

MAUTHNER VERSUS WITTGENSTEIN: LANGUAGE AS METAPHOR

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Abstract

Mauthner esteemed language as a philosophical inquiry. He measured the philosophical entailments between language and reality and the consequent knowledge produced by such entailments. He questioned language's aptitude to express and represent reality and, according to him, language is a critical source of knowledge and an unfaithful representation of reality, because there is a gap between language and reality, i.e. language distorts perception and engenders false and fictitious assumptions about reality. Language fosters superstition, creates gods and idols and exerts a dominating power over the intellect. Mauthner pointed out a critique of language based on metaphors, which would serve to address and clarify the deformation of reality. Wittgenstein, unlike himself suggested, was inspired by Mauthner. Both showed interest toward the critical analysis of language and there are many conceptual similarities between their language's conceptions (e.g. concerning the use of metaphors to understand language). Therefore, this paper seeks a) to emphasize Mauthner's metaphors on language as an accurate interpretation regarding the philosophical entailments between language and reality, and b) to demonstrate the epistemological legacy of Mauthner's critique of language to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language.

Keywords: language; Mauthner; metaphor; philosophy of language; Wittgenstein.

Resumo

Mauthner encarava a linguagem como uma investigação filosófica. Assim, mediu os vínculos filosóficos entre linguagem e realidade e o consequente

conhecimento produzido por tais vínculos e questionou a aptidão da linguagem para expressar e representar a realidade. Segundo Mauthner, a linguagem é uma fonte crítica de conhecimento e uma representação infiel da realidade, dado que há uma lacuna entre linguagem e realidade, ou seja, a linguagem distorce a percepção e engendra premissas falsas e fictícias sobre a realidade. A linguagem acolhe superstições, cria deuses e ídolos e exerce um poder dominante sobre o intelecto. Mauthner apontou uma crítica da linguagem baseada em metáforas, que serviriam para abordar e clarificar a deformação da realidade. Wittgenstein, ao contrário do que sugeriu, foi inspirado por Mauthner. Ambos mostraram interesse relativamente à análise crítica da linguagem e existem muitas semelhanças conceituais entre as suas conceções do idioma (por exemplo, sobre o uso de metáforas para entender a linguagem). Assim, este artigo procura a) enfatizar as metáforas de Mauthner sobre a linguagem como uma interpretação precisa sobre os vínculos filosóficos entre linguagem e realidade, e b) demonstrar o legado epistemológico da crítica de Mauthner da linguagem à filosofia da linguagem de Wittgenstein.

Palavras-chave: linguagem; Mauthner; metáfora; filosofia da linguagem; Wittgenstein.

1. Introduction

In the early 20th century, the critique of language was an emerging area. Several studies on language are mainly developed in the first half of this century. These studies helped to frame (but not definitively) the critique of language as a new field or branch of science based on a new paradigm (the so-called linguistic-turn) and on the original studies about language made by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Herder and Johann Hamann.

Following this linguistic tradition, Fritz Mauthner (1849-1923) esteemed language as a philosophical inquiry. He measured the philosophical entailments between language and reality and the consequent knowledge produced by such entailments. He questioned language's aptitude to express and represent reality and, according to him, language is a critical source of knowledge and an unfaithful representation of reality, because there is a gap between language and reality, i.e. language distorts perception and engenders false and fictitious assumptions about

reality. Language fosters superstition, creates gods and idols and exerts a dominating power over the intellect. We may regard Mauthner as the destroyer of critical language superstitions. Mauthner pointed out a critique of language based on metaphors, which would serve to address and clarify the deformation of reality.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), unlike himself suggested, was inspired by Mauthner. Both showed interest toward the critical analysis of language and there are many conceptual similarities between their language's conceptions (e.g. concerning the use of metaphors to understand language). The correspondence between language and reality feed a debate whose origins date, at least, as far back as Plato's *Cratylus* dialogue. The history of philosophy shows such permanent interest on language and critical analysis of language since then. Therefore, this paper seeks a) to emphasize Mauthner's metaphors on language as an accurate interpretation regarding the philosophical entailments between language and reality, and b) to demonstrate the epistemological legacy of Mauthner's critique of language to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language.

The critique of language is important either for the regular language-use or the assimilation of knowledge coming from this language-use. In this perspective, a simple use of language is a construction of reality, because language is used to represent and to express figuratively the reality. Therefore, it is necessary a conceptual framework to define the role of philosophy of language and to connect the similarities and dissimilarities between Mauthner and Wittgenstein. The relevance of the philosophical study of language is due to the complementary between philosophy and language. The scientific area we commonly call "philosophy of language" studies language used in everyday life and underlines the intentions and recognitions of meanings, the signs and their referents, etc. Language has, according to Mauthner, a dual and simultaneous role: it is a vehicle of criticism and an object of study.

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (hereafter just mentioned *Tractatus*) Wittgenstein pointed out the importance of the whole philosophy as critique of language and he noted that the role of philosophy is to clarify the propositions (1999: 4.0031; 4.112). Wittgenstein presented philosophy as a propaedeutic path. In the *Philosophical Investigations* (hereafter just *PI*) he said that studying the language phenomenon held to understand the meaning and the purpose of the words, taking into account the different language games, uses and meanings of words or phrases (1996: § 5).

