i.e.: symbolic form. The way language enters into what is meaningful is captured by the I-you understanding or what Wittgenstein somewhat unfortunately calls primitive reactions and primitive language-games. The sense in which language is about commonly established intelligible uses of words is in its turn captured by the talk of meaning of concepts. What complicates this picture is the fact that certain common meanings are established by repression. I tried to sketch out how this happens with my short discussion about Wittgenstein’s herd-remark and some passages from his remarks on Frazer. The important thing to note here is that Wittgenstein’s remarks on form of life in PI address language in the sense where repression does not enter the picture, while the herd-remark and remarks on Frazer point to the way in which repression does enter language. There are thus three different “entrances” to language: first of all we have what emerges from our interpersonal understanding and that can be captured by the concept “the meaningful”; secondly we have the interrelated cases of personal and collective repression that project a whole mythology in our language; and thirdly we have the logical point that the meaning of concepts do not have to have their foundation in some kind of super-logic but acquire instead their meanings within a form of life and the way they are used in it.

In this light it is perfectly clear in what sense language is in order and in what sense we have to be in rebellion against language in order to reach clarity. When Wittgenstein speaks about ordinary uses of words he either has in mind the I-you dialogue or the way ordinary uses of concepts show their embeddedness in a form of life. However, there is no room for anything like ordinary language philosophy in Wittgenstein’s thinking and there is no particular affinity between Wittgenstein and Austin. Moreover, the sense in which Wittgenstein’s philosophy is a therapy does not imply that philosophy would not be about rigorous thinking. It is rather that philosophy has so far not been rigorous enough – for instance in its single-minded insistence that philosophical rigour is about rationality or some other forms of intellectual activity.

For Freud, Wittgenstein’s thinking has equally profound consequences. One could say that the kind of rationality that underlies Freud’s thinking is washed away by a kind of engagement that cannot be understood in natural terms. In lack of natural referents, also Freud’s symbolical picture of the mental

apparatus becomes superfluous. There is no way any instinct or desire could be intelligible independent of your relationship to others, i.e.; independently of language. All instincts and desires become meaningful and hence intelligible in relationship to others, in the sense of an I to a you. This also means that everything that can be called meaningful is also moral.

However, some of the most important insights in Freud are preserved and even radicalised in Wittgenstein's thought: we can get sight of the most important issues in human life only in terms of I-you encounters. This is because also all our problems of understanding and experiencing have their roots in our difficulties with each other. These difficulties are not intellectual in character. They arise because we refuse to openly see each other and hence cannot see the world aright either: "The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man." (T §6.43.) To the extent that we dare to face each other we will see that all the problems were erected by ourselves; privately and collectively. They are not there as features of reality.

Philosophy in the classical sense dissolves itself. Where does this take us? Perhaps in this direction: "In [Sic! Should probably be "Is"] telling what one sees something like turning one's inside out? And learning to say what one sees, learning to let others see inside us? (Ms-148,43v[2])

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Notes:

[1] In most of the essays in a book edited by Arnsward (2009), the writers point to the radical and unconventional features of Wittgenstein’s ethics; features that are said to make it hard to understand what he means. Despite many good points, the book still fails in my view to really show what the difficulties and unconventional features in his ethics are. To say that he has no ethical theory, does not argue for any norms, sees ethics as a search for meaning, thinks ethics is about putting demands on himself, etc., does not do that (see for instance pp. 21-22, 47-48).

[2] Baker’s account of Wittgenstein’s ethics limits it to something like a personal severity that Wittgenstein tried to impose on others. One is responsible for one’s philosophical misconceptions. (Baker 2004, p. 198.) But this does nothing to show in what sense ethics is an integral part of Wittgenstein’s philosophy.

[3] Obviously I cannot deal with the later developments of psychoanalysis, such as the object relations and attachment theory and the interpretation of Lacan. Those who are familiar with theories such as these may think that I am addressing issues that have already been developed much further than they were developed

by Freud. I hope it will become clear that the perspective I am sketching out here is very different from the perspectives in question.

[4] After a paper I read on this issue (at Åbo Akademi University in June 2013) Christian Erbacher gave voice to such view. However some late remarks in the LW II indicate that Wittgenstein did not fully realise the importance of the I-you perspective. He says for instance that one should look at sensation concepts from both the first and the third person perspectives (p. 37). But from the point of view of the I-you perspective the first and the third person perspectives are two sides of the same problem. I hope I am able to bring out something of this.

[5] I do not mean to say that this repression is collective as against individual. I rather mean that being an individual is here determined by collective understanding which is much wider than just “collectivity” as a specific group-phenomenon. One understands oneself and the other in terms of collectivity. In the I-you relationship one’s self-understanding is “characterised” by openness towards the other.

[6] Speaking about the question of otherness Dieter Mersch says “Ultimately, Wittgenstein was in default of an answer to this problem: his ethics of showing was solely restricted to the individual; it resigned to personal deed; for that reason, an answer to the individual ‘puzzles of life’ also conditioned not answering the puzzle of others.” (Mersch 2009, p. 49.) Mersch’s reading is almost exclusively based on Wittgenstein’s early notebooks and TLP. This, combined with a rather classical view on morals makes it possible for Mersch to make the above judgement of Wittgenstein (which is a fair judgement of the *early* Wittgenstein) and to overlook the moral importance of Wittgenstein’s later work.

[7] “Wenn man verkühlt ist tut das Waschen weh & wenn man im geist krank ist, das Denken.” (Wittgenstein 1997, p. 119)

[8] What I say here has much less affinities with Heidegger’s idea about pre-theoretical understanding than it may appear and this of course has to do with Heidegger’s failure to acknowledge the importance of the I-you perspective. For more on this, see Westerlund 2014.

[9] The lamentably common tendency to think that Wittgenstein’s thought leans towards behaviourism arises only when the importance of the I-you perspective has not been acknowledged. Many of course simply deny, without having thought about the I-you perspective, that Wittgenstein would have been an behaviourist but this is not philosophically speaking very interesting.

[10] According to Bruce Fink, Lacan thinks that what he calls Other jouissance must be ineffable. The idea of ineffability is an outcome of precisely the kind of view of language that Wittgenstein is in my view criticising. See Fink 2002, pp. 39-40.

[11] Wittgenstein's talk of first-person expressive and third-person descriptive utterances is problematic and contributes to my conviction that he did not explicitly realise the importance of the I-you perspective.

[12] Those who have misgivings with my use of "fundamental" here, should perhaps consult PO, p. 169: "(When it has meaning at all, the word 'fundamental' can also mean something that is not metalogical, or philosophical.)"

Abbreviations:

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| <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> | T |
| <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> | PI |
| <i>Philosophical Occasions</i> | PO |
| <i>Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology (Volume I-II)</i> | RPP I, RPP II |
| <i>Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology (Volume I-II)</i> | LW I, LW II |
| <i>Denkbewegungen</i> | DB |
| <i>Culture and Value</i> | CV |

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