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Language and the Other Side: On Wittgenstein

I thank Benvenuto and Strandberg for their interesting comments to my paper

(Benvenuto: <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/commentary-to-hannes-nykanens-paper-wittgensteins-radical-ethics/>)

(Strandberg: <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/psycho-analysis-and-the-morally-charged-nature-of-personal-relations-a-response-to-hannes-nykanen/>)

I will have some problems with replying to them both in this long but not long enough reply. Benvenuto is very far from my point of view while Strandberg postpones the question of how far he agrees with me into a future that perhaps reaches beyond this reply. Anyway, he says that 'there are no direct objections I wish to make to his text; what kinds of objections I have to it will not be clear to me until Nykänen has further explained what he means at a number of points.'

Benvenuto is convinced that it would have been 'much more appropriate' if I had referred to Husserl, Scheler and Merleau-Ponty, rather than to Wittgenstein, in order to support my thesis. Already this critical comment actualises more themes than I will be able to handle in this reply. There may be some reasons for mentioning Scheler here, but certainly not the two others – and this includes contemporary phenomenologists such as Evan Thompson and Dan Zahavi. What I am trying to do is to go further in the direction of the 'anti-philosophy' that Wittgenstein brought forth more forcefully than anyone before him and even if all philosophy is, mostly without recognising it, self-deconstructive one would not first of all think of the philosophers that Benvenuto mentions in this connection.

One way of approaching the issue would be to say that the important thing does not concern 'content' but rather 'method' though, also this way of putting it can be misleading. That a philosopher speaks about empathy and intersubjectivity does not mean that, since I speak of I-you understanding, what this philosopher says is congenial to my view. In fact, the concept of intersubjectivity is a formation of what I take to be a typical philosophical confusion or, in other words, of discursive repression: of a discourse of repression.

Before I go on, I want to say that I am a little at loss to know how to do this, since Benvenuto does not directly at all address the moral and interpretative issues I was discussing in my paper. I have no idea about what he thinks of my thoughts about apology and forgiveness, of my interpretation of the paragraphs in *Philosophical Investigations*, etc. Strandberg again, does not directly criticise me but gives instead a reading of Freud in order, I suppose, to see what I think of it.

In order to start from an at least seemingly common point, let us ponder upon Wittgenstein's saying (in the *Tractatus*) that 'ethics cannot be put into words'. What words, *what language*, is it that we are dealing with

when ethics appears in this way? As Benvenuto notes, Wittgenstein was during his whole life trying to understand language. If it would be true that Wittgenstein never changed his view of ethics, then it would appear as if ethics and language are two separate things for him – for he certainly changed his view of language. However, such a suggestion does not hold even for the *Tractatus* for also here ethics is, according to Wittgenstein himself, the most important aspect even if it is present only ‘between the lines’.

Can we even make sense of the idea of a language where ethics cannot be put into words? Yes, we can. In fact, we can even make some kind of sense of a language where the very existence of another mind is put into question and a language where, scandalous as Kant thought it was, we cannot prove the existence of ‘things external to ourselves’ (See Kant 1979, p. 22). We are, obviously, dealing with a far-reaching philosophical idea about language. Kant’s way of trying to amend this scandalous problem built heavily on distinguishing between theoretical and practical reasoning. However, it has shown itself to be impossible to make sense of the notion of practical reasoning in a way which would have been generally accepted. Many philosophers question whether there can be such a thing as moral reasoning. It is, by contrast, hard to imagine what it would mean to question whether there is such a thing as theoretical reasoning. Kant again even gave a priority of practical reasoning over theoretical reasoning (see Kant 1996, p.147).

Kant had obvious difficulties with putting ethics into words and still, ethics had for him a priority over theoretical matters. A similar tendency is apparent in the *Tractatus*. It is preoccupied with theoretical issues, while what cannot be said; what according to Wittgenstein is ‘between the lines’, is said to be the most important part of the book. So ethics, whatever else it is, cannot be separated from the question concerning language. This makes Benvenuto’s suggestion that Wittgenstein never changed his view on ethics but only on language sound odd.