To understand Mauthner's theses, this paper is restricted to his well-known

magnum opus entitled *Contributions to a Critique of Language* (hereafter just *CCL*), mostly the first part of the first volume (entitled the “essence of language”). This text is very important, because it established Mauthner’s conductive lines for his philosophical thought on language.

The structure of my paper rests on three essential issues: first, Mauthner’s perspective on critique of language; second, Wittgenstein’s perspective on language-use; third, similarities and dissimilarities between both Mauthner and Wittgenstein uses of metaphors about understanding language.

The word “metaphor” is the touchstone for my paper’s approach and purpose, i.e. to settling the connections between Mauthner and Wittgenstein perspectives on language. This word is etymologically composed by two Greek terms: “*meta*”, a noun which means “over”, “beyond”, “on the other side of”, “across”; and “*pherein*”, a verb which means “to carry” or “to bear”. This composed word means a “transfer” or “carry over” (from *metapherein*) especially of the sense of one word to a different word, a stylistic device in which one transfers the literal meaning of a word to another meaning through an implicit comparison or analogy (Balla, 2012: 106).

The metaphor generates a semantic shift of meanings. It is a sophisticated ability to create meanings. According to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, a metaphor is “the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion” (1902: 1457b). Therefore, a metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion (Aristotle, 1902: 1457b). A metaphor has a cognitive function, because the understanding demands mental effort, as Aristotle remarked: in order to understand a metaphor, the hearer has to find something common between the metaphor and the thing the metaphor refers to.

Another interesting perspective on metaphors is the Nietzsche’s essay “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”. Nietzsche rejected the idea of universal constants and claims the “truth” is only “a movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding” (Nietzsche, 1990: 891). For Nietzsche, truths are illusions, i.e. metaphors. Aristotle and Nietzsche, like Mauthner and Wittgenstein, they all shared the relevance of metaphors and a sort of concern for

understanding language using metaphors.

2. Mauthner's perspective on critique of language

Mauthner was a philosopher, a critic, a journalist, a novelist and a dramatist, etc. Gershon Weiler said that, although his original insights and his chief merit – he “produced a philosophy of language by carrying the principles of empiricism to what he believed to be their ultimate conclusions” – Mauthner wasn't a major figure in the history of European philosophy (Weiler, 1970: 1). His marginal position in philosophy was not overcome even by Gustav Landauer, who supports his writings.

However, he had influenced many activities of his time, such as philosophy and literature, and he remained on the fringes of a great renown. Mauthner's work had influence beyond Austrian and the German languages. His writings (namely the *CCL*) fascinated James Joyce and Samuel Beckett (Jaurretche, 2005: 54).

In the *CCL*, Mauthner remarked that language is an object of study and a means for research (Mauthner, 2001: 33). This remark led Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin to understand Mauthner as “the first modern European writer who considered language itself as a central and crucial topic of philosophical considerations” (Janik & Toulmin, 1973: 119).

Mauthner's main project was the critique of language. As he explained, the critique is always called the activity of human reason to separate or differentiate (Mauthner, 2001: 33). He focused his studies and projects in this linguistic interest, writing several works relating to language, especially the critique of language. At the time, Hugo von Hofmannsthal published *The Letter of Lord Chandos*. Both Hofmannsthal and Mauthner are contemporary Austrians concerned with the expression of a deep spiritual crisis and the inability to speak, considering language as an insufficient, irreducible and threatening means of expression.

At the end of the 19th century, language has become a central issue for literature, philosophy and critical thinking in Austria. This issue was also present in Mauthner's contemporaries and compatriots, as Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Karl Kraus and Robert Musil; then in Ingeborg Bachmann, Peter Handke and, especially, Wittgenstein.

In 1906, Mauthner realized the importance of the critique of language as a new scientific branch (Mauthner, 2001: 24). In this new branch, Mauthner was more innovative than Wittgenstein, because the former admitted in this year (when he wrote the foreword to the second edition of the *CCL*, i.e. the first part of the first volume) his

ambitious to be an expert in this new discipline (the critique of language) he just created (Mauthner, 2001: 24) while the later, in the same year, enrolled himself at the Technische Hochschule (Berlin-Charlottenburg) to study aeronautical engineering.

Mauthner's work is concerned with the British philosophical tradition of empiricism and nominalism (or relativism). Mauthner thought John Locke was the pioneer of the critique of language, due to his meaning theory in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Janik & Toulmin, 1973: 123; Cloeren, 1988: 55).

Mauthner's philosophical work influenced decisively the inquiry and the literary perspective of several Viennese authors, such as H. C. Artmann, Gerhard Rühn, Konrad Bayer, Oswald Wiener and Friedrich Achleithner. For these authors, the most fundamental way to be compromised with language is to be concerned with humankind, i.e. to have concerns justified by the attempts to force language to an adequate approximation to reality and, therefore, to a clarification or elimination of language's ambiguities (Mauthner, 2001: 40). However, the common aspect to all these authors, including Mauthner, was the role of the critique of language regarding the power and dominion of the critique itself over the language as an ineffective tool to reflect reality.

