BECOMING THE LANGUAGE YOU BELIEVE

James McMahon [•]

Albert Ellis Institute, NYC; MATES Foundation, U.S.A.

Abstract
Heidegger quipped, "Language is the house of being". He meant that we exist and function in language. This paper will argue for language games (Wittgenstein) as applied to psychotherapy and other interventions - with a sidelong glance at some definitions and semantics.

Keywords: language, culture, community, psychotherapy

Introduction to the Language of Culture and Community

As reported by the International Psychology Office of the American Psychological Association (August, 2011), in March 2007 the APA Psychology of Religion division hosted a symposium "Visions in Conflict: international perspectives on values and enmity" at Loyola College of Baltimore. Eight speakers addressed topics concerning forgiveness and conflict resolution. The presenting organization, Visions in Conflict, actually has a website that could be of interest to some listeners and readers: it has been led by psychologists who have aided in discussions concerning the Camp David Accords and President Jimmy Carter trying to resolve Israeli-Egyptian issues, in the Cyprus Unification discussions, and many others.

A close reading of the eight presenters has convinced me that, in addition to issues concerning what popular writer John Spong has called "tribal religion" or xenophobia concerning what an in group believes, the heart and

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Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to:

[•] Psy.D., Ph.D., Th.D., Sc.D., Supervisor and Trustee, Albert Ellis Institute, NYC; President, MATES Foundation. USA. E-mail: *bjpsymac@msn.com*

soul of the differences amongst people concerns the language which they use. That language often is masked with other terms such as culture or human-made institutions including art, science, and education, but each of them within a culture also breaks down into what Wittgenstein called a language game. Thus, psychology has a language, theology has a language, and elementary education has a language. Further, Romanian psychology has a language, American psychology has a language, and Chinese psychology has a language. And, experimental psychology in Romania has language, social psychology in Romania has a language, and education psychology in Romania has a language.

The language game of each from Wittgenstein is not a pejorative term; rather, it is an accurate term in order for the tribe or participants to communicate effectively. For between-group language or inter-tribal communication, there is no such thing as an exact translation, argued for so eloquently by WVO Quine at Harvard. We learn the prepositions of and grammar of and colloquial use of expressions of another language by participation - by experience. This last issue then leads to the idea of community - and especially community education or how to keep the language game going, how to modify it, and how to make it more relevant. The present state of a group's language could be called its "being" or current status, and here a quip from Heidegger (1998) will summarize this brief introduction to language: "*Language is the house where Being lives*".

Resolving a Problem

Even since three Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle), the world has been left in some way with a problem of dualism. Dualism means that people believe that they have a body with five traditional senses (smell, sight, hearing etc), but they also believe there is an animating or separate life force. Plato argued that it was the world of animation or soul that was real, and real souls dropped or fell into bodies (the original meaning of the concept of the fall of human beings, later taken over by Christian theologians as a fall from the good life in the Garden of Eden with God). Aristotle and Aquinas later resolved the problem to their own satisfaction by arguing for hylo-morphism, or the idea that the animating force and material force came together simultaneously. Of course, this did not resolve the dualism issue: the argument merely made them -

body and soul - contiguous.

Later, the father of modern philosophy, Rene Descartes, tried to doubt all of his previous learning. However, he could not doubt that he doubted. As such, he argued that there was a resident doubter (soul or animating force) inside of his material body and he spent the rest of his life without success trying to get them together in order to explain human unity.

From the arguments presented in the previous two paragraphs, one could conclude that Aquinas was an existentialist although he never said that existence preceded essence. To deal with this dilemma, Immanuel Kant argued that we were each born with categories or potentials that eventually allowed us to know and experience life. While his scheme was needlessly top heavy with category machinery, his argument that we could not know reality directly seemed to grab hold for the next generation of philosophers, the Existentialists. Soren Kierkegaard is generally recognized as the first, and other familiar names are Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers, Camus, and to in a certain sense, Husserl. They argued that existence preceded essence - if there was an essence - and that we each lived in language.