But would it not seem that Wittgenstein’s view of language in the *Tractatus* is different from the mainstream philosophical view that creates the scandals? Not really. What is distinctive of the *Tractatus* (and the ‘Lecture on Ethics’) is that Wittgenstein explicitly excludes ethics from philosophical discourse. Making such a move is like aiming at giving an account of business life and excluding the concept of greed (analogous, that is, to economics). And of course, if we exclude all moral issues from philosophy, we will not have any philosophical problems. All the problems will be between the lines so to speak.

The problem in the *Tractatus* is the ethics. It is a version of a quite familiar, basically Kantian, absolute ethics. Without going into Kant’s struggle with the issue, I just maintain that this ethics is the other side of the scandals of philosophy. It is ethical problems that create a certain view of language that, further, delivers what you wanted: an ethics that keeps the other, in the sense of ‘you’, at bay. In other words: the view of ethics expressed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* and ‘Lecture on Ethics’ is a product of the typical, philosophical view of language. ‘The’ typical? Yes, I will try to explain myself. As a first indication of the way I see it, I wish to point out that the use of the word absolute – or ‘unconditional’ – is already a symptom of the problem we are dealing with, for it is in fact nonsensical to speak about absolute value, the way for instance Kant did. The so called unspeakability of ethics is inherent in ‘absolute’ ethics whether one acknowledges it or not. That philosophy creates a problem of speaking about ethics is a consequence – and I want to stress this – of the ‘rationalistic’ tendency inherent in philosophy (and this rationalism is much more elusive than Heidegger’s notion of *rechnendes Denken* can capture; indeed this rationality includes also Heidegger’s expression ‘*die Sprache spricht*’). But the rationalism in question is not all that rational for it is its unacknowledged goal to disarm ethics. (In everyday circumstances this disarming takes other forms.) (What I say here may give a hint of why I think that the distinction between analytic philosophy and continental philosophy is not important, but it becomes more evident in Nykänen, 2019.)

Briefly put, the early Wittgenstein in fact *ignores* the problems of philosophy, maintains a Kantian view of ethics and, finally, avoids the problems of accounting for this ethics by claiming that it cannot be meaningfully spoken about. With the later Wittgenstein, things become more and more different, going towards what I have called I-you understanding. This is what I tried to show in my original paper. But it is very hard to bring out the ‘meaning’ of I-you understanding and obviously I was not clear enough, for

Benvenuto's refutation of my suggestion leans on a complete misdescription of what I tried to bring out:

'According to analytical philosophy, the "second" Wittgenstein would say that the only sensible language is public language – and Nykanen seems to follow this line of thought to the extent that he identifies a primacy of the I/you language – both in the sense that language always belongs to a community and is never used individually, and in the sense that language can speak only of public objects, and not of 'private objects' or inner objects of which only an individual can have direct experience.'

What Benvenuto says here goes against everything that I tried to say. In fact, his way of thinking, just as continental philosophy in general, is much closer to analytic philosophy than the view that I try to bring out. Secondly, a central point for me was to show that the classical dichotomy between collectivity and individuality that also Benvenuto is operating with, is confused. Or rather: repressed. It is a repression of I-you understanding. If Benvenuto does not share my view of I-you understanding, he should, in his criticism, at least note that on my view I-you understanding is *not* an instance of collectivity (or sociality, I make no difference). It does *not* 'belong to a community' *nor* is it 'used individually'. In fact, my point was precisely that in repressing I-you understanding philosophers create the individual-collective dichotomy which is an instance of the more fundamental subject-object dichotomy.[1]

Moreover, and as the title of my paper indicated, it seems to me that the later Wittgenstein begun to view ethics in a new, radical way. This means that the standard way of viewing ethics both within and outside philosophy will be unable to 'find' ethics in the later Wittgenstein. Let me now make still an effort to clarify the kind of ethics towards which I think Wittgenstein was moving.