Mauthner's philosophical thought had various influences, like Ernst Mach's opposition to any universalism, essentialism and positivism, just accepting the phenomenal. Mauthner applied to Mach's definition of language as a "complex of feelings" used to refer bodies, things, and the I. He was also influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche; whose books he had enjoyed avidly and whose philosophy he had admired. E.g. Mauthner agreed with Nietzsche's thesis that language, in its origin, belongs to the epoch (Johnston, 1983: 196-7).

In addition to Mach and Nietzsche, there are also Kant, Locke and Hume (Cloeren 1988: 33, 55). These authors influenced Mauthner so much that he admitted his work was a continuation or even the result of these mentioned authors' investigations about the possibility of knowledge.

Influenced by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Mauthner intended to undertake a Kantian method to defeat metaphysical speculation and to replace the critique of reason by a critique of language. If language and reason (including cognition and memory) are close, according to Mauthner, and if language is understood from a relative or empiricist perspective, there might not be a "pure reason". But instead of such "pure reason", Mauthner proposed a "linguistic reason", following Kant's epistemology.

For Mauthner, language is essentially metaphorical (Weiler, 1970: 156). He

argued that metaphor and association are identical, i.e. there is no difference between the mental act which creates a metaphor and that which produces another association, because both are acts of comparing (Weiler, 1970: 158). Therefore, language and thinking are both metaphorical.

According to Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, philosophers always treated language's problems since Plato and Aristotle. However, until the late 19th century, philosophy of language's problems had a secondary status regarding to other subjects (Janik & Toulmin, 1973: 120). For Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Kant was who contributed most to change the situation in support of language's problems central positioning in the philosophical field. However, the problem of defining the purpose and the limits of reason suffered a double transformation: first, it becomes the problem of defining the essential purpose and the limits of representation; then it turns into the language (Janik & Toulmin, 1973: 121).

Similarly to Karl Kraus's critical analysis of language, Mauthner's work was the expression and the documentation of a language's crisis in German-Austrian early 20th century studies (Bredeck, 1998: 203). According to Hans-Johann Glock, Mauthner's method was psychological and historical; he took into account the critique of language as a social psychology piece (Glock, 1996: 11). The critique's content was empirical, because language is based on sensations, and the result was sceptical, insofar the reason is identical to language. Nevertheless, it doesn't mean to represent reality. That's why Wittgenstein developed his own critique of language (Glock, 1996: 11-2).

Wittgenstein's logical critique of language is opposed to Mauthner's critique of language, as it is expressed in the *Tractatus* (1996: 4.0031). However, Mauthner keeps his merit of having been the first to identify, in his *Dictionary of Philosophy*, the philosophy with the critique of language.

3. Wittgenstein's perspective on language-use

Wittgenstein's philosophical perspective about language was the result of a remarkable epoch in Vienna. As I mentioned previously, the same happens with Mauthner's perspective. In the early 20th century, Wittgenstein received critical and nonconformist influences from culture and society. According to Hans Sluga and David Stern, there was a characteristic spirit of *fin-de-siècle* cultural rebellion in Vienna and the Wittgenstein family belonged to a small social group from which the artistic, intellectual, and scientific achievements of that culture emerged (e.g. Johannes Brahms,

Gustav Mahler, Karl Kraus, Sigmund Freud, Adolf Loos, Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, Rudolf Boltzmann, Ernst Mach, Moritz Schlick, and Otto Weininger). Therefore, the effects of his early upbringing are clearly visible in his thinking (Sluga & Stern, 1997: 3).

Wittgenstein confessed himself “only reproductive” in his thinking: “I think I have never invented a line of thinking but that it was always provided for me by someone else & I have done no more than passionately take it up for my work of clarification. That is how Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, Sraffa have influenced me.” (Wittgenstein, 1998b: 16).

Wittgenstein’s later writings are a philosophical critique of language, focusing many arguments and perspectives already anticipated by Mauthner in 1901. E.g. the idea that language rules are like game rules and the word “language” is also an abstract and general term (Janik & Toulmin, 1973: 123).

Wittgenstein’s critique of meaning (as an object designed or signified by a word) dwells upon several related topics. One of them is that there is no language essence, because one word can have many uses, forming a field of family resemblances (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 67). What forms the concept and gives unity is not a kind of uniformity or generality, but a kind of overlapping features. The expression “family resemblances” characterizes these similarities: “the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: ‘games’ from a family.” (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 67). A word can be used in a variety of ways and can have multiple meanings or shades of meaning. Wittgenstein exemplified the word “game” as a case in point, a word with no single essential meaning, but having a pattern of uses related by similarities and differences (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 66).

The “family resemblances” concept is important to Wittgenstein’s criticism about the essentialism of language. But this does not mean that Wittgenstein said games have nothing in common. They are activities or proceedings, and there are many activities which are not games, like a child playing without rules, throwing a ball with no goal. What Wittgenstein means is that there is not a set of conditions fulfilled by all games, i.e. there is not a necessary and a sufficient analytic definition for “game” or “language-game”, because language is a form of life.

Thus, if there is any essence of language, it is the multiple relationships between language-games. The language’s structure is based on a regulated praxis of language-

games, which is the unique foundation for them. They do not need any scientific foundation or analytic definitions, because the use of expressions is definite, it is the result of simple linguistic praxis. For Wittgenstein we do not learn how to use language by an inner understanding, but only by training.