One specific group, the Vienna Circle (known as British Analytic Philosophy, and Logical Empiricism in America) was known as logical positivists. Much in the literature of psychology is written today from that point of view. It argued for the Verification Principle; namely, that if something could not be experienced through the senses, it was nonsense. Thus, words like God, heaven, and similar abstract concepts for the Positivists just did not exist. The problem for the Positivists, however, was that the verification principle could not be applied to itself in Logical Positivism, so the whole matter was self-referentially incoherent.

Now, Ludwig Wittgenstein had been a colleague of the Positivists in Vienna (although he was never a member of the inner circle): he thought of himself as a Positivist. However, he began to doubt that Positivism could be applied to Positivism, and he argued that, indeed, we could learn from poetry, from love, from belonging to a faith group, and the like. He argued, then, for language games in that each language for each group had a goal, there were logical and coherent rules to achieve the goal, and most people who belonged to the group could play the game. As a further result, since human beings lived

in language, invented it, changed it, and guarded it, dualism was eliminated-even for theologians who argued for language that talked about soul, divinity, God, angels, and miracles.

Contributions from Canada

In mid-Twentieth Century Canada, a luminary named Marshall MacLuhan emerged. He argued that the medium was the message. Language was the medium by which we learned to be a person, form habits that when multiplied became traditions, which formed cultures, and which formed communities and then societies. A current Canadian influenced by MacLuhan, by language games, and by evolutionary Christianity is Gretta Vosper. She is a minister in the Church of Canada, but her message has gone far from her base in Scarborough-Toronto. To summarize her work, she argued that language is our medium of expression, and if we believe the language of our group, we become that language. So, if one believes in the language of Romanian Orthodoxy, one labels him or herself Romanian Orthodox; if one believes the language of Karl Marx, one labels him or herself as a Communist, and if s/he believes the language of Milton Friedman, one labels him or herself as anti-Keynesian economist; and, if one believes the language of rational emotive behavior therapy, one labels him or herself as a follower of Albert Ellis in psychotherapy-the original cognitive behavior therapy. We each become the language in which we believe.

A simple but hopefully not simplistic example of the above scheme could be useful. Most adults in the West today can write. A question then arises: when exactly did we each become a writer - on what day and at what time did each of you, you and I, become a writer? First, of course, we learned the alphabet, and then we learned by phonics to but simple sounds together. Then we learned to print in simple form: first the letter A, then to make a simple word, AT, and then to make a more complex word, CAT, BAT, MAT, RAT, and so on. We then learned that A could be written in script rather than printed, and the same rules of moving from the simple to more complex prevailed. We each became so proficient (fast and accurate) at writing that, after a while, we could write automatically - without thinking about writing. We could take notes in class rapidly if need be by listening and jotting down

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precise terms. We each became the language in which we believed - in which we participated - and so each of us has become a language writer.

Back to Kant. Note however that with the exception of primitive sensations, we do not know reality directly, but only indirectly through language. Thus, an Evangelical Christian does not know God directly but does know God through the language that s/he has constructed or in which s/he believe or interprets from the Bible to try to "capture" God. A cognitive psychologist does not know the mind of human beings directly but knows it through the language game s/he has constructed. Gianni Vattimo, the Italian philosopher-teacher from recent memory put it this way: "There are no facts - only interpretations. Including this one".

To fortify Kant's point about living in language concerning how *beliefs* are constructed, it would be impossible for a horse to describe a human being because the horse does not have the language to do so. Now, nothing here is intended to undermine the security of belief relied upon by many religious adherents: it is offered merely to emphasize *language games*. Similarly, it could be argued that a human being - including human works such as Holy Scripture - cannot describe God because we do not have the language to do so. Pushed far enough, most believers sooner or later will invoke mystery. Romanian Orthodox believers will invoke mystery early concerning attempts to describe God. They would describe rituals or sacraments, for example, as holy mysteries. Eventually they will retreat to tradition (tradition being an amalgamation of habits).