I will bring into play what I call the basic constellation; a constellation where a person feels the greatest imaginable fear for another person, such that the fear is not a fear of violence but a fear of the other as a 'you' (for more on this, see Nykänen 2019). Here we find the you that Lacan, and Freud too, dreaded so much; the you in which, when it is spoken, one will find '*das Ding*' (Lacan 1997, p. 56). But let us bring in a later Wittgenstein here too: 'Hate between men comes from our cutting ourselves off from each other. Because we don't want anyone else to look inside us, since it's not a pretty sight in there.' (Wittgenstein 2001, p. 46e.)

When is the dread of the other most intolerable? And how am I seeing the other when she causes that dread in me? It is not when the other is an enemy. An enemy can make me afraid of losing my life, but in relation to the fear we are now considering, an enemy is completely harmless – or possible even an alleviator. Is not the hate that Wittgenstein is talking about the *ur-hate* that arises from the fear of being seen by the other? Here, the other is the most dreaded thing imaginable. 'Thing'? Yes, the concept of thing enters this discourse of fear in many ways. Firstly, the other *thus imagined* is not a human being in the sense of 'you' but an *essence*: a manifestation of persecution. Unfortunately, such an other is not necessarily a product of imagination – not imaginary – for the other *can* be the essence of persecution. But the other can also be a you. How are we to distinguish the other as a you, who is misguidedly felt to be the most frightening thing there is, and the other as a persecutor, that is: as someone as *little of a you* that one can imagine?

Is the loving you the 'real' you? And is it the hating other who is the one persecuting you? *Because, in despair, we want* it, the problem is more entangled than that. There is a sense in which it is the loving you that can be the 'worst' persecutor. This is when one fears the openness of love where you 'see' the other. The loving you not only is prepared to be in openness, but also sees the other, whether she wants it or not. Being prepared to be in openness is what I mean by being a you. Let me call the one who fears openness the 'subject'. For the one who does not want to be seen; who fears openness, – and is there anyone who does not know what this means? – there is nothing worse than 'you'. In fact, when you do not want to be seen, you much prefer the company of those who hate, for these are others who also do not want to be seen. These subjects will be in a togetherness of 'not seeing'. When we speak about the fear that is not a

fear of enemies, there is no worse persecutor than a 'you'. For a you is someone who does not enter the *pretence of closedness*: a pretence where the members of a 'we' pretend that the 'inner' of the other is categorically hidden from us so that it *appears* as if I am hidden and 'protected' from the you, who is here always a persecutor .

A telling case of such pretence can be found in an account of the relationship between a schizophrenic girl, Renee, and her therapist. Here is an observation that Renée made about her relationship to her therapist: 'What did me the most amazing good was her use of the third person in speaking of herself, "Mama and Renée," not "I and you." When by chance she used the first person, abruptly I no longer knew her, and I was angry that she had, by this error, broken my contact with her.' (See Renée 1979, p. 52.)

'Normal' people perform identical acts of pretence in order to protect themselves from the 'terribleness' of the you that sees you when being seen is the last thing you want. And like Renée, normal people also refer to non-breakable, 'absolute', principles that are taken to be the presupposition for contact; for a heavily conditioned contact.

The togetherness of not wanting to see or to be seen, in short: collectivity, creates a discourse that tries to secure non-understanding. To put it into a picture, we create formalities such a formal address rather than addressing 'you'. The discourse of philosophy is the paradigmatic discourse of non-understanding. Here, we cannot be sure that there even exist other minds or indeed any 'external objects'; 'external', that is, to the 'thinking' subject. How is it possible that the discourse that proposes to be the most rigorous there is has entangled itself in this 'scandal'? Here we meet the thing – or: the Thing.