In order to avoid conceptual misunderstandings, Wittgenstein develops the difference between a genuine ownership (when one talks about observable objects of the external world) and a representational form of ownership (when one talks about personal experiences of his internal world). In the former case of ownership (unlike the latter case of ownership), it makes sense to ask “Who is the owner of this picture?”. But when one says that he has a certain mental image, pain or visual impression (i.e. when one says “I have such-and-such visual impression”), one does not have to know who he has; there is no deictic use of “this” in respect of our own sense-impressions (Hacker, 1997: 273).

The experience of meaning (e.g. the meaning of words for sensations) is related to the experience of understanding, since understanding a word is like being able to play chess (Wittgenstein, 1988: 55); it is a linguistic technique and it shows us how to use expressively a word for a sensation.

To clear up this point, Wittgenstein presents an analogy: a word is like a railway station where a lot of lines cross and the experience of meaning (e.g. having in mind something, a sensation connected with a word or an expression to be expressed linguistically) would be some sort of vibration showing which way we might travel or follow (Wittgenstein, 1988: 57). Then, thinking that the experience of meaning depends on the context justifies the variety of meaning/use of polysemous words like “bank” or “board”. It also justifies the requirement for a relative understanding of the meaning of words, since the determination of their meaning is not always possible.

E.g. the concept of “meaning” has odd jobs in language-use, because everything that belongs to our world or constitutes our forms of life is codified and depends on the respective meaning, i.e. everything has a given meaning that indicates its functions and what it is. The word “Meaning” is one of the words of which one may say they have odd jobs in the language and “what causes most trouble in philosophy is that we are tempted to describe the use of important ‘odd-job’ words as though they were words with regular functions” (Wittgenstein, 1998a: 43).

From 1929, Wittgenstein undertook what is conventionally designated by a philosophical turn on ordinary language problems. His attention turns to the acquisition

and use of informal language as a means of communication. This turn is developed with the influence of some Mauthner's ideas, because Wittgenstein has become acquainted with Mauthner's writings since the *Tractatus* (Sluga & Stern, 1997: 13).

On the one hand, there are few similarities between Mauthner and the so-called "the early Wittgenstein", the author of the *Tractatus*, on the other hand, there are more similarities between Mauthner and the also so-called "the second Wittgenstein", the author of the *PI*. About this last aspect, the situation changes, i.e. the similarities are developed and Wittgenstein comes to view philosophy as a critique of language (like Mauthner's perspective). In the following sub-sections, I present some similarities and dissimilarities between both authors.

4. Mauthner and Wittgenstein: pragmatic perspectives on language

A primary and general similarity between Mauthner and Wittgenstein concerns the pragmatic perspective on language. Language and its uses are explored in a privileged and fundamental way by both authors. For Mauthner, language is a huge treasure or a common object which acquires value through the use (Mauthner, 2001: 51). According to Mauthner, all other objects in use are consumed (e.g. food) or are spoiled (e.g. tools and machines) and if language was a tool, it also would be spent or spoiled. However, only words can be depreciated, wear or be consumed. Words are useful to people, but language is not an object of use or a tool. Language is no more than its own use: "language is the use of language" (Mauthner, 2001: 51) and language would die if it is not used. For Mauthner, the meaning of a word is clear by the context it is used (Mauthner, 2001: 111). Therefore, Mauthner rejects Hegel's absolute idealism (Mauthner, 2001: 51) because such a pragmatic perspective is incompatible with all philosophical speculative perspectives, like the Hegelian system, which was understood as a model of speculative thought (Cloeren 1988: 216).

Regarding Wittgenstein's perspective, the language-use is a central issue of his philosophy of language. He said "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 43). Wittgenstein's thesis comes close to what was previously mentioned regarding Mauthner's conception about the meaning of a word be clear by the context. However, a dissimilarity between Mauthner and Wittgenstein drift from their pragmatic perspective, insofar language and its use are also a dissimilarity, to the extent that Mauthner does not consider language as a tool, unlike Wittgenstein (1996, §§ 11, 14-5, 23).

Mauthner is one of the few authors mentioned by name in Wittgenstein's writings. However, Wittgenstein refuted Mauthner. In the *Tractatus*, he wrote: "all philosophy is 'critique of language' (though not in Mauthner's sense)" (1999: 4.0031). Hans Sluga and David Stern explain this allusion stating that it results from a demarcation of Wittgenstein, because "at the time he had sided with Russell against Mauthner's antiformalist and sceptical view of language" (Sluga & Stern, 1997: 13). Although refuted by Wittgenstein, the refutation is not fortuitous, because the dissimilarities between both authors are deep and evident; and there are no further developments made by Wittgenstein about Mauthner's sense.

If Wittgenstein was "only reproductive" in his thinking, as he confessed (Wittgenstein, 1998b: 16), Hans Sluga and David Stern insist on pointing out fundamental similarities between Mauthner and Wittgenstein's remarks on language. These similarities constrained Wittgenstein's philosophical production in all phases of his philosophical development, including the last one, which is most obvious. "His wariness of scientific theorizing, his scepticism towards psychology, his anti-Cartesian reflections on the self, and in particular his picture of language are all in agreement with Mauthner" (Sluga & Stern, 1997: 13).

