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"MY TONGUE SWORE BUT MY HEART DID NOT": VINDICATING ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY AGAINST THE PROCUSTEAN BED OF SCIENTISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Often vilified, if not outright rejected, ordinary language philosophy has been sustained, from its very beginnings, due to the fame of authors such as Austin and the later Wittgenstein; but not, however, on its own merits. These, when recognized, are branded as either constituting a bad philosophy of language, or simply a bad philosophy altogether. Thus, some charitable interpretations have tried to domesticate its methods to make it compatible with a more orthodox philosophy of language. Very gradually, however, this situation is changing, largely thanks to the influence that Stanley Cavell's philosophy is having on several generations of philosophers. The main thing is to convince ourselves that ordinary language philosophy is not strictly speaking a philosophy of language. It is a philosophy that proceeds from the ordinary and pays attention to the importance that the ordinary has for philosophy. We will, in the course of this article, analyze the criticisms and attempts to domesticate ordinary language philosophy and will anticipate Cavell's defense of the ordinary language philosophy as practiced by Austin and Ryle in Cavell's inheritance of the former

Key words

ordinary language philosophy, Stanley Cavell, J.L. Austin, Benson Mates, Ludwig Wittgenstein

Introduction

I will not, even for the sake of argument, state that any specific period in the past was better than the present, but it seems to me that currently a particular crisis has developed in which the health of the human spirit hangs in the balance. The reason for this is primarily because the human spirit lies in the hands of people who have little or no patience for anything without practical use, or for anything that is not measurable, replicable, consumable, etc. This may not be absolutely bad, but it is

definitely not good; and is one of the repercussions that the world-wide expansion of scientism is having on all aspects of our lives.[1] Being a professor of philosophy myself, it is sad to see that the field of study appears to be voluntarily taking part in what can only be described as nonsense.

I consider myself to be a Wittgensteinian at least in that I am, like Wittgenstein, convinced that the nature of philosophy is somehow connected with the way "people live": that is, with features of our culture and civilization. However, these do not need to be extraordinary features, ordinary ones serve just as well (indeed, maybe this is the reason why this kind of philosophy is quite extraordinary). Wittgenstein was said to be an ordinary language philosopher, and, the way I see it, the main goal of ordinary language philosophy (OLP) is, paraphrasing Austin, to remind us of our responsibility for the things we say where and when we say them, as well as the everyday commitments resulting from the things we say. In other words, it is an approach meant not so much to elaborate a theory of meaning, but rather to describe the way we – creatures endowed with language – experience and create meaning. Against the reductionism and bias characteristic of a scientistic, decoupled rationality, OLP finds in the understanding of meaning a manifestation of human life (PI: §§80-81). In effect, this is no different from understanding a piece of music, a painting, a poem, or even a joke as a manifestation of a form of life. *Our* form of life.

I claimed in the opening section of this article (somewhat melodramatically and for the purposes of emphasis), that the health of the human spirit hangs by a thread. I have also suggested something the need to vindicate OLP in order to reverse this situation. Its critics, however, think that OLP is just a "sign of the sickness of our souls, a revolt against reason itself and a self-deceptive attempt to procure by theft what one has failed to gain by honest toil" (Rorty 1967, 3)[2]. Consequently, following its dazzling appearance in the 1940s and 1950s, in the 1960s OLP suffered a quite abrupt fall into oblivion and became regarded as a failed project. Now, there are enough reasons to maintain that the discredit suffered by OLP was largely a result of the distorted image that most philosophers have made (or assumed) of it. Thus, some familiar criticisms which form the basis of this distorted image are as follows:

> Philosophy is, or should be, concerned with the foundations of knowledge, the relation between mind and body, the nature of justice, and other such issues, not with what ordinary people think and do.

[1] My experience tells me that one is never careful enough when making such statements. Suffice it to say that what I am pointing to in my accusation is not science, but rather "scientism." I mean by "scientism" the tendency in the social sciences and humanities to assume and apply the scientific method in their own practices, and to accept that the only valid knowledge is that which can be obtained by means of the scientific method. In other words, scientism is equivalent, in my opinion, to a propositional, cognitivist colonization of reason that turns those disciplines following other procedures into epistemic epiphenomena. This is very different from criticizing science, which is unquestionable in its own right.
[2] Rorty attributes the thought to Russell.

> Practitioners of ordinary language philosophy fail to distinguish between the semantic and pragmatic features of language.
> Practitioners of ordinary language philosophy make claims about how 'we' use words based solely on how they use words, but such a sample size is far too small to yield the wanted results. (Coleman y Welty 2010, 210; quoted in Vilanova forthcoming)

These three criticisms are easily dismantled, and indeed we will dismantle them below (sections 3 and 5 trough 7 *passim*). Firstly, however, I would like to draw attention to the fact that this situation is currently being reversed through the number and quality of publications that in the first decades of the 21st century have, albeit slowly, recovered lost ground. And, secondly, I would like to mention that most or a significant number of these publications are directly or indirectly influenced by the thought and work of Stanley Cavell.[3] Cavell is not to be considered a mere spokesman or defender of the philosophy of Austin or Wittgenstein: on the contrary, Cavell's defense of ordinary language philosophy is to be regarded as the "most detailed explanation and defense of the procedures of ordinary language philosophy ever made" (Chapell 1964, 13).

Cavell met Austin at Harvard in 1955 when he was still a student, and in December 1957 he was invited to participate in a meeting of the APA held at Stanford. He was given the task of defending Austin and, as a consequence, OLP, from criticisms by the logician and historian of ancient philosophy Benson Mates, who also attended the same meeting.

Mates (1958) took a firm stand on the side of empiricist semantics and a scientifically oriented philosophy against what he considered to be an anti-empirical philosophy. The latter, to make things worse, in his view appealed to informal methods of investigating ordinary language. In the paper he read on that occasion, Mates questioned whether ordinary language philosophers had gathered the kinds of evidence that their "statements on ordinary language" required, and whether these could be adequately verified. The fact that some of their statements seemed to contradict one another—he was referring to statements by Austin and Ryle on whether an action is made voluntarily—was considered by Mates to be symptomatic of the arbitrariness of OLP's methods. This arbitrariness, in his view, invalidated those methods as genuine sources of knowledge. Therefore, it was a question of either empiricism or arbitrariness (Hare 1960, 208).