In order to secure non-understanding the model for rigorous thinking has been taken from the world of things; dead things. For of course the discursive repression of understanding must be carried out under the pretension of intellectual strictness and rigour. And so it is assumed that only statements about objects (or, if you prefer, about 'Being' or 'phenomena') can meet the demanded standards of rigour. Only the relationship between thought (language, discourse) and object has been assumed to 'have' this rigour that has been given the name of 'objective certainty'. Of course, also language becomes here a Thing; a phonetic sound-sequence that represents external objects. This sound-sequence has by almost all philosophers I know of been taken to be a *precondition* for human understanding. What a luck for philosophers that human beings did not start expanding their communication by using hand signs! For it would presumably be less credible to suggest that a set of hand- and finger-constellations would be the objective precondition for human understanding.

The basic conjuring trick of the philosopher is the idea of mediation. Understanding between human beings must be mediated by a something. It is this move that creates the rational motivation for the illusion that one cannot be seen by the other. My thoughts and feelings are all 'in my head', invisible to you. To the extent that I want you to know some of them, I will have to somehow 'put' these thoughts and feelings into (the fraudulently lamented 'inadequacy' of) language, or facial expressions, and turn them over to you. It is from out of this 'existential solipsism' – to appropriate an expression of Heidegger – that the idea of language as a medium, the idea of the Thing as a manifestation of what is 'really' real and the idea of the subject as the inscrutable origin of experience are wrung. The priest says that only god knows your heart and the philosopher says that if your heart is to be known, something like a god is needed. Not Wittgenstein, though: 'If God had looked into our minds, he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of.' (Wittgenstein 2009, §284.) This is because language is on his view not a discourse that runs parallel to an assumed subjective, 'inner' world of thinking: 'Meaning something is not a process which accompanies a word.' It is rather that '[...] meaning something is like going towards someone' (ibid. §§291 and 457). Only to someone who cannot let go of the philosophical idea of language does Wittgenstein's remarks raise the question whether he was a behaviourist. But to think that would be absurd.

The point is just that Wittgenstein does not think that language is an objective and object-determined discourse into which the inscrutable inner thoughts must be translated. 'The inner' is for Wittgenstein

morally determined:

If I lie to him and he guesses it from my face and tells me so – do I still have the feeling that what is in me is in no way accessible to him and hidden? Don't I feel rather that he sees right through me?

It is only in particular cases that the inner is hidden from me, and in those cases it is not hidden because it is the inner. (Wittgenstein 2004, p. 33e.)

Here the dreaded you; the you who 'sees right through me' when I least would want it, enters the picture and, insofar as I stay with my lie, I desperately try to create the illusion that 'you' cannot see through me. (Is it not obvious that this remark is squarely at odds with the scepticism of the early Wittgenstein that Benvenuto refers to?) This illusion is puffed up by my clinging to the idea that what is at stake is just that *I see things differently than 'you'*; that we are just two isolated subjects with different ideas about moral issues. Our ideas are, so I want to think, manifestations of our inscrutable subjectivity and if it is to be determined whether or not I lie, this can be done only with reference to objective discourse which in connection to moral issues has acquired the form of 'moral law'.

How this notion of moral law should be understood, whether it has objective authority and if so, what it is that gives it this kind of authority, is under debate. But it is almost universally agreed upon that moral law *has* authority and that, whatever else is the case, this authority is an aspect of shared, social, values. What is not acknowledged in this collective repression is that the moral law has been created by our shared dread of the you that 'sees through' us.

Take for instance Emmanuel Levinas. What is it that saves 'me' from the face of the other (and already here, the 'you' has been repressed and transcendentalised)? Yes, it is the 'third' person. With the third person, which means: with society, arrives justice. (See Levinas 1999, pp. 97 ff.) What Levinas, in this gesture that could be called archetypical, does not see, is that here I-you understanding is repressed. Or rather: by making this gesture one can do away with this 'terrible' you. When the third person/society with its notions of respect, neutrality and justice enters the picture, she will in fact *not be neutral at all* but side with me and my lie: She will 'find' that what she has is a case where two persons disagree morally and so she has to take an objective look at the quarrel. But this was precisely what I wanted! No one seeing through me any more: my unbearable rottenness has become just one of two different views.