Roman Catholics will find similar difficulties but will rely on descriptions of the Church as the Body of Christ to find God in the process of interaction within that language game. Evangelicals will retreat to the Bible by claiming that it was written by the Holy Spirit. When that line of reasoning is pushed, that Christian believer will argue that the Holy Spirit dictated scripture to writers and that what was written was without error. We have no physical record, however, of any piece of scripture earlier than that of the 4th Century, and even then we know that the writings moved from Hebrew to Greek to Latin to the vernacular. The constructions were changed to make sense to local faith communities. For example, in the Lord's Prayer (starting with Our Father …) the ending for many Christians is, "… For thin is the kingdom…" However, the

first addition of that closing came from a margin note put there by a praiseful monk in the 8th Century who was undertaking the labor of writing before the advent of printing in the 15th century: earlier references to it will not be found. That newer construction for many is the word of God in spite of the fact that the incorporation of a margin note was an error constructed into the translation. In Islam, Salmon Rushdie has paid a heavy price for arguing in fiction that much in Islam was changed over the years by translators who were writing under divine guidance.

Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers together will argue that they selected from among the many writings available those suitable to create a canon of scriptural texts in the 4th Century - even though the idea of books, chapters, verses was not put together until the 13th Century. Theretofore, as in the Hebrew Scriptures, scrolls did not differentiate with punctuation, paragraphs, books, letters, chapters, verses, and so on. As a result of the idea from constructivism that all languages seem to be local (i.e. are given meaning by groups of believers), a whole new group of Progressive Christians will argue that there are thousands of Christian language games that have led to turmoil and arguments including discrimination against Jews, women, and each other. Positively, however, they will argue that God is a synonym for the word Being or Existence and that, since we each exist, we are in relationship to each other from our birth onward - we live in language relationships - and so we are in relationship to God as the ground of all being (Tillich). It is the relationship between self and God, being created in God's image and likeness that enlivens this form of Christian belief with its non-theistic premises (does not argue for God as a person, or son, or Trinity, but argues for God as an activity such as love, charity, kindness, and other positive interactions). This last is more concerned with following Jesus and doing than believing in Jesus through faith. Once that language game gets underway, chances are that the person will believe and in circular fashion become what s/he believes. The current Italian psycho-theologian, Mancuso, would argue forcefully along these lines, whereas the Romanian Evangelical writer Corneliu Simuţ has written a text criticizing Mancuso from the framework of orthodox Protestantism - and probably from the perspective of all Orthodoxy including Eastern and Western liturgical religions.

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That Progressive Christian described here does not confuse works or deeds with eternal reward (a doctrine of works) compared to a doctrine of faith: that Christian sees Christianity as a way (as in the Acts of the Apostles), as a lifestyle, to become one with the God of love and action - not the God of reward and punishment. Jesus for such believers is the Atonement, the at-one-ment, with the God of action. He was killed, they argue, because he preached a kingdom within (mystery) which was contrary to the Romans who did not refer to themselves as an "empire" but as the kingdom: the collision course got Jesus murdered since he claimed to be advancing a new kingdom. He was not murdered according to this line of reasoning because God the Father sent His Son to be murdered as a sacrifice to please God the Father: they would see that line of reasoning as child abuse on the grand scale (and would point to the idea that early Christians did not teach Jesus dying for the sins of humanity but that line of reasoning was developed in the West by Augustine - not a favorite of Eastern Christianity - and the so called fall of humans from a life of perfection only reclaimed for them by Jesus dying on the cross). This last argument was forcefully central to Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity after it was firmly established through the dissemination of the writing of Anselm in the 11th Century.

Lastly, concerning the force of becoming what one believes using religious belief as a model, Paul the Apostle taught that in Christ there is neither male nor female, gentile nor Jew, slave nor free person … that Christians were all one in Christ. Since these words from Paul were written before all the other writings in New Testament scripture, it seems not to have taken long for males to assert their supremacy by arrogating clerical duties and transmission of power to themselves - in spite of the fact that the same Paul in his Letter to the Romans (14th chapter) calls his female co-worker an apostle. Progressive Christians would argue that Western and Eastern Christianity, then, departed and has stayed departed from the basic teaching of equality found in Paul's words in favor of power games, games of reward and punishment from a God who doles them out, and that each Christian group interprets scripture to claim that that group is right (meaning correctly taught) without realizing that the "I must be right because I said so" doctrine involves power and exclusivity - just the opposite of what Paul taught as the fundamental philosophy of Jesus.