My aim, in this paper, is somewhat in that it entails examining, first, what I believe are the causes of the almost complete disappearance of OLP from both academic curricula and fashionable debates; and, second, why I think these causes were biased and self-serving. I will start by making a brief presentation of the linguistic turn(s) that characterized much of philosophy during the twentieth century, before I then

[3] Some works in the Cavellian orbit include Baz (2012), Laugier (2013), Hansen (2017), de Lara and Crary (2019). See also Hanfling (2000), Dauber and Jost (2003), Coleman and Welty (2010), and Parker-Ryan (2010).

offer a glimpse of what OLP is (or should be taken to be). I will next review some criticisms of OLP. Then, with the help of Austin and Cavell, I will address these criticisms. Thus, among my questions will be: What is OLP? What were the reasons for its abrupt disappearance? Why is it necessary to vindicate it now?[4]

1. The Linguistic Turn(s) in Philosophy

Rorty (1968) divides the ranks of the linguistic turn's protagonists, the linguistic philosophers, into two great families: on the one hand those who opt for a philosophy of ideal language, and, on the other, those who opt for a philosophy of ordinary language. The former are characterized by the conviction that the problems of philosophy are solved by reforming ordinary language. The latter are characterized by the idea that the problems of philosophy are solved by deepening one's understanding of ordinary language.

It may be little more than a question of nuance, but my opinion is that we should speak of not one but of *two* linguistic turns, each of them corresponding to one of the two aforementioned families. Firstly, we have the logicist-semanticist turn initiated in the last decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, in the works of such authors as Frege, Russell, the early Wittgenstein, and the logical empiricists, among others. This first, paradigmatic turn runs in parallel with the development of analytic philosophy throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and reaching the end of its golden age due to a series of critical views, some of them internal (Quine's, Strawson's, Kripke's) and others external, the latter being the main cause of a further turn, namely the pragmatic turn. In what follows I will develop this distinction a bit further in order to mark important differences between the two types of philosophies of language resulting from each of the two turns: one semantic, the other pragmatic.

1.1. The Semantic Turn

At the end of the nineteenth century, philosophy underwent a turn with respect to the very epistemological domain characteristic of Modernity. This turn was of a

[4] While preparing this paper I have benefited from my participation in two research projects sponsored by the Spanish Government: "Perspectivas personales. Conceptos y aplicaciones" (RTI2018-098254-B-100. Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades. Programa Estatal de I+D+i Orientada a los Retos de la Sociedad. Gobierno de España) and "Comprensión intercultural, pertenencia y valor: aproximaciones wittgensteinianas" (PGC2018-093982-B-100. Ministerio de Economía y Competencia. Gobierno de España). Several versions of this material were read in different meetings and seminars held in the last two or three years in Barcelona, Madrid, La Laguna (Tenerife), Sao Paulo and (online) in Siedlce (Poland). I am very grateful for all the comments I received on those occasions. But I would especially like to thank Byron Davies for his invaluable help with the revision of my English. If this article has something interesting to tell anyone, they will be able to understand it thanks to Byron's help. Needless to say, any errors in the text are entirely my responsibility.

linguistic nature. Authors like Frege and the early Wittgenstein were convinced that most philosophical problems had their origin in some kind of linguistic misunderstanding caused by the vague and ambiguous nature of ordinary language. In order to avoid these misunderstandings, they proposed that the answer to traditional philosophical problems – such as those related to being, substance, or mind – should be obtained from careful attention to language. This attention was not given to the superficial grammar of each particular language, but rather to the logical form of language.

This linguistic turn imposed a new philosophical method – the logical analysis of language – and meant the birth of analytic philosophy, whose golden age lasted until the 1950s. Throughout those 50 years, analytic philosophy dominated a good part of the Western philosophical scene with something of an iron fist. Also, just as with the social sciences and to a lesser extent the humanities, analytic philosophy succumbed to the siren songs of scientism, and, even worse, voluntarily participated in the process of epistemic and cognitive colonization of all orders of human experience (empirical, aesthetic, moral, religious, etc.).

The interest of the "semantic turn" in language was certainly genuine, but it did not exactly coincide with the interest that linguists or philologists may have had in language. It was not strictly speaking a linguistic philosophy. The ultimate goal of the logical analysis of language was to bring to light its formal structure. But contrary to what many have thought, this goal is not so different from the traditional goals of philosophy[5]. For instance, the logical analysis of language was needed because, according to the likes of Frege, the early Wittgenstein and the logical empiricists, considered ordinary language as irredeemably vague, ambiguous, and ill-formed. The linguistic turn meant a search for an ideal, formal language free of ambiguities and in which, therefore, thoughts and propositions could be adequately expressed. This was to be achieved by means of the logical analysis of language, since it was assumed that the deep logical structure of our propositions kept a privileged relationship with the structure or form of reality. The semantic turn, thus, emphasized the representational capacity of language and its ability to say things about the world under the guise of the relationships between the meanings of our sentences and their truth conditions. Knowing the meaning of a sentence, then, is the same as knowing what the world would have to be like for the sentence to be true.

[5] Curiously enough, this criticism is very similar to the one made of OLP that depends on the assumption that it is a linguistic philosophy concerned only with language. More specifically, this is the assumption that OLP's main concern consists in revealing important aspects of ordinary language that we might have overlooked, determining what are its correct uses and denouncing abuses. But as Austin said, OLP does "not *merely* [look] at words (or 'meanings', whatever they may be)" (Austin 1979b, 182).

1.2. Pragmatic Turn

In the 1950s the method of logical analysis of language had to face some important critical views that shattered its foundations. Some of these criticisms were *internal,* for instance: Quine's criticism of the two dogmas of empiricism; Strawson's criticism of Russell's theory of descriptions; Kripke's criticism of the descriptive theory of reference; and Rorty's criticism of representationalism; while other criticisms were *external* (mainly Austin's and Wittgenstein's).

The main consequence of both kinds of criticism was the same: the abandonment of the method of logical analysis of language. But while the internal criticism in fact meant a face-lift and a flight forward on the part of analytic philosophy of language, the external criticism gave way to a new linguistic turn: the pragmatic turn.

According to this second turn, firstly, the participation of certain pragmatic elements and processes in the determination of meaning is not residual, but rather permeates all language in such a way that the study of language, as though it were an abstract and decontextualized object, is completely meaningless. Second, ordinary language is perfectly precise and wholly adequate to its task, which cannot be reduced to just representing the objective world. As Austin reminds us, ordinary language embodies all the practical distinctions that prove useful in human life. Ordinary language, then, does not need to be analyzed logically, nor indeed in any other way. Its use should be observed and recorded as a means for accessing the normative background that sustains our way of life.

In their heyday, the so-called ordinary language philosophers were mainly located in Oxford. Their leader was J. L. Austin, who proposed the expression "linguistic phenomenology" as the name for this new way of doing philosophy, which proceeded by examining "what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations" (Austin 1979b, 182). Other OLP philosophers taught at Cambridge, like Wittgenstein and some of his early followers. These philosophers renounced conceptions of language as constituted by sets of pre-existing propositions, or of meaning as something hidden and to be discovered by means of logical analysis. Thus, they also rejected the supposed isomorphism between language/logic and the world. Representationalism ceased to be the main factor in the philosophy of language. This literally put in check the supposed relationship between truth and meaning. Consequently, what is important according to OLP is not representing or mirroring the world, but how we (each one of us) use language on a given occasion. Language was no longer seen as an ideal that is subject to the laws of logic. Instead, language begins to be seen by OLP a something alive, situated, contingent, and in continuous change.