Much more should of course be said about collectivity and the way it in different guises such as god(s), nation, the moral law, normativity or, as with Heidegger, the destiny of a *Volk* (see Heidegger 2009.), represses I-you understanding. But, when combined with what I said in my original article, I hope that what I have said above becomes clearer.

It is into these creations of the dread of the you, that the later Wittgenstein's view of language lands, and it should be easy to see why his thoughts have been understood in so wildly different ways (as an expression of idealism, realism, anti-realism, positivism, solipsism, behaviourism, naturalism...). The radical character of his thinking lies in the fact that he deconstructs what I have called the typical philosophical view of language where you and I are metaphysically separated from each other and where language functions as an objective discourse into which the thoughts and experiences of the isolated subject are translated. What Wittgenstein is doing again and again in different ways is to show how the meaning of the things we say to each other are not in need of any metaphysical justification; that the meaning of something said needs be checked only by asking oneself: could someone else, a you, understand what I am saying? I tried to show some aspects of this in my original paper.

There are many instances in the later Wittgenstein where it is pretty obvious that ethical issues are at stake and that they are central to the points Wittgenstein is making; issues where concepts like, pity, pain, longing, caring, crying, laughing, feeling, understanding in one's heart, etc., are discussed. Of course, philosophers are prone to look at ethics as something law-like. They may disagree about whether or not these laws are

underpinned by rationality, but most philosophers seem to agree that ethics is a constriction on the will. My intention with the paper on Wittgenstein's ethics was precisely to show how Wittgenstein's later philosophy revolves around an ethics that is radically different from the 'limitation of the will'-ethics typical of philosophy (and religion and society at large). The latter kind of theories take it for granted, as also Benvenuto points out, that ethics has some essence that is to be determined. But Benvenuto does not seem to notice that the early Wittgenstein's idea that ethics cannot be talked about in a meaningful way *does* involve essentialism – for instance that the essence of ethics is such that it cannot be meaningfully talked about. Moreover Wittgenstein's early view involved that ethics is 'absolute', that it is 'transcendental', that ethics and aesthetics are one, that ethics is mystical, etc. How can Benvenuto at once say that '*for Wittgenstein there is no essence of ethics*' and then go on talking about the 'transcendental quality of [Wittgenstein's] ethics'? Can one find more *typically philosophical* ideas involving essences than the ones we have here? This view, with its essentialism, is what Wittgenstein moved away from.

There is indeed, as also Benvenuto notes, a strong anti-essentialist tendency in the later Wittgenstein's philosophy. But as I have showed, this cannot possibly be accounted for in terms of the ethics of his earlier philosophy. The *Tractatus* is full of essentialisations. So, if Benvenuto agrees that there is in the later Wittgenstein a strong anti-essentialist tendency, how should this tendency on his view be accounted for? My paper was an effort to do that. Shortly put, '*you*' have no essence any more than '*I*' have, nor does the understanding we have for each other. The need for the concept of essence arises when it is claimed that *language* is the condition of possibility of understanding (or for anything to 'show itself' or 'disclose' itself). For it would have to be by virtue of some inherent feature(s) that language 'can' do that. This is why, among others, the early Wittgenstein and Heidegger, are so obviously entangled in essentialism[2](philosophers who move around at a longer distance from this basic assumption about language may appear to be less essentialist.)

Wittgenstein's early solipsism and his mystification of ethics is an inseparable aspect of the typically philosophical view that he held early on and that Benvenuto is mostly referring to. But in my view he was moving away from this view, warning his readers that it is often hard to see this movement because the new idea 'still has egg-shells from the old view sticking to it' (Wittgenstein 2001, p. 45e).

