

Review of: "How to cure the Wittgensteinian anxiety? A two-dimensional approach to speakers' intuitions in linguistics"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The name "Wittgenstein" in the title of a linguistic or literary work used to have about the same effect as the word "Sex" in any other context. This does not mean, of course, there need to be a deep connection with Wittgenstein philosophy. Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress* is a case in point, and, I think, Kowalewski's well-written article another.

From my point of view Kowalewski is fighting an ingenious and well-informed battle against chimera. Chomsky's view that language competence is innate has never appealed to me, and to the extent one could speak of arguments in favour of this position, I never found them convincing. Matej Drobnák's recent overview on the matter at the Radboud University, Nijmegen, clearly showed, or so I think, the serious problems that the innate competence view on language still faces. If there is any anxiety at all, I would rather look for it among the followers of Chomsky who still assume language competence is innate.

By contrast the linguistic work that Wittgenstein's philosophy has inspired – e.g. Peregrin's *Inferentialism*, – in which language is viewed as a normative social practice where nothing is hidden, still seems to have much to recommend it. And this <jdo drop: is jdo> even from the point of view of empirical science, which by now has well established the feasibility of the normative abilities required for our various linguistic competences.

Would Wittgenstein have been against the use of intuition in linguistic science, as Kowalewski assumes? I think the best answer to this question is: Mu. That is, from the way I read Wittgenstein's later work (with its strong similar strands in his early work) it is more natural to "unask" this question than to try and answer it.

Firstly, Wittgenstein's work is concerned with clarifying the diverse ways in which elements of language express meaning. Here he was looking not for a science but for surveyable representations, using e.g. small-scale models of linguistic social practices (language games). "Don't think, but look!" Indeed, explanations presume language, and so at best play a relative part in clarifying our abilities to use language. Here, intuitions have hardly any role to play.

Secondly, I see no strong opposition in Wittgenstein's work against mental states or processes as such, but do think he holds one should not grant them any status in constituting semantic competence. E.g., his manuscripts on the *Philosophy of Psychology* are deeply concerned with how language is used to either express or to describe mental phenomena. I think his claim was that our competences are shaped, at least in part, by the forms of life one finds oneself in. To the

extent such language use makes sense, the distinction between our inner and outer ways of living is not so relevant. Meaningful forms of language finds their foothold in the living rather than in what does not live, but do so in terms of criteria (not: causes) that can be learned and applied in a normative way. On this view, intuitions again have no important role to play.

Yet, all this does not mean there is an absolute ban on ‘intuitions’ in our reflections on linguistic competence. After all, the term ‘intuitions’ is quite vague and could as well be used for internalised remnants of our social practices. Using such ‘intuitions’ is absolutely fine when attempting to get clarity on our linguistic ways – Wittgenstein does so all the time, – as long as we realise such ‘intuitions’ are hardly private and only do their jobs to the extent their workings – expressive, descriptive or otherwise, – can be clearly discerned, articulated, learned, reapplied.

‘Intuitions’ as internalised remnants of our social practices seem similar to Kowalewski view on intuitions in his two-dimensional approach. But I do think that what he is after is much more private and subjective. If so, it is here our ways part...