1.3. The meaning of "Ordinary Language Philosophy"

Ryle (1953) warned of the dangers we face if we are unclear about what we mean (or what we do not mean) by the word "ordinary" in "ordinary language philosophy"[6]. I could not agree more with Ryle's warning, but what is at stake here, in my opinion, is something far deeper. I believe that after having presented the two linguistic turns (the semantic and the pragmatic), we are in a position to specify that what is at stake is our conception of *rationality*.[7] That is, what the pragmatic turn entails is a profound change in our conception of rationality: it advocates leaving behind a Rationality decoupled from our way of life, in favor of another notion of reason coupled to it. It is not, then, a confrontation between a rational and an irrational conception of language, but between a Rationality that threatens to colonize and phagocytize everything falling out of the limits of its area of influence, and a different kind of rationality whose informality overflows into those limits. Certainly, defenders of the more traditional, uncoupled Rationality will think that this is a bad justification or even worse, since on their conception irrationality and informality are practically synonymous. I will deal with that thought in the next section. In what remains of this section I will concentrate my efforts on trying to show how a realistic image of OLP modifies the notion that an "Orthodox conception" (Ambrose 1952) has of certain philosophical concepts[8].

The Orthodox conception is engaged in the search for truth. According to this conception, language is a representational tool, "a 'formal' calculus with abstract, timeless, precise contents..., which serves to represent and explain reality." For its part, OLP considers language to be a "repertoire of conventions for carrying out actions of many different kinds, and pragmatically dependent".

If we now turn to the conception of knowledge that follows from the above, we will find that, contrary to the conception supported by ideal language philosophy (according to which "knowledge is necessary, infallible, monotonous, well-founded and free of pragmatic conditioning"), OLP considers knowledge to be "fallible, approximate, not absolutely grounded, not monotonous, conditioned by practical issues".

The sum of the above results is a profound change in our conception, our rationality. In this case, the orthodox conception ("uncoupled," as I have called it) behind ideal language philosophy is one in which Rationality is "a priori,

[6] For instance, we should be clear that it is not the same use of ordinary language as the ordinary use of language. We should also be clear that OLP's investigation is about what we do with our words and not about the characteristics or properties of those words. In this regard, a comment by Parker-Ryan´s comes to mind: "Indeed, the figures we now know as 'Ordinary Language' philosophers did not refer to themselves as such – it was originally a term of derision, used by its detractors" (Parker-Ryan 2019).

[7] In fact, this should surprise no one: it is obvious in the quotation from Rorty in which he refers to critics of OLP and to Russell in particular.

[8] Here I am closely following Vilanova (forthcoming) and the next three quotations are from this yet unpublished paper.

foundational and 'stark'". The new (coupled) rationality promoted by OLP is "contextualized, weak, historically and anthropologically determined, content-varying, and 'embodied'": A wild horse that the orthodox conception set out to tame.

2. Taming Ordinary Language Philosophy

Although few people in academia really know what to do with Wittgenstein, he and Austin are two of the most respected and widely read philosophers of the 20th century. Nevertheless, OLP has not attracted the same amount of attention as these philosophers: or when it has, this has been to belittle its assumptions, its methods, and its alleged results. In my opinion all the criticisms made against OLP belong to one of the following two categories: (1) criticism claiming that OLP is a bad philosophy of language; and (2) criticism claiming that OLP is simply a bad philosophy.

Let us first pay attention to the second objection. According to OLP, *what we usually say* is a significant factor in doing philosophy. But this view is simply and plainly unacceptable for the many philosophers who think that philosophy is a much more difficult task, even an epic one. I would like to mention here the names of Ernest Gellner and Bertrand Russell.

In his unmistakable style, Russell (1957) begins with the following ironic remark:

> My purpose in this article is first to discuss G. F. Warnock's 'Metaphysics in Logic' [...] Mr. Warnock belongs to the 'Philosophy-Without-Tears' School, so named because it makes philosophy very much easier than it has ever been before: in order to be a competent philosopher, it is only necessary to study Fowler's *Modern English Usage*; post-graduates may advance to *The King's English*, but this book is to be used with caution for, as its title shows, it is somewhat archaic. (225)

Warnock was regarded as a disciple of Wittgenstein, so the good connoisseur would have immediately realized that when Russell says "'Philosophy-Without-Tears' School" he is actually referring to OLP and to (the later) Wittgenstein in particular: a philosopher whom Russell regarded as having thrown his talent overboard and as having philosophically degraded himself by taking common sense seriously.

> The later Wittgenstein... seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary. I do not for one moment believe that the doctrine which has these lazy consequences is true...
> The desire to understand the world is, they think, an outdated folly. (Russell 1959, 161)

And still more, he states the fundamental dogma of OLP to be the assumption that:

> common sense [i.e.: ordinary language] is sacrosanct, and that it is impious to suppose it capable of improvement. (Russell 1959, xii)

Gellner (1959) shows the same kind of concern when he considers that that OLP renounces any serious solution to those problems and questions relevant to the increase of scientific knowledge. But he also criticizes what in his opinion is one of OLP's most undesirable features: namely, the view that linguistic practices with certain expressions are what determine the meanings of those expressions, so that every time our use of an expression changes, its meaning also changes, making it impossible to discuss even the degree to which our discourses are faithful to the nature of what we are talking about. In other words, according to Gellner, if OLP were correct, then linguistic activity would be immune to (orthodox) rational criticism.

It seems, then, that according to this kind of criticism OLP is just bad philosophy: trivial and naïve, having so surrendered to common sense that it is immune to rational criticism, etc. As Stanley Cavell has pointed out on several occasions, this criticism is nothing but yet another manifestation of the mistrust that philosophy shows towards common sense. But beyond this display of distrust based on a superficial and, I suspect, a biased reading of OLP, we do not find good arguments on Gellner's part. His book is at times a libel made up of an endless succession of comments *ad hominen*, which should make us want to ask where exactly this need to reject or to overcome ordinary language philosophy comes from (Mulhall 1994, 445).

If we focus exclusively on the criticism directed against the alleged conservatism of OLP, it is very easy to show how much the critics miss the mark, for as Austin made very clear, OLP neither considers ordinary language to be immutable and incapable of improvement and therefore "sacrosanct", nor does it claim that ordinary language is the last word in any philosophical dispute. It is rather only the first word.