It might appear odd to say that Wittgenstein's early view on ethics is a typical, absolutising, moral-law ethics, given that he, in contrast to Kant, thought that one could not say anything sensible about ethics. One could of course say much about this, but here I just note that it has been hard for Kant and Kantians to make sense of Kant's ethical rationalism and indeed Kant himself saw the problems with practical reason, when he said that practical reason cannot be speculative but must simply obey unconditionally the moral law. This is in fact not that far from the position of the early Wittgenstein: that there is nothing to say here at all, just to obey.

There is still one more oddity that Benvenuto should take issue with. In a manuscript titled 'Philosophy' Wittgenstein says that philosophy is 'work on oneself', that a philosophical difficulty is 'not a difficulty of the intellect, but of the will', likening moreover the temptation to use a given linguistic expression to the difficulty of holding back tears or an outburst of anger. (See Wittgenstein 1999, p. 161.) It is hard for me to see how Wittgenstein could say these things if he thought that there is nothing one could meaningfully say about ethics. Here, in the passages referred to, just as in many other places, Wittgenstein characterises philosophy as moral work. How then could it be, that what is said in philosophy has got no relation to morality? Now, someone with a law-conception of morality will indeed wonder how architecture, which Wittgenstein also mentions, could be about ethics. Here one should note that Wittgenstein made moral remarks also about music. Whatever one thinks about that, it is clear that the later Wittgenstein used a lot of philosophical examples that must be understood in a moral light. These examples do not have as their purpose to underpin or defend any version of a law-ethics – hence they are not noticed by philosophers who assume ethics is about law – but to make the reader ponder upon the way the meaning of language is dependent on the sense in which what you say to a particular person is, or is not, sensible, that is: possible for that person to understand. This is what I have called the I-you character of the later Wittgenstein's

philosophical discourse. Finally, it is quite clear that throughout his life, Wittgenstein was working on himself and so changing his way of seeing things all the time, trying to solve philosophical puzzles. Indeed he says that if one does not do that, one could as well stop philosophising: ‘For solving them [philosophical problems] means changing one’s point of view, the old way of thinking’ (Wittgenstein 2004, p. 84e). I find it very hard to think that Wittgenstein would have kept to the view of ethics he had in his youth. He always stressed the centrality of ethics for his thinking and on his terms, there is no way one could change one’s philosophical view without changing one’s view of ethics.

Let me now address one specific aspect of Strandberg’s reflections on Freud, namely Strandberg’s observation that Freud was aware of the fact that ‘it is easier to bear the thought that I have violated “the external ones” [conventional, social rules] than that I have violated someone’ – a central idea in my original paper. Freud’s remark without doubt points in the direction of I-you understanding. Still, there are too many problems in his thought for this insight to get much momentum. For instance, Freud did not see that *collective pressure* is something else than *conscience*, the former being a repression of the latter. (I have criticised Freud’s basically Kantian notion of conscience in Nykänen 2014.) But an even more fundamental, though connected, thing is to see how, in collective repression, we create a philosophical view of language that helps us keep up the illusion that we are not seen by the other – the theme of my original paper that I also tried to outline above.

Focusing on language will make it more fruitful to discuss Lacan’s account of psychoanalysis. Here I can of course only shortly outline how I see Lacan’s philosophy.