If philosophy is a critique of language either for Mauthner or Wittgenstein, it has a primary and a common aim for both authors: the clarification or elimination of language's ambiguities. According to Mauthner: "this critique [of language] does not want more than what the whole linguistic science always wanted: to clarify the phenomena of language. Explain language!..." (Mauthner, 2001: 40).

Regarding Wittgenstein, one can even admit that linguistic concerns cross all his writings, because he always demonstrated his philosophical interest: to clarify language-use in order to obtain the desired understanding. Therefore, Wittgenstein's early philosophy stated: "The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of 'philosophical propositions', but to make propositions clear" (Wittgenstein, 1999: 4.112).

Wittgenstein's later philosophy argued several remarks about his "linguistic ideal". E.g. "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 109); "The meaning of a question is the method of answering it. (...) Tell me how you are searching, and I will tell you what you are searching for" (Wittgenstein, 1998c: § 27); "Thoughts at peace. That is the goal

someone who philosophizes longs for (Wittgenstein, 1998b: 50).

With this new perspective focused on clarification, Wittgenstein understood the philosopher as a conceptual therapist: “The philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness” (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 255); “The philosopher is someone who has to cure many diseases of the understanding in himself, before he can arrive at the notions of common sense. If in life we are surrounded by death, so too in the health of our understanding by madness.” (Wittgenstein, 1998b: 50).

Concerning the *Tractatus*’s allusion to Mauthner, Wittgenstein points out his opposite perspective about knowledge produced, arguing a correspondence between language and reality. For Wittgenstein, unlike Mauthner, words are competent to represent reality. According to Elizabeth Bredeck, Mauthner has the dubious distinction of being mentioned by name in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* and “Wittgenstein takes very different stances from Mauthner’s on such issues as the possibility of scientific knowledge, and maintains that congruence actually does exist between reality and language (in the form of logical propositions)” (Bredeck, 1998: 205).

This difference is about the necessary connection between language and reality. According to Mauthner, language shows itself incapable to be the image of reality (Mauthner, 2001: 34). For Mauthner, language only provides contingent images of the world. There is a gap between language and reality. In the same way human senses change over time and needs, images of the world are also contingent if we understand the formation and the use of concepts as a process which begins with *sense datum* and determines language production (Bredeck, 1998: 203). Through the notion of contingent senses, Mauthner admitted the existence of a gap between what is sensitive and what is intelligible. We inherit language when we learn how to use it (Mauthner, 2001: 51) and, therefore, we are subjugated to the power of words, which gives us a distorted knowledge of the world. Therefore, regarding the previously Wittgenstein’s idea about the treatment of a question by the philosopher as the treatment of a disease, there is a divergence regarding Mauthner.

For William Johnston, “reality can only be lived; it cannot be embalmed in words”, and “any effort to translate experience into words propagates empty phrases” (Johnston, 1983: 198). To check the superstition of words, Mauthner exhorted to the silence, i.e. to cease asking questions, because the answers will only multiply webs of words. William Johnston concludes Mauthner differs from Wittgenstein in holding that there are no meta-language to define the limits of the expression, i.e. the capability of

being uttered in words or sentences.

Mauthner's scepticism about the abilities to know the world come from his epistemological nominalism, which has a sensualist found (Haller, 1988: 11). Such scepticism guides Mauthner to define the language's nature and limits. For Rudolf Haller, Mauthner's *CCL* developed an "epistemological nominalism whose foundation, as in the case of Mach, is based upon the sensualistic premise that nothing is in our understanding which does not rest on sensual constituents" (Haller, 1983: 11).

For Mauthner, the critique of language wasn't a linguistic analysis, but the language's radical doubt to reflect about reality. In 1906, Mauthner took into consideration the thesis that philosophy is a critique and a theory of knowledge and, consequently, a critique of language (Mauthner, 2001: 21). While for Wittgenstein this was the path chosen to philosophy, for Mauthner the language of science isn't precise when it refers reality. In general, language is only useful to poetry due its metaphorical and evocative power. The knowledge of the world is impossible through language and it is also impossible to sustain the word's content. Regarding this aspect, Mauthner and Wittgenstein (the one of the *Tractatus*) agree, because both recognize the mystical silence's solution for language inability to express the reality. As an instrument of knowledge, language and its inability foster Mauthner's sceptical perspective, which results in the silence (Bredeck, 1998: 204).

The metaphorical nature of language obstructs the uniqueness, the non-equivocal, and, for this reason, all types of exact scientific knowledge. On the contrary, it is possible to sustain the content of a word's feeling. It is also possible an art which acts on the word, a word's art as the poetry (Mauthner, 2001: 53, 115). The relationship between mind and word is metaphorical. All knowledge is limited; it has a linguistic feature and results from the transformation or translation (sometimes lost) of sensations into concepts.

In his turn, Wittgenstein delimits the territory of language and conceives a pictorial view of language in his *Tractatus* and *Notebooks*, i.e. he structures language and reality according to the so-called isomorphic or the picture theory of language (Wittgenstein, 1979: 5-9, 1999: 1-3.144). Language represents reality as if the words were a decal of reality (Wittgenstein, 1999: 4:01). This is the logical uniformity of a particular image of language, by which a name means an object (Wittgenstein, 1999: 3.203). Wittgenstein's concern goes through a logical improvement of language, in order to apply it to science. Therefore, he declares the impossibility to speak with

propriety and accuracy about the ineffable, the mystical.