> Certainly ordinary language has not claim to be the last word, if there is such thing. It embodies, indeed, something better than the metaphysics of the Stone Age, namely, as was said, the inherited experience and acumen of many generations of men [...] that experience has been derived only from the sources available to ordinary men throughout most of civilized history: it has not been fed from the resources of the microscope and its successors. And it must be added too, that superstition and error and fantasy of all kinds do become incorporated in ordinary language and even sometimes stand to the survival test [...] Certainly, then, ordinary language is *not* the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded. Only remember, it *is* the *first* word. (Austin 1979b, 185; the underlining is mine)[9].

Be that as it may, such criticisms as Russell's and Gellner's, especially the latter's, have contributed in the construction of a distorted and very unfair image of OLP: one that is informal and dogmatic, to say the least, as well as an image tailored to those

[9] Think, for example, of the philosophical elucidation of meaning. In this case the first word would consist in the "explanation or perhaps regulation of the ordinary notion of 'meaning'," whereas the last word would be the "philosophical concept of meaning," the result of the typical process of reflection (See Blanco Salgueiro forthcoming).

very same criticisms. According to this distorted image, OLP's bomb-proof fidelity to ordinary language limits its work to nothing more than establishing correct uses of language and criticizing incorrect ones (mainly carried out by philosophy) based strictly on its knowledge of and trust in ordinary language. According to Gellner this alleged short-sightedness on the part of OLP turns it into a propaedeutic or a mere therapy. But OLP is not propaedeutic. It seeks neither to reform nor to justify any concrete use of our language because, to start with, there are no uses superior to others. In fact, pace Gellner and Russell, PI is full of examples of how the extra-ordinary uses of philosophy stretch the limits of meaning so that they can find a suitable context[10].

Moving on to the second objection outlined above, it is easy to see why an ideal language philosophy might find OLP to be a bad philosophy of language. For the former, a good explanation of natural language and of meaning is one that will include references to the formal structure of language and to its compositional features; and then the result should be verified on the basis of objective evidence by means of reliable methods. According to this way of thinking, nothing can be less reliable or unsystematic than focusing on the contextualist nature of uses of language: the incidence of contexts, it is assumed, is incompatible with the required formal and systematic treatment of them. Critical reactions to this supposed contextualism were not long in coming[11], and consisted either in recommending the conversion of OLP into a kind of philosophy of linguistics (e.g., Mates, Fodor and Katz, to name just a few), or in taming it in such a way that it would be compatible with the exclusive determination of meaning by semantics (e.g., Grice, but also others like Kaplan and Searle). I will make my assessment of the first reaction when I introduce the exchange between Mates and Cavell, and I will discuss the second in the following paragraphs.

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[10] See Cavell: "the philosopher who proceeds from ordinary language is concerned less to avenge sensational crimes against the intellect than to redress its civil wrongs [...] This inevitably requires reintroducing ideas which have become tyrannical (e.g., existence, obligation, certainty, identity, reality, truth...) into the specific contexts in which they function naturally. This is not a question of cutting big ideas down to size, but of giving them the exact space in which they can move without corrupting" (MWM, 18).

[11] It is a common mistake to confuse OLP with a radical version of contextualism. However, the difference between the former and the latter is, in spite of everything, very evident. Contextualism is part of the business of determining the truth-conditions of what we say, and it adds to the traditional picture a certain sensitivity to the pragmatic and contextual aspects involved in determining those conditions. Ordinary language philosophy could not be more indifferent to the question of the truth conditions of what we say. The meaningful unit according to ordinary language philosophy is not words or even utterances, but rather "the total speech act in the total speech situation" (Austin) or the language games shaping our way of life (Wittgenstein). Thus, if there is any empirical fact about language according to ordinary language philosophy, it would be this: the boundary between semantics and pragmatics is neither impenetrable nor opaque, but rather the opposite. That is, there is a constant and uninterrupted traffic from one to the other, the important thing being not so much the determination of the truth conditions of what is said, as rather the recognition of what is said when, where, and by whom.

If there is one thing OLP is known for, it is the full embrace of the pragmatic turn. In a nutshell, what this means is that the involvement of pragmatic factors and processes in determining what is said must be taken into serious consideration. The consequences of the pragmatic turn in its purest and most extreme version are such that it makes no sense to continue asking about the truth conditions of the proposition expressed by means of what is literally said[12]. The proposition is contextually determined, and this is a phenomenon that pertains to the whole language and not only to those regions of it that are more clearly sensitive to context. Semantics cannot do all the work by itself, and the boundary separating semantics from pragmatics is not impermeable in the way that Grice intended.

A notable difference between Grice, on the one hand and Russell and Gellner, on the other, is that the Grice does not ridicule OLP. Although he is the leading proponent of what I call the attempt to domesticate OLP, Grice also believes in the usefulness of a philosophy that proceeds from ordinary language[13]. What Grice achieves is not without merit or interest. His attempt at domestication begins with the distinction between what a speaker says literally and what his utterances imply conversationally (what Grice called an "implicature"). Grice never had reason to question the mutual independence of semantics and pragmatics. Accordingly, he never doubted that the meaning of what is said belonged in the domain of semantics:

[12] In a footnote just after the paragraph on whether ordinary language is the last word or the first word, Austin asks us to "forget, for once and for a while, that other curious question 'Is [ordinary language] true?'" (Austin 1979b, 185 footnote #2).

[13] In this respect one can never be too cautious with Grice, since, for instance, it must be borne in mind that in the 1960s he was part of the group of Oxonian philosophers led by Austin—the "Play Group"—one of whose main tasks consisted, in Grice's own words, of "careful examination of detailed features of ordinary speech" (Grice 1986, 51). Grice even replaced Austin in the leadership of this group for a short period of time. In fact, he was explicitly against Russell's and Gellner's criticisms and in favor of the philosophy that "proceeds from ordinary language":

> Another dogma to which some may have supposed us [i.e., ordinary language philosophers] to be committed is that of the sanctity, or sacrosanctity, of whatever metaphysical judgments or world-pictures may be identified as underlying ordinary discourse. [...] In fact, the only position which to my mind would have commanded universal assent was that a careful examination of the detailed features of ordinary discourse is required as a foundation for philosophical thinking; and even here the enthusiasm of the assent would have varied from person to person, as would the precise view taken (if any was taken) about the relationship between linguistic phenomena and philosophical theses. [...] When properly regulated and directed, 'linguistic botanizing' seems to me to provide a valuable initiation to the philosophical treatment of a concept, particularly if what is under examination (and it is arguable that this should always be the case) is a family of different but related concepts. Indeed, I will go further, and proclaim it as my belief that linguistic botanizing is indispensable, at a certain stage, in a philosophical enquiry [...] (Grice 1986, 50-56; quoted by Blanco Salgueiro forthcoming).