The way I see it, Lacan’s three registers – the symbolical, the imaginary and the real, together with some other, central concepts of his – arise from what I have called the typical, philosophical view of language that is created in the basic constellation. When objectivity acquires the role of ‘saving’ us from the look of the other, this other becomes a ‘big other’ or, in my terms, collectivity: the master of language and value. This collectively mastered language is ‘objective’ in the sense of being an impersonal discourse that is taken to be the condition of possibility of understanding between human beings. ‘*Die Sprache spricht*’ as Heidegger puts it (1990, p. 11 ff.).[3] This is closely related to what Lacan calls the symbolical. When this idea of language is assumed, it appears as if I could never ‘really’ reach the other (a version of the philosophical problem concerning other minds) – which was precisely what I *in my despair* wanted. My relationship to the other, and to myself, becomes ‘imaginary’ in the sense intended by Lacan – but also in a sense *not* intended by him. Moreover, the relationship between human beings, ethics, becomes in this illusion ‘unspeakable’: language, this impersonal discourse, ‘can’ never ‘really’ capture the different aspects of either the objective things or human relationships. It is this illusion that Lacan, not seeing the illusion, calls the register of the real. Instead, he projects the illusion into ethics and states that, in the words of Alenka Zupančič, at the ‘heart of ethics’ there is something that ‘has nothing to do with the register of ethics’ (Zupančič 2011, p. 235). What Lacan calls lack is in my view a repressed articulation of our repressing rejection of understanding the other; a rejection whose general philosophical articulation takes the form of a discourse (the discourse of philosophy) where one ‘cannot’ know the other, not even if she exists at all. Lacan’s notion of lack is one of the many elaborations that originates from this repressing rejection.

The understanding that we do have of and for each other is, *insofar as* we fear openness, the *most dreadful thing there is* and so we create a number of common strategies for making ourselves believe that we cannot know each other. Wittgenstein seems to realise this and, in my view, his philosophy of language builds on the fact, as I take it to be, that we understand each other even ‘before’ we have language in the sense of ‘standardised discourse of signs’. My original paper was an effort to bring out this aspect in his thinking.

Perhaps this sketch of the way I see Lacan can clarify why I have been more interested in the later Wittgenstein than in Husserl, Scheler, or Merleau-Ponty.[4] For, in contrast to the early Wittgenstein and the philosophers just mentioned, the later Wittgenstein starts to break down what I take to be the central repression in philosophy (and society in general): the idea of language as an indispensable presupposition for human understanding; the idea that we are metaphysically separated from each other and that language is an

objective discourse, a sign-system, with the help of which we can, 'with great difficulty', render our 'inner life' into the terms of the sign-system. We are assumed to be like ships in the era preceding the telegraph: we try to convey our thoughts by waving flags, the difference being that when it comes to language we do not have the faintest idea how the sign system has, or even could have, come into being. On this crucial point we just make a gesture towards history, sociality, culture, etc. and leave the issue at that.

The later Wittgenstein shows that the idea of a language that transcends human understanding in the sense that it is supposed to be a presupposition of human understanding which already contains what can be said; the idea of a transcendental language with its super-logic, is untenable. Language is about what you say to me. If I do not understand, you can try to explain what you meant. In a discussion about language Wittgenstein asks: 'What about the colour samples that A shows to B: are they part of language? Well, it is as you please.' (Wittgenstein 2009 part I, §16.) It is as you please because what matters is what it is you intend to say, or convey, to someone else. Wittgenstein's discussions almost always start from what I call I-you understanding: suppose someone says to you..., if I tell you..., if A says to B..., if a teacher says to the student..., etc.

Wittgensteinians (and indeed Wittgenstein himself) misleadingly refer to this way of philosophising as based in ordinary language. Hence they think that Wittgenstein is an ordinary language philosopher. The sense in which this is seriously misleading becomes evident if one reflects at the radical difference between Wittgenstein's 'ordinariness' and J. L. Austin's ordinariness. Where Wittgenstein places language against the background of what 'I' can sensibly say to 'you', Austin tries to categorise, in a way typical of philosophy, general structures and functions of language – a philosophical preoccupation which is precisely what Wittgenstein is criticising.

I may not have been clear enough in showing the sense in which the transcendentalising idea of language is the corner-stone when it comes to repressing the 'danger' of the you. Whatever the case, this is why I am more interested in the later Wittgenstein than in Scheler, though I cannot here account for my critical points against Scheler – who without doubt has many interesting things to say about ethics and love. (Contrary to what Benvenuto suggests, I do not think that Husserl and Merleau-Ponty are of any particular interest here. As to my focus on the repressive character of language, it seems to me that what Luce Irigaray says in *The Way of Love* seems much more interesting.)