Taking Goethe's poetry as an example, Mauthner concludes the power of language (as an instrument of knowledge) is very small and the power of language (as an artistic *medium*) is great (Mauthner, 2001: 109). The difference between both authors is also reflected in Mauthner's thesis that men cannot go beyond a metaphorical description of the world and in Wittgenstein's thesis about a *bildliche Darstellung* of the world, i.e. a representation of the world in the form of a mathematical model capable to allow a true and certain knowledge of the world. At this point, Wittgenstein refutes Mauthner's scepticism and restores objectivity of science.

Another remarkable similarity between Mauthner and Wittgenstein is the language-game conception. For Mauthner, language is a common property to individuals, i.e. a similarity or community of worldviews (Mauthner, 2001: 52). Mauthner compares language to a rule of a game, saying: in the majestic social game of language, the individual rejoices when, following the same rules of the game, he thinks like millions of people (Mauthner, 2001: 52).

Language is a human activity and the use of language has influence in people interactions, because language orders human life in the same way a rule orders a game (Janik & Toulmin, 1973: 126). Language and rules of a game are conventions. The more individuals play with language and game the more authoritative are these conventions. Mauthner and Wittgenstein agree that language is a social game. For both, the rules of a game (i.e. the grammar of a language) cannot exist *a priori*. On the contrary, the rules to acquire and use language are developed as a game.

4.1 The ladder metaphor

The ladder metaphor used by both Mauthner and Wittgenstein shows a great similarity. The ladder is, metaphorically, the critique of language for Mauthner and the philosophical propositions for Wittgenstein. According to Hermann Cloeren, "Mauthner compares the difficulty of conducting a critique of language with climbing the rungs of a ladder", considering that "the climber's intention is to rise above the lower ground and to reach higher levels" (Cloeren, 1988: 218). Hermann Cloeren argues that Mauthner's thesis means the climber can rise and reach, but he is on one of the rungs of a ladder which still stands on the ground. For Hermann Cloeren, Mauthner demands that all who engage in a critique of language destroy the language behind him, in front of him and in him.

Mauthner argues that as long as a person climbs up the ladder step by step, he has to destroy each step after setting his foot on it, so that people who come next have to build new steps to climb the ladder and destroy them again as they rise.

Wittgenstein also looks into silence from the ladder metaphor. This ladder metaphor, used by Mauthner in the *CCL*, was also used by Wittgenstein at the end of the *Tractatus*: “My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)” (Wittgenstein, 1999: 6.54). He means people must surmount these propositions to see the world rightly. In the final remarks of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of the ladder to express the function of his book, which is to be used in order to climb on it, in order to “see the world rightly”. Paradoxically, the book and its theses must be recognized as nonsense and be thrown away. Hence, “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (Wittgenstein, 1999: 7).

Although both Mauthner and Wittgenstein adopted the ladder metaphor to illustrate how language is acquired and used, each author assigned to the ladder (i.e. the language) a peculiar sense. Mauthner associated the ladder with the critique of language activity and the circus act in which a clown climbs the ladder till the top and then tries to throw it down or throw it away, creating a comical and tragic sense at the same time. The situation is itself already impossible to happen, because we can never get unstuck the language of the land even in a tragic, poetic or humorous situation. If the ladder of language is discarded, it would make the person fall to the ground. In turn, Wittgenstein gave a more therapeutic and mystical sense to the ladder metaphor. A sense that not only warns about the problems that can arise from the misuse of language but also elucidates the misinterpretation.

4.2 The large city metaphor

Another metaphor about language concerns to “a large city”. Mauthner compares language to a large city as if language was formed by the same process of the city: the language was formed as a large city, room by room, window by window, apartment by apartment, house by house, street by street, neighbourhood by neighbourhood; and all of it came together, joined (Mauthner, 2001: 53).

Wittgenstein also used this metaphor. In Wittgenstein perspective, the fragments of our linguistic practices are interrelated and, therefore, part of a global system. In his

later writings, Wittgenstein described this idea when he compared language and a city: “Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses” (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 18).

The metaphors used by Mauthner are evident in Wittgenstein’s writings: the sense assigned by Mauthner is subsequently adapted by Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein only could be influenced by Mauthner’s *CCL*, as it happens with this metaphor seeing language as a large city. According to Hans Sluga and David Stern: “When he later rejected the idea of language as a single, unified structure and instead wrote that ‘our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets... surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs’ he was, once again, employing a metaphor he had borrowed from Mauthner”, who, in turn, had taken it from Sextus Empiricus (Sluga & Stern, 1997: 13).

Hans-Johann Glock says this analogy between language and a city previously occurred in Boltzmann’s *Physics* and Mauthner’s *CCL*, both mentioning the city centre (i.e. the everyday language) is a maze of twisting streets, while more recent additions (e.g. the specialized terms of chemistry or mathematics) are the suburbs and has straight and uniform lines (Glock, 1996: 186).