However, it is no less true, and above all more decisive, that the driving forces of Grice's thought included both a set of more traditional convictions and a desire for systematicity, as can be seen in other statements of his in which he mentions his later "efforts to arrive at a more theoretical treatment [i.e., the elaboration of a grammar of ordinary language] of the linguistic phenomena of the genre which had occupied me for so long at Oxford." In other words, he had full confidence in the possibilities of revealing a pattern reiterated beneath the varied and even chaotic use of language, and thus of accessing "new levels of generality" (Grice 1986, 59); More on this point in Acero forthcoming). This was so much the case that, according to Soames, "Grice's work is the end of the ordinary language philosophy" (Soames 2003, 198).

what the speaker literally says already determines by itself a truth-evaluable proposition. Implicatures, on the other hand, since they do not affect, according to Grice, the truth value of the proposition uttered by a speaker, are a matter of pragmatics. The distinction is defined as that between the semantic or literal meaning, and the pragmatic or speaker's meaning. Grice does not stop there, but rather goes on to systematize the study of the speaker's meaning by endowing the pragmatic aspects of linguistic communication with its own rational logic. Thus, Grice aspires to systematize any informal aspect of our use of language and, by doing so, he ends up domesticating and, in a way, trivializing OLP. In other words, he presents it as a clearly irrelevant addition to the philosophical enterprise of determining the truth conditions of what is said.

The shadow of Grice's attempted taming of the pragmatic turn along more orthodox lines is, indeed, long – so much so that the neo-Gricean orthodoxy wants nothing to do with pragmatic novelty (i.e., with its chaotic consequences for the theoretical study of language.) Thus, the latter has also focused its efforts on taming OLP. This could be represented even more graphically: it is as though the semantic turn had assimilated the pragmatic turn, or rather faced with the apparent impossibility of governing the pragmatic turn, the most orthodox thought opted for a strategy (sadly) characteristic of a more reductionist philosophy. This was the strategy of accommodating it to the Procrustean bed of formalism and semantics. In my view this has been achieved throughout the enterprise of sponsoring contextualism, so that the latter occupies the place that should belong to OLP[14]. However, what exactly is achieved by this move? Above all, contextualism becomes the champion of pragmatics and is presented as the main adversary of the standard semanticist position, namely literalism. This has the consequence of keeping semantics and pragmatics separate, even though they are in fact two sides of the same project: that of systematically determining the truth-conditions of what is said.

3. A Friendly Face to Ordinary Language Philosophy?

A place often visited even by would-be supporters of OLP is the distinction between what, following Hansen (2014), we will call Austin's "constructive project" and Wittgenstein's "therapeutic project." Framed this way, the aim seems to be to rescue from the above criticisms at least one half of OLP (namely, Austin's project), even if this comes at the cost of losing, since it is impossible to tame, the other half (namely, Wittgenstein's project). This division derives from tendencies to contrast Austin's more systematic vocation with Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical spirit, so that it is as though Austin's philosophical project were located somewhat closer to the semantic turn's area of influence. Here I will take this division for granted solely for the sake

[14] See footnote #13, above.

of argument, but also with the aim of showing that this attempt to tame even Austin's seemingly more propitious philosophy is based on a misunderstanding of it.

The following is how Austin describes what is believed to be his constructive project:

> in examining what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we look not only at words (or meanings, whatever they may be), but also at the realities we speak of through words: we are using a heightened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of [...] phenomena (Austin, 1979b, 182).

The main hypothesis of the constructive project is that it is possible to discover facts related to the meanings of words and to reach certain conclusions about the realities to which we refer through our words by observing how those words are used (Hansen 2014, 557). Thus, according to Hansen, we can distinguish two different phases:

> The *Semantic phase*: it is divided in two, a first phase in which the ordinary language philosophers make statements about the use of certain expressions, and a second one in which they offer explanations of such uses (that is, of the meaning of the expressions) based on the statements made, for example like this: "the best way to explain that the expression 'X' is generally used in the way 'Y', requires that the semantics of 'X' possess the feature F".
> The *Metaphysical phase*: from the fact that an expression possesses certain semantic traits it follows that that to which the expression refers is of such and such a form: if the semantics of 'X' possesses F, then the nature of that to which 'X' refers possesses the trait G.

Proponents of the constructive project insist that in the semantic phase, Austin employs an informal experimental approach to gather evidence of the existence of certain almost imperceptible distinctions between the meanings of different words and of expressions that apparently have the same meaning. This method, though informal, is intended to ensure that the intellectual respectability of Austin's project is in keeping with scientific standards of rationality; for instance, evidentialism. The "heightened word awareness" Austin mentions in the text above would be obtained by collecting evidence that is "almost imperceptible" but nevertheless measurable. What Austin proposes, according to this interpretation, are linguistic experiments thanks to which it is clear that it is better to use one word rather another in a particular situation. This is needed because, according to its critics, ordinary language philosophers make descriptive claims about uses of language, but the methods they employ to gather that evidence are unreliable.

But this insistence on interpreting Austin from an evidentialist perspective does not take into account another possibility that is much more accurate, or at least more in line with what seems to be the spirit of Austin's philosophy. In fact, the evidentialist perspective is completely refuted not only by Cavell's interpretation of Austin and Wittgenstein, but also, despite Hansen, by a close reading of the works of

these authors themselves. It is thus worth stressing at this point the differences between, on the one hand, Hansen's evidentialist-scientistic interpretation, however informal it may be, of Austin's methods, and, on the other hand, Cavell's own interpretation of those methods, which consists in comparing Austin's ability to offer examples of ordinary usage to the phenomenon of having perfect pitch (Cavell 1994, 21). In this regard, it is revealing to bring up Wittgenstein's remarks about acquiring "a nose" for recognizing imponderable evidence (PI, part II, section XI). It is striking that Hansen himself echoes Cavell's analogy but fails to recognize the difference with his own interpretation. However, this should not come as a surprise since, in the same work, Hansen subscribes to the more-or-less widespread view that explicating, and therefore understanding, Cavell's views about ordinary language "is no picnic" (Hansen 2014, 560; Hansen echoes Bates and Cohen 1972). And it is plain to see that he has not understood him. In short, what in this context Cavell is trying to achieve by means of the perfect pitch analogy is to subtract Austin's philosophy from the field of epistemology – where what is important is verification or justification on the basis of ponderable evidence of the truth of our knowledge claims – and to bring it closer to more informal fields of thought: for example, a field such as ethics, where what is important includes recognizing the positions we occupy as speakers and whether we are willing to accept responsibility for the things we say, etc.

4. Enter Benson Mates

Now, is Austin's informal method in fact a reliable one for gathering evidence about how we ordinarily use an expression? This is the starting point of Mates's (1958) argument against OLP. The positions in the debate are very clearly defined: Mates argues that neither Austin nor any other ordinary language philosopher has a reliable method for settling the kind of question that is at stake when it comes to determining the meaning of what we say or whether this or that use of language is correct or not. Cavell's response is as complex as it is illuminating. First, he manages to show that Mates's way of posing the question does not do justice to OLP since the latter is not in the business of gathering the kinds of evidence needed to support a systematic theory of meaning. He also manages to show that precisely the novelty and strength of OLP (of the pragmatic turn for that matter) makes clear that it is unnecessary to appeal to matters of fact in order to determine the correctness or incorrectness of a given use of language. If this is interpreted as laziness or hastiness on the part of OLP by the likes of Mates, then so much the worst for them.