I do think that Freud developed the concepts of repression – in the general sense of 'defence' – and the unconscious much further than did Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche or von Hartmann (to mention the most notable philosophers that worked with those concepts – if they can be said to be concepts). But, like Lacan, he still entertains the typical, philosophical view of language, which means that the most important aspect of the I-you relationship is not realised. Concerning his confusing conscience with collective pressure one could say that *if* collective pressure, instead of conscience, is taken to be the expression of what ethics is, it is not, contrary to what the critics of Freud tend to think, *that* nonsensical to say: 'What is bad is often not at all what is injurious or dangerous to the ego; on the contrary, it may be something which is desirable and enjoyable to the ego' (Freud SE XXI, p. 124). In the ears of philosophers, this may sound as saying 'bad is often good', but what Freud sees, without realising it, is an evil aspect of our repression of conscience or, more generally, I-you understanding.

All in all, I do not think that psychoanalysis, insofar as it sticks to its Freudian roots, will take us much further in our efforts to understand the significance of the I-you relationship. In this respect I think that the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein is, despite its many limitations and confusions, much more promising. Particularly the late manuscript that has been published under the heading *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology II (The Inner and the Outer)* clearly shows how Wittgenstein is deconstructing the idea that there could be any such thing as a subjective inner that is categorically inaccessible to 'you' (which does not mean that one 'completely knows', whatever that means, the other nor oneself). The specification 'you' is important because for 'us', for the collective gaze, there precisely is the (illusion) of an inaccessible inner.

Let me finish with a quotation from the above mentioned book:

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. (Wittgenstein 2004, p. 86e.)

There are many ‘egg-shells’ in this remark but its general thrust is clear. As to the egg-shells, Wittgenstein’s talk of ‘certain signs’ is confusing when his aim is to say precisely that we understand each other without interpreting signs of something inner. Secondly, the point is not about what one can convince another person about; the point is that the understanding ‘I’ have of ‘you’ cannot be expressed in the third-person perspective. When I ask you for forgiveness, this cannot be ‘publicised’. If my asking for forgiveness would be filmed and publicised on YouTube, what *Isaid* to *you* will not be there. Unlike European art films, Hollywood in a rather obvious sense admits its fear of the I-you understanding for, when this understanding is perhaps most easily perceptible, namely in a love-scene between two persons, Hollywood almost always introduces an audience that ‘castrates’ their love so that it does not become too threatening. For yes: there is a sense in which love is as political as can be.

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Note:

[1] It is characteristic of the tendency to dichotomies that haunts philosophy that Rupert Read criticises my idea of I-you understanding for having a ‘bias in favour of individualism’ and for giving a too dark picture of collectivity. (See Read 2019, pp. 378 ff.) Thus, if one is disposed towards affirming ‘irreducible subjectivism’ one will interpret those aspects of I-you understanding that clash with subjectivism as instances of collectivism, and if one is disposed towards objectivism one will be disturbed by what appears to be ‘subjectivism’.

[2] A motto of Heidegger’s is telling: ‘*Das Wesen der Sprache : Die Sprache des Wesens.*’ (See Heidegger 1990, p. 200.)

[3] Someone might here protest and say that Heidegger explicitly criticises the idea of language as an expression of the inner (see p. 14). That is true, but his discourse could be said to be a poetics of the Thing. In my words, Heidegger is, here, more of an objectivist than a subjectivist.

[4] As I see it, analytic and continental philosophy are slightly different, repressing responses to the basic constellation. Analytic philosophy builds on an effort to dodge the basic constellation by focusing on objectivity and pretending that subjectivity is no big problem, while continental philosophy proceeds by affirming an ‘irreducible, inscrutability’ of subjectivity, pretending that objectivity is a fairly trivial matter. Both are equally entangled in the subject-object dichotomy that arises as a repression of the I-you perspective. For more on this, see Nykänen, 2019.

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