This last language game - the God of rewards and punishment - it could be argued has created a guilt trip on the grand scale in the name of mainline Christianity - Western and Eastern. The Protestant conundrum was commented upon by Luther. If Jesus died for our sins and we humans who believe in Jesus are forgiven, it would seem reasonable to sin and enjoy it since we are each already forgiven. Caught in this dilemma, Luther quipped approximately, "Therefore, go forth: sin bravely". Conversely, Jewish theology has taught that it is sinful for a human being not to enjoy human pleasures that God has created such as sex, wine, and the good life. Not to masturbate, for example, according to this norm would be sinful (assuming social modesty), whereas for Christian believers it could be worthy of eternal damnation. Since Jesus was a Jew who did not speak about or teach against this Jewish norm, Progressive Christians would argue that mainline Christians (still in the grasp of men) use their teachings as means of power (Foucault) and control over believers to maintain themselves in positions of prominence.

Albert Ellis on Language Games

Now Ellis (see McMahon and Vernon, *Evolution of a Revolution*, Barricade Press, 2010) was trained in the revisionist psychoanalysis offered at the Karen Horney Institute in New York after his graduate studies at Columbia University. Yet, his training analyst, Hulbeck, was an Orthodox Freudian (probably open and structuralist simultaneously) whereas Ellis received his doctorate from that university in 1947, Carl Rogers had been awarded his degree in clinical psychology from Columbia in 1931. One of the prevailing counseling or language games then at Columbia was Rogers' person centered arguments. They were complemented by behaviorism and the various languages (schools) of psychoanalysis (Freud's open model and his later structural model, Horney's model, object-relations models, Reik's model, a combination of psychoanalysis-behaviorism model, and many others).

Ellis, probably *post hoc* his 1953 interaction with a female patient, used philosophy such as the writings of the Stoics to justify his arguments - to try to make them right with the established psychological and psychotherapy communities extant in New York and beyond in the 1950s. In interaction with a female patient who said that she did not do well with male personnel workers

during job interviews because she was afraid of men (her father having been her batterer), Ellis quipped to the woman that her father was dead. She replied with a query - that it was not her father who was responsible for her current fear but what she was saying today about those past beatings. Ellis agreed and pointed out that she kept telling herself that false belief - that for her the past could be the proximate cause of her decision today to be fearful and thus obfuscate her ability to think straight during an interview. Between the two of them, then, the revolution in language against the prevailing metaphors for psychotherapy had been born: the language game in psychotherapy was about to change on the grand scale.

Ellis further believed - from the influence of Rogers and Tillich - that we were each thrown into life, that we had no choice of who would be our parents, and that we thereafter became choice-makers. He argued for strong influences of biology to set up defenses or irrationalities to protect that self-thrown-into-life (Heidegger's throwness), and so he developed an A-B-C model to help attenuate or lower the level of irrationality so that self-acceptance became the primary purpose of his rational thinking (later rational emotive therapy and now rational emotive behavior therapy). His argument would have been (Ellis died on July 23, 2007) that very little will bother a person who accepts him or herself unconditionally. A true religious adherent probably believes that self unconditionally accepted in relationship to God generally is not a worrier, is not depressed, and that such a person tries to live in the here and now of everyday life. A counselor or psychotherapist's job then is to help a person minimize irrationalities in favor of rational living in order to achieve self acceptance - the primary purpose of RE & CBT being self acceptance (rational emotive behavior therapy being the first of the cognitive therapies before Aaron T. Beck named his language game cognitive behavior therapy). Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (the formal legal name of the intervention) starts with the premise of USA or unconditional self acceptance and how to 'rearrange' the furniture in a person's mind to allow for its primacy, whereas CBT or Cognitive Behavior Therapy (the name given in 1976 by Beck to his theory and interventions) starts with Socratic questions to eliminate faulty cognitions (reasons) or combinations of reasons called schemas. CBT does not get to self usually, although self as a schema or cluster of behaviors can be inferred within CBT. Today, many followers of the revolution would refer to

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the language game as RE & CBT.