As might be expected, Mates's criticism was not exclusive, and neither was he the first philosopher to formulate this kind of criticism against OLP. Chisholm (1951), for instance, had already criticized OLP on the basis that a right or wrong use of language is a question of truth or falsity, and therefore settling this question should be considered an empirical matter, and not one to be solved by mere speculation. To be

fair, we must say that Cavell's response was also broadly anticipated, for example, by Alice Ambrose (1952). This will be discussed further in section 7.

For now let us quickly review the main points of Mates's critique. There is no better way of doing this than to check what Mates himself has to say about what he thinks are the main difficulties facing OLP:

> In this paper I shall discuss certain difficulties which seem to me to stand in the way of understanding or properly appreciating the work of the so-called "ordinary language" philosophers. These difficulties concern the interpretation of the various seemingly factual statements which such philosophers make about language. I am mainly interested in the question of how one would go about verifying these statements; *insofar as meaning is bound up with verification, this is also a question of their meaning* [...] Even among those [ordinary language philosophers] who can claim to be "in the know" or to "get to the point" there are wide disagreements both as to the truth and as to the meaning of given assertions of the sort under consideration, and these disagreements are by themselves a basis for skepticism. When in addition it is seen that such assertions play a crucial role in the discussions which are supposed to answer, dissolve, or somehow get rid of the traditional problems of philosophy, a philosopher may perhaps be excused for looking at the matter a little more closely (Mates 1958, 161; emphasis added).

According to Hansen (2017, 7), Mates' argument can be summarized as follows:

> (1) Statements about language made by ordinary language philosophers are descriptive (evaluable as true or false), not normative (i.e. not advice on how to use language).
> (2) Skepticism about the ordinary language philosophers' descriptive claims about language is warranted by the fact that (i) speakers are often not reliable reporters of their own linguistic behavior, and (ii) there is disagreement even among practitioners of ordinary language philosophy (Ryle and Austin, for example) about how expressions are used.
> (3) There are two basic approaches to verifying descriptive statements about language: the extensional approach, which looks at the use of expressions, and the intentional approach, which involves eliciting the beliefs of speakers about the meaning or use of expressions. Ordinary language philosophers 'tend toward an armchair version of the extensional approach', ignoring the intentional approach. The two approaches may yield conflicting results, so relying only on one method will not give a complete picture of ordinary use.

Even more succinctly: according to Mates, philosophers of ordinary language make descriptive claims about uses of language, but the methods they employ for gathering the evidence needed to make those claims are unreliable.

5. Extending The Limits Of Rationality I: What does knowledge mean??

What decisively shows how poorly Mates understood Austin is that Austin did not aim to elaborate a theory of meaning, and so the reliability of his methods should not be judged from that angle. Austin's real aim was to clarify some traditional philosophical disputes (e.g. about which actions are good or bad, right or wrong, what

is the nature of action, the problem of free will, etc.) by clarifying what are the correct uses of expressions such as '(by) error', '(by) accident', 'deliberately', 'intentionally', 'voluntarily', 'cause', 'know ('I know that p')', etc.[15]

In order to show that this is the case, I will following de Lara (2019) and take a closer look at the pages in which Austin compares "I know" and "I promise."

> when I say, 'I promise', a new plunge is taken: I have not merely announced my intention, but, by using this formula (performing this ritual), I have bound myself to others, and staked my reputation, in a new way. Similarly, saying 'I know' is taking a new plunge. But it is *not* saying 'I have performed a specially striking feat of cognition, superior, in the same scale as believing and being sure, even to being merely quite sure': for there *is* nothing in that scale superior to being quite sure. Just as promising is not something superior, in the same scale as hoping and intending, even to merely fully intending: for there is nothing in that scale superior to fully intending. When I say, 'I know', I *give others my word*: I *give others my authority for saying* that 'S is P' (Austin 1979a, 99).

As de Lara – closely following Cavell on this point – reminds us, this is a passage that for Austin's interpreters, especially those belonging to the analytic family, and regardless of their possible sympathies with Austin, represents a "fundamental, pervasive error in Austin's way of looking at words and things" (Cavell 2010, 320; See de Lara (2019)). The accusation is that, by means of this analogy, what Austin ends up doing is "performatize knowledge." That is, it is as though Austin were claiming "that to say 'I know' is to produce a performative (not descriptive) utterance" (320). Of course, the orthodox conception cannot accept this, because what Austin would be implying is that "just as when I say 'I promise' or 'I bet', in appropriate circumstances, then *eo ipso* [...] it follows that I (*ipso facto*) promise or I bet, in the same way if I say 'I know' then *eo ipso*, by that fact, it follows that I know" (320). But, of course, saying "I know that p" or "I know p" is neither necessary nor sufficient to know that p or to know p, and "[a]ny theory leading to such a conclusion has repudiated itself" (320). But as obvious as this may seem, it is worth considering the view that what these critics seem to be trying to safeguard at all costs is a descriptive or factual use of "I know", instead of trying to account for Austin's intended novelty. This is nothing new on the part of those criticisms of OLP that we have been considering: they appear unable to see beyond the limits of the orthodox conception of rationality, and they consequently try to accommodate any dissonance within those narrow limits.

Austin does not claim that saying "I know" is equivalent to performing an act of knowledge (expressing, as it were, mere subjective certainty). In fact, he denies it (Austin 1979a, 101). But what he may be suggesting, according to Cavell, is that using

[15] See Wittgenstein: "All these, however, can appear in the right light only when one has attained greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning something, and thinking. For it will then also become clear what may mislead us (and did mislead me) into thinking that if anyone utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it, he is thereby operating a calculus according to definite rules" (PI: §81).

the words "I know" in a certain way implies that we are doing something *similar* to making a promise "*in a specific respect*, namely, that just as saying that you promise takes a step, makes a commitment, beyond saying that you fully intend to, so saying that you know takes a step beyond saying that you are, for your part, absolutely sure" (320). "A step beyond" here means "'going beyond' the cognitive accomplishments in being or making sure" (321), which for Austin, if we stick to Cavell's interpretation, means "that the step beyond can be said to be the *same or sufficiently similar* step that is taken in the case of promising, on the ground [...] namely, that *you give others your word*" (320-21). This suggestive way of looking at language is, though still incomplete, what decisively characterizes OLP, as well as Cavell's inheritance of Austin. Furthermore, what it reveals is that "human speech [is] radically, in each uttered word, ethical. Speaking, or failing to speak, to another is as subject to responsibility, say to further response, as touching, or failing to touch, another" (321). Whatever guarantee is there here, it is not based on empirical facts (Lara, 2019).