4.3 The map metaphor

Another interesting and shared metaphor is the map metaphor. The usefulness of language’s metaphors for human knowledge has to do with the adoption of the map metaphor as a representation device and a meaningful use regarding reality and knowledge of reality. For Mauthner, the power of language lies in its ability to be a meaningful representation of reality, like the drawings illustrating a scientific text. In this case, Mauthner argues we would consider foolish someone who would want to make a research trip through Africa on a map, instead *in loco* (i.e. there, in the ground) and we would say to him “even with the most powerful lens you could not find on the map more than your ancestors already discovered or believed to discover” (Mauthner, 2001: 71).

For Mauthner, drawings are always schemes independently they are natural and perfect. Drawings are like any other image or representation; they are mere referential substitutes of the proper things they represent. The same goes with the words. This idea

has ancient antecedents in Plato's *Cratylus*, where the cognoscibility of things as *noumena* (i.e. themselves and not by their names) is elucidated. In the *Cratylus*, Plato refers to the virtue and the fallibility of names in a sufficiently useful way in order to clarify the importance of this reflection for the study of meaning processes. The conclusion of this Platonic dialogue is: names and words are generally intermediate elements between the cognoscible person and the object of knowledge (Plato, 1998: 439b).

If it is possible to know things accurately through their names (as an image of things or a faithful reproduction of reality and truth) or through the things themselves (the truth itself), which of these two forms of knowledge would be the best and the more precise? Despite this Plato's question (Plato, 1998: 439a-439d), it easily follows the perspective on language as a symbolic or conventionalist conception.

In the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Wittgenstein mentions some blindness situations which don't allow a normal behaviour, i.e. a common behaviour similar to other people. Wittgenstein presents the example of a person who does not like to see a drawing or a photograph, because that person says the discoloration of human beings is ugly, and the example of a person who admires a landscape while he looks at a map and exclaims "what a glorious sight!" (Wittgenstein, 1998d: § 170).

A representation (given by a visual sign) of an object (e.g. a pipe) is always a representation of an object and never the object itself, i.e. in a representation process, the representative is never the represented, like Magritte's picture subtitled "Ceci n'est pas une pipe", which is clearly explained by Michel Foucault (1983: 23). There is always a semantic transitivity shown by the classical expression *aliquid pro aliquot*, i.e. the representative (the map) and the represented (the meaning or the information given by the map).

Wittgenstein's intention is to warn the wrong uses and misinterpretations of language. One might compare "I am having..." to a direction-arrow on a map: the words "I am having..." and a direction-arrow belongs to the ordinary language and to a map, respectively; and they both show what we can do with the language and with the map. Wittgenstein argues it is possible to compare the use of certain psychological propositions in the first person (e.g. "I'm having a toothache") with the direction indicated by an arrow on a map. Though the proposition and the arrow belong to different domains of meaning, both are susceptible to everyday linguistic uses, both necessarily represent something and both show what we can do with them, i.e. with the

language and with the map. Both language-use and map-use presuppose a technical reference. The act of representing is presented neither in the language nor in the map. The map represents, because its function is identical to the grammar. The representation is the necessary and sufficient condition for something be a map, i.e. be a map imply essentially two things: first, the map represent a given reality; second, the map is used in a certain way. The use of the map makes it a map. Similarly, it is the use of a word or proposition that renders it intelligible. When we learn to read a map, we learn how to use certain signs which are printed on paper. In this perspective, a map is like a proposition: it is something that should be used in a certain and definite way, i.e. a map also represents a certain technique or a way to use it, as if it was a given manual of instruction. But a map does not teach us how to use it.

What Wittgenstein sought to demonstrate with this perspective on language is the meaning of some words (e.g. “gold tooth” or “book”) can be revealed when we point to something, while the meaning of other words, expressions or psychological propositions (e.g. “toothache”) cannot be expressed by in an indicative language. Therefore, while a person reading a map is someone who knows how to use a map, a speaker is someone who knows how to use a word, an expression, a proposition or any acoustic image (sound) or visual image (the graphic aspect of a word). The reader of a map and the speaker of the words are similar regarding the *sine qua non* condition to use and master a technique.

On the one hand, if one claims that a given sheet of paper is a map, one is saying such sheet of paper has a definite use; on the other hand, if one understands certain sounds or marks as words and propositions, one is able to use them according to a defined manner.

The system of language is also a chain of signs, applications and consequences and it is what makes us able to express the understanding of an image in a proposition. Through replacements of mental images by public signs or common words, we constantly get different interpretations and understandings about what is meant and said. However, the images and the signs, *per se*, are meaningless, since “only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning” (Wittgenstein, 1998d: § 504; 1993b: § 173). Otherwise, we become conscious of the nakedness of the words: “[...] in ordinary circumstances these words and this picture have an application with which we are familiar. – But if we suppose a case in which this application falls away we become as it were conscious for the first time of the nakedness of the words and the picture.”

(Wittgenstein, 1996: § 349).

This quoted remark represents the support for the Wittgensteinian thesis that it is essential for us to grasp the familiar application of language in order to understand other people and, consequently, be understood by them. This grammatical principle lies in the claim that “a rule stands there like a sign-post” that does not leave room for doubts or that sometimes leaves room for doubt and sometimes don't (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 85). If a sign-post says “To Coton” and I follow it, how do I know how to follow it? Why is the rule not expressed by “You have to turn left at a right angle”? “A signpost says ‘To Coton’ and you follow it. How do you know how to follow it? Why shouldn't it be the rule that we had to go at right angles to the left? Or backwards from the arm to the hand?” (Wittgenstein, 1988: 9).

