



## Thinking and Language

**Abstract:** The following theses about the relationship between language and thought can be found in both linguistical studies and analytical philosophy. The common view of modern philosophy tends to identify thinking and language. The structure of language is said to be the inherent structure of our mind, of the way we think. That these assumptions are not only logically mendacious and inconsistent is discussed in the following refutation. There are mental domains in our mind that transcend the limitation of language. Higher forms of thinking do not apply linguistic structures but holistic patterns of thought that I call 'Hologemes'.

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### Common linguistic and analytical theses:

- A. We can think only what we can express in language (by saying it)
- B. Language = limitation for thinking
- C. Thinking is bound to language
- D. It is not possible to think without using language
- E. Language = domain of truth

### Refutation:

#### A. We can think only what we can express in language (by saying it)

This statement is based on a wrong assumption: there was first language, and then thinking evolved. How could this hypothesis justify the genesis of language? Why should language at all have come into existence, if there was nothing before it which could be used as an incentive for expression. Humans always had some vague ideas or inner feelings, which they wanted to communicate to their kin. Language is only one mode of expression among many others, like gestures, body postures, emotions, etc. These modes of expression are only instrumental to an inner process in our mind, namely, thinking or feeling. Although we did not possess from the very beginning clear concepts or ideas at all, we nevertheless had certain representations given to us through perception, which we processed with a yet crude tool (primitive mind). Spinoza, by a stroke of genius, described the evolution of the ratio as an evolution of acquiring and developing a more and more sophisticated tool, that is, our mind, by using and refining it. Therefore thesis A is wrong, because we can think everything we want, even though it may not be expressible in language. Sometimes we have clear ideas and an adequate understanding of something, but when told to explain it to others, we often fail to do so, because we're not able to find the "right words", that is, we fail to adapt our ideas to the inherent limitations of the language. A good example is the experience of the mystics. Although they have a clear experience and knowledge in their mind, the language is inadequate and too restricted to become a vessel of expression for their most intimate and comprehensive experience or thinking. Ideas are much more complex than the simple components of a language. Although our vocabulary expands continuously, the single words are linked to a precise meaning or several different but yet clear meanings. Poets try to exploit the farthest edges of our language and to express what seems inexpressible. This kind of language is open to a vast degree of interpretation and could hardly be used to communicate in

everyday life. It is an artistic expression of inner moments of personal experience. It is possible, through the intimations given in poetic language, to transcend the narrow boundaries of language and to reach the original experience or idea, the poet or philosopher or mystic tried to express through the available means of a language. Ideas are the private good of everyone, but language is a public good, that must be available to everyone, otherwise language would be useless. As the primary good of language lies in communication, it must obviously be limited to a certain range of concepts that are clearly defined by tradition and by a tacit contract amongst social beings.

### **B. Language = limitation for thinking**

Therefore, language can only be a limitation for our rational or discursive thinking, because rational thinking is nothing else than language in our mind. We think the same way as we would express the thoughts as words in our language. We know, however, that rational thinking is only one small part of human thinking as such. Reason uses a much wider scope of ideas and principles, which transcend the possibilities not only of language but of rational thinking.

### **C. Thinking is bound to language**

This is clearly wrong. The opposite is the case: language is bound to thinking. Thinking is the primary act of the human mind and language is the expression of thinking through articulated sounds that bear a certain significance for congenial beings. Rational thinking only is dependent on language, because rational thinking is identical to language, and thus a reciprocally coextensive means of conceptualization. The higher philosophical thinking, and Paranoetic or Transrational Thinking specifically (Paranoesis), is independent of language, because noetic thinking needn't necessarily be expressed in language. Philosophical knowledge or wisdom contains more than can be expressed by any language, even though certain terms, used for example in ancient Greek, with original meanings and being not translatable, are notwithstanding limited, because a much more complex meaning has to be compressed into a single word, which lends itself to a wide range of possible interpretations. The primary idea in our mind is a complex pattern of differently connected and interconnected ideas, and this compound form is called a Hologeme. Hologemes are inexpressible and can only be understood by our mind alone. Therefore, real philosophical communication goes from mind to mind, using language only as a very inadequate carrier of information. On the level of philosophical communication, language has lost its predominant significance, such as it usually possesses in our rational world.

### **D. It is not possible to think without using language**

From what I said above, this thesis should be evidently recognized as begging the question. Philosophical knowledge or "Erkenntnis" (as opposed to rational knowledge or "Wissen") is hologemic by nature. First there is the "Erkenntnis" of a fundamental truth or principle in philosophy, and in a second step, the philosopher tries to articulate his hologemic knowledge in the realm of rationality by using language as the common means of understanding and communication. We often have ideas, anticipations, hunches, premonitions, intuitions etc. all of which are not bound to language and cannot be expressed in it at all. These are not single thoughts that correspond to equally single words in our language, but these are complex thought-structures that have no direct relationship to single words. Language is a particularized structure, drawing heavily on our analytical way of thinking. The corresponding manner of thinking is rational thinking. Higher and more complex forms of thinking are not analytic or particularizing, but synthetic and holistic. Therefore language would not be the right means of expression. Complex processes of thinking cannot be transformed equally into language as it is the case with discursive thinking.

### **E. Language = domain of truth**

This thesis is only true if restricted to pure logical truth. Formal language could be the domain of formal truth. It is possible to analyze language insofar as to determine whether truth or falsity appears in it. Not the truth of an idea expressed in language is considered in this process, but only the formal truth of non-contradiction as well as of other logical laws. This formal truth

pattern may be transposable to rational thinking, thereby excluding for example contradictory statements, but in higher forms of thinking these logical laws are not valid any more. Philosophical wisdom is often expressed in paradoxical statements (see Socrates: I know that I don't know, or Koans in Zen Buddhism).

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