When Austin (1979a) asks, "How do you know it's a goldfinch?" what is at stake is not the justification of a claim to knowledge, but rather what position the person making the claim to knowledge occupies, since it is from that position that she can make that claim. In other words, what is at stake is whether she is in a good position to know what she claims to know. It is the position occupied by the speaker that determines her authority or legitimacy to make her claim. What is relevant, according to Austin, are "past experiences, our opportunities and our activities in learning to discriminate or discern, and, bound up with both, the correctness or otherwise of the linguistic usages we have acquired" (Austin 1979a, 80). All of which boils down to the following question: "How have I come to be in a position to know things about goldfinches?" whereby what is being questioned are my credentials as a speaker (experience, training, knowledge of the subject in question, etc.). Thus, what an ordinary language philosopher like Austin seeks is a proper "situation assessment" (Austin 1979b, 194). For him, the rationality of what we human beings say (claim) has less to do with whether it can be right (true) than with whether we have the right (or the legitimacy) to say it. If someone claims to know p, and later it turns out that p was false, it is not correct to say that she was wrong when she claimed to know p (Austin 1979a, 98). What according to Austin would allow us to judge that the person was wrong is that she could have been expected to occupy a position allowing her to know that p and yet did not occupy it at that time. By placing at the center of our attention the speaker's responsibility for what she says, what Austin manages to do is change the terms in which we value the rationality of a claim to knowledge.

It is the task of the speaker to make sure that she is in a position to claim to know what she claims to know; if she has any concrete reason to doubt this, then she is irresponsible in making that claim. What Austin's analogy suggests, then, is that "ostensibly epistemic language" ("I know") is as much about the careful assessment of a situation and the responsible understanding of our words' implications and

effects as it is about ostensibly non-epistemic language (e.g., "I promise"). When I say, "I know", I am responsible for what I say (that I cannot be wrong): I take a risk and give my word, thus risking my reputation. In that sense, it is no different from assuming the kind of commitment that comes with saying "I promise."

6. Extending The Limits Of Rationality II: "Must We Mean What We Say?"

Cavell's defense of Austin at the 1957 APA conference revolved around two main themes: first, showing that the practice of OLP does not depend on the kind of evidence demanded by the likes of Mates; second, that the metalinguistic observations of ordinary language philosophers about the ordinary use of language are not descriptive, but are covered by a necessity of sorts, something that should make us want to reconsider what are the true limits and nature of our rationality.

Cavell admits that Mates is indeed right in insisting on differences between Austin and Ryle: Austin produces examples of what we say when and why (for example "let's take 'voluntarily'... we can make... a gift voluntarily"), while Ryle offers explanations (generalizations from examples) of what we say: "In their most common use 'voluntarily' and 'involuntarily' are used... as adjectives that apply to actions that should not have been done. We ask ourselves if a certain action was voluntary or not only when it seems that it is someone's fault... etc." (MWM, 2-8).

Mates, of course, assumes that the only acceptable option is understanding ordinary language philosophers' metalinguistic claims as though they were empirical claims to be contrasted by the right kind of evidence. For his part Cavell asks the following: Do we really need to conduct a survey to decide which of them – Austin or Ryle – is wrong? Would it indeed be dogmatic, Cavell continues, to conclude simply that, in this case, Ryle is wrong, and that Austin's examples are counterexamples of Ryle's generalization? Cavell answers negatively: but not because, as Mates argues, Ryle needs evidence to support his claim, but rather because he generalizes too hastily.

Ordinary language philosophers, Cavell notes, are neither linguists nor anthropologists studying a language which is not their own. An ordinary language philosopher makes observations about the language of which she herself is a native speaker. The metalinguistic claims, Cavell observes, are also uttered by a native speaker of a particular language. And generally, a native speaker does not have to go through the same procedures as a non-native speaker (for example, a foreign linguist researching our language) in order to be able to say when it is correct to say this or that. It is part of the process of learning a language that we know when an action is voluntary. Native speakers of a given language are themselves the source of evidence. They are, for example, the source of evidence used by linguists in their empirical descriptions of language.

The final result of the process of acquiring a language is that we share "routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation" (Cavell 1976d, 52). To paraphrase Wittgenstein: we share a grammar by the mere fact of having acquired the same language in a process that consists of aligning language with the world. The grammar of a word refers to its role within a given language game. OLP can be understood, then, as though it were a repository of grammatical reminders (more on this below).

Cavell observes that there is some kind of necessity in the metalinguistic assertions made by ordinary language philosophers, which is sustained by the intrinsic normativity of language. If someone at a party asks me if I have dressed the way I have voluntarily, this not only implies that my way of dressing is peculiar: it *must* mean that my way of dressing is peculiar. The only thing the ordinary language philosopher needs as a support for his metalinguistic observations is that something follows from the fact that a term is used in a habitual way: this authorizes us to make certain inferences, to draw certain conclusions; and this refers, again, to language-learning: "*learning what these implications are is part of language learning* [...] They are an essential part of what we communicate when we speak" (MWM, 11-12). By learning a language, we acquire an intimate, implicit understanding of these implications. It is not always possible to make explicit everything that we communicate, and so mistakes and misunderstandings are always possible. In contrast to Mates, then, "the philosopher who proceeds from ordinary language is entitled, without special empirical investigation, to [the kinds of] assertions [they make about ordinarily language, e.g., about how a word is used]" (MWM, 12, 37). There is no single way to specify that what we imply is appropriate. Therefore "the question of evidence is irrelevant" (MWM, p. 14).

I will now draw attention to Ambrose (1952) as a way of closing my attempt to vindicate OLP against the orthodox position of language, of knowledge, and – in short – of reason[16]. In fact, Ambrose successfully put distance between OLP and the orthodox conception. The latter is concerned with reliably establishing the truth conditions that an empirical statement must fulfill. OLP, for its part, is interested in the elucidation of linguistic facts. Now, although these are not strictly speaking the facts about the world sought by the orthodox position, they are, nonetheless, real. OLP, then, aspires to be able to say something about how we use language in referring to the world: it is just not a search for *the* truth. When a philosopher of ordinary language claims to understand an utterance, she is not claiming to be right about

[16] I am indebted to Juanjo Colomina-Almiñana for putting me on Ambrose's trail. In the same context of criticism and defense of OLP, Colomina-Almiñana (2018, especially 384 and ff.) devotes several pages to Ambrose's response to Chisholm, among many other interesting issues relevant to the present topic.

what the world is really like, but is rather saying something about her as well as our own image of the world, about what sense it has for us. Ordinary language is not strictly speaking about the world, but rather about how we deal with the world, how we use language to express what is the case. What ordinary language philosophers do, therefore, can be seen as a sort of collection and issuance of grammatical reminders. These are reminders about our responsibility, when using language, to refer to what we believe is the case. If anything, these reminders about ordinary language point to the structures of thought shaping the domains of meaning for the speakers and thereby, as Cavell (MWM) argues, make explicit the intrinsic normativity of language.