How do we know what it is to follow a sign-post? A sign-post corresponds to a rule and we are trained to follow it, since there is no rule without a technique. “But, someone says, we could give more directions instead. But will it do? We learn a rule partly by training, partly by explanation; whether we have learnt it can be found out in two ways: (i) make one do the thing, (ii) ask for an explanation” (Wittgenstein, 1988: 127). The normal procedure is to follow a sign-post, i.e. the direction in which it is pointing. If a sign-post is a rule, how is the rule explained? It could be explained by a praxis reached by training; or by the explanation “To follow the direction in which the sign is pointing”. The sign-post example is similar to that of following incorrectly the rule “writing down series of the form $0, n, 2n, 3n, \text{etc.}$ ” with the orders of the form “ $+n$ ”, i.e. it would present similarities with one in which a person naturally reacted to the gesture of pointing with the hand by looking in the direction of the line from fingertip to wrist, not from the wrist to fingertip (Wittgenstein, 1996: 185).

“The directions are sufficient if they ‘make you go the way’, but there's not such a thing as ‘all the directions’. For example, you see a sign-post; how does it direct you? How printed sign connect with your ‘getting it’? Suppose we add another direction to the sign, say, ‘read this from left to right’. Is that the last explanation?” (Wittgenstein, 1988: 245). By the rule, people learn a rule by training, finding out whether it's enough by looking at what is done.

The map metaphor shows how ordinary language is socially used and how it is useful to mean something, since there is nothing that signifies by itself. For this reason, Wittgenstein says that a Chinese sentence seems a mere series of sounds for those who do not understand it and “don't have any thoughts in connection with” it (Wittgenstein,

1993c: § 104). Language misunderstandings came from the superficial use of grammar, which looks only to the structure or characteristics of words. To avoid conceptual misunderstandings and mistakes in the philosophical activity, we must take into account a depth dimension of grammar, the atmosphere of each and every word within its language-game (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 664).

For example, the above-mentioned sentences “I have a toothache” and “I have a book” have the same structure. But they do not have the same “depth grammar”. Wittgenstein distinguishes the “dimension of depth” from the “dimension of surface”, i.e. “depth grammar” (the “significant meaning-use” of words) from “surface grammar” (the sentence structure or the immediately evident characteristics of words).

Something different takes place when words are uttered significantly from when the same words are merely uttered. As Wittgenstein expresses it, in the first case, I say that words have a depth dimension or that something goes on with me, inside my mind, as I utter them (i.e. I felt that words have an atmosphere), unlike in the second case (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 594). The “depth grammar” and “surface grammar” concepts justify a better language-use understanding and avoid confusions in the common use of ordinary language.

Both Mauthner and Wittgenstein showed concerns about the misunderstandings derived from the misuse of language. The semantic difference has to do with what Mauthner calls “the aging of the word”. The classic example is the biblical phrase “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Mauthner, 2001: 74). Some words are polysemous, abstract (with metaphysical content) or without extra-linguistic and observable referent. The frequent attribution of a concrete reality in these abstract and general words (e.g. “God”, “heaven”, “eternity”, etc.) caused speculative confusion and troubled Mauthner. It is necessary to take an anti-Kantian metaphysical effort to impose limits on the expression.

Assuming a nominalist and a radical philosophical position, Mauthner considered that all philosophical problems were, indeed, problems related to language (Janik & Toulmin, 1973: 122). Mauthner took a radical position on what should be philosophy: a critical theory of knowledge and, therefore, a critique of language. In the *CCL*, Mauthner wrote he was confident for having chosen a right path for philosophy, i.e. a critique of knowledge which is a critique of language (Mauthner, 2001: 21).

For Elizabeth Bredeck, Mauthner developed a theory of knowledge which ends in the empiricism, but he also redefines some basic concepts (Bredeck, 1998: 203), in

particular the concept of “language”, regarding to something else than speech, because it is the *medium* of all cognition and, as such, an instrument of knowledge. For Mauthner, mental images of reality are created through language and this thesis is unlike the Wittgenstein conception of language-game.

5. Conclusion

There are several issues about language addressed by both Mauthner and Wittgenstein. Regardless the treatments assigned by each author, these issues are common interests (e.g. individual language; exteriorization of sensations; the social nature of language).

Regarding the social nature of language (as well as the subjacent issue of individual languages) there is a conceptual approach also evident in the works of both Mauthner and Wittgenstein. Mauthner said in his *Dictionary of Philosophy* that if the nature could speak, it couldn't speak our language (Leinfellner, 2005: 466). This idea is very similar to what Wittgenstein expressed in the part two of the *PI*: “If a lion could talk, we could not understand” (Wittgenstein, 1996: 223).

Language is the product of a cultural and social dimension, connecting people in a complex and diverse way. What Wittgenstein meant by this statement is that language is a form of life, a sort of result from cultural processes. The required skills to use language are acquired in society. Therefore, if a lion could speak, we would not be in a position to understand it, because human speakers and lions don't share the same form of life; don't have the same course of life and culture. To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life (Wittgenstein, 1996: § 19). This perspective is consistent with Mauthner's perspective, according to which the meaning of a word is only clear due its context (Mauthner, 2001: 111).

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