7. Acknowledging the "reasons of the heart"

Although we have not yet needed to introduce the Cavellian reception of the later Wittgenstein, what has already been said should suffice for realizing that Cavell's own conception of OLP is more radical than Austin's. Let's see how this is the case by looking at two of Austin's most important insights. First, we have seen that Austin (1979a) shows a claim to knowledge to be more than just a descriptive statement. Second, regarding the normativity of language, Austin (1975) offers an institutionalized view of language, one in which normativity is derived from the conventionality of those procedures that establish when an utterance is happy and when it is unhappy. Cavell finds this view to be too superficial: it is an insufficiently intimate view of the normativity of ordinary language.

Thinking about Austin's "step beyond" the descriptive claim to know, Cavell acknowledges that he

> was [...] convinced that Austin was right in finding something amiss with this ancient philosophical picture of knowledge [...] But I had little idea how to clarify my intuition that Austin's idea of the claim of knowledge as "going beyond" the cognitive accomplishments in being or making sure and certain was not to be *modeled* on the act of promising as going beyond expressing an intention, but was a separate interpretation of excess, say, of my stance toward my accomplishment, my stake in it, expressing authority toward it. Some ten years later I will be able to begin articulating this region "beyond" knowledge by taking into account the concept of acknowledgment (2010, 321)[17].

[17] To glimpse the profundity of the change in the conception of rationality driven by OLP it might be a good idea to keep in mind Cavell's comparison between judgment in OLP, on the one hand, and aesthetic and ethical judgments, on the other. For instance: "I will suggest that the aesthetic judgment models the sort of claim entered by these philosophers [of ordinary language], and that the familiar lack of conclusiveness in aesthetic argument, *rather than showing up an irrationality, shows the kind of rationality it has, and needs*" (Cavell 1976b, 86. The emphasis is mine). Aesthetic judgments comprise our position; they are not merely questions of personal taste. (For a critic writing in a newspaper it is not enough to write: "I did not like yesterday's piano concert by Mr...;" she would have to give her reasons for thinking that if she is going to be taken seriously.) Cavell relates the success of such judgments not to the accuracy with which they

According to both ideal language philosophers and ordinary language philosophers, what we say is subject to some kind of necessity, or at least manifests some regularity, because otherwise communication and mutual understanding would be impossible, or a mere miracle. The difference between them is that while for the former such regularity obeys the internalization of a hidden, predetermined structure which the philosophy of language must discover, for the latter it consists in a mutual attunement of judgments, practices, and responses, as well as in our sensitivity to the linguistic behavior of others. This is a process whose success does not always depend (or rather, never depends) on detecting objective evidence, but instead depends on *acknowledging* those gestures, inflections, aspects, etc., which in a strict sense are not ponderable. (Think of, say, the meaning of the expectant gaze accompanying a promise, or of the smile driving the story of an unexpected event, or of a tear burdening with emotion the memory of a shared past). We must mean what we say because meaning what one says is, to a great extent, one's responsibility.

We expose ourselves to public ridicule if we permanently fail to be sincere. And, of course, there are occasions in which we lie or make a strategic use of language. But even lies are subject to codes allowing us to recognize them in such a way that if we fail to do so, it will not be because we have missed some objective fact, but rather because we are not willing to make the necessary effort, or are insensitive to certain stimuli, or have lost our interest, or do not feel like doing that thing at that precise moment, etc. After all, we are only human.

If like Hippolytus we take an oath and then regret it, relying on the excuse that we were not sincere ("my tongue swore to, but my heart did not"), the consequences can take on the size of a Greek tragedy. The regularity of our linguistic practices and

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describe facts, but to their ability to make an interlocutor adequately appreciate the situation by acknowledging what the relevant facts are.

On the other hand, in the third book of CR, Cavell compares the ordinary language philosopher to what he calls the moralist: "[The moralist is] the human being who best grasps the human position [and therefore] teaches us what our human position is much better than we know it, so that we cannot escape it except by distraction and brutalization [and if this is so] then our first task in putting ourselves on trial is to distinguish the moralist from the moralizer" (CR, 326). What makes the moralist capable of performing such wonders is not that she is in possession of a knowledge of what is right or reasonable to do in a given situation, for there is no such thing (Cf. CR, 254), as seems to follow from the existence of incompatible and equally legitimate positions in almost any ethical and moral discussion. But if this is so, one might ask whether a moral argument is or could be rational. Well, for Cavell, the objective of moral argument is not to ensure agreement on what is right. "[Evaluating the moral claim] consists [...] in determining what your position is, and challenging the position itself, questioning whether the position you take is appropriate to the claim you have introduced [...] the point at issue is to determine what position you are taking, that is, what position you are responsible for – and whether it is a position that I can respect" (CR, 268). What, in short, makes a moral argument rational

> is not the assumption that in every situation there is only one thing that should be done and that we can know what that thing is, nor the assumption that we can always agree on what should be done based on rational methods. Its rationality lies in following the methods that lead to the knowledge of our own position, where we are; in short, to a knowledge and definition of ourselves (CR, 312).

meanings depends greatly on our interest and on whether we are satisfied with speaking through others or not. Living a human life, in a human world, means that ordinarily we are attuned with each other. Ordinary language philosophers are in the business of acknowledging the tune that we, members of a linguistic community, share. OLP, then, helps us to *fully* (i.e., without subjecting our experience to the bed of Procrustes) inhabit our ordinary world: "morality is in that world, and so are force and love; so is art and a part of knowledge [...] and so is religion [...]. Some mathematics and science, no doubt are not" (MWM, 40). A world in which certain actions are voluntary and in which we will never find out what a voluntary action is unless we can see when we should say that an action is voluntary.

Austin's (1975) reference to *Hippolytus* is even more striking if we take into account Russell's reference to a well-known aphorism of Pascal: "the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of" (Russell 1959, xiii). This is especially the case if we take into account the fact that Russell mentions Pascal's statement as exemplifying what he interprets as a surrender to epistemic obscurantism, conformism, and conservatism. In his view, Pascal's statement is obscurantist insofar as it admits the existence of reasons lying outside the reach of reason's light. One of the objectives of my defense of OLP has been precisely to show how wrong this point of view is. There are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in Russell's philosophy (or in Gellner's, or in that of the many practitioners of a scientistic philosophy). These conceptions of reason are reductionist, and therefore incapable of appreciating all those not-necessarily-ponderable nuances of our experience.

Conclusion

Against any semanticist/literalist/reductionist view of language, OLP shows that learning a language means learning a world. The world – unless we are willing to give OLP another chance – is in serious danger of being colonized by the likes of reductionism, cognitivism, and, more generally, scientism.

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