Some critics of the RE & CBT language games will argue that such interventions are not profound. Ellis, contrarily, argued that self-acceptance was more profound than psychoanalysis - and was the most profound issue of his arguments. Ego as the balancing agent between biology (id) and social norms or conscience (superego) was more of a goal of theorists such as Anna Freud and Heinz Kohut than it was of Freud himself. His argument was more for balance or homeostasis than it was for self primacy since self was not an operating aspect of his early or later structural psychoanalysis.

Some Definitions

This writer would argue for several definitions that could prove helpful to a reader.

1. *Inference* can be described as the reasoning involved in drawing a conclusion based on circumstantial evidence rather than on sense data. For example, I might conclude without having seen it or having observed a videotape of a nearby a person who had blueberry on his or her face when there was a blueberry pie and knife nearby with a section of the pie cut and missing - that person took and ate the blueberry pie. If there are footprints in the snow going from and to a house - both ways - and there one John is at home that the footprints belong to John (especially if the treads look to be the same). In the examples, I have inferred that the nearby person ate the blueberry pie, and in the second example that John went in and out of the house.

2. *Belief* means to put trust or confidence in some event, some person, some inference, or some philosophy or set of writings. When I believe that there is a place called Uganda but I have never been there, I have trusted sources such as TV reports with video, maps and textbooks, and anecdotal reports from travelers.

3. *Logic* is the process of correct reasoning regarding how to draw an inference or conclusion. Two examples would be syllogism and Venn's diagrams (pie charts to be specific). An example of a syllogism would be:

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> All human beings are mortal. (major premise)
> John is a human being.   (minor premise)
> John is mortal.   (conclusion)

     Note that all human beings from what we know sooner or later die. Human beings try to stave this off as long as possible in most instances, but there are exceptions such as tortuous pain, extreme despair, or sudden accidents. Part of our inheritance as humans compared to other animals is that we know and are self-consciously aware that we each will die. John is a human being by virtue of the fact that he is alive, that he has a name, that he has unique finger prints, and that he had a definite time and place of birth, and that he has a hear-kidney pump, brain, and sense apparatus. Thus, there is good evidence to support the major and minor premises, and so the conclusion that John is mortal seems sound.

     An example of a diagram would be a pie chart with, say, 45% of it one color and 55% another color. Let us have the 55% represent the number of older women in Romania, or in just about any national population for that matter. We could conclude, logically, that the majority of older people in Romania are women - if and only if the data support the representation of the pie chart.

4. *Rational or rationality* according to Max Weber can be considered from four (4) perspectives:

- thinking to attain ends or goals (often called pragmatism - or does the thinking process work to achieve the end or goal)

- that the thinking process conforms to intrinsic beliefs for the sake of consistency

- when the thinking process feels right based on experience shown not to have been irrational (anti-goal or anti-belief)

- habits of thinking that a person imagines will work (and which sometimes do not work such as in neurotic thinking where a person repeats the same reasoning over and over with the hope of achieving a different result per Einstein)
  Weber argued that rational thinking or rationality usually represented

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some combination of the four perspectives. Kant, who lived well before Weber, would have seen it this way: *reason* was the process of using Weber's combination, whereas *rationality* meant to optimize reason - to make the best fit of available information to reach a conclusion (which could be changed in the face of new information - thus encouraging flexibility as opposed to relativism - and not to cling to faulty conclusions as in the church versus Galileo, or to disregard anthropological data showing the age of the universe to be about 15 billion years, the age of earth to be about 4 billion years, and the age of human being variously to be from 250,000 to 1 million years depending upon specificity or generalization concerning nearness to presently living human beings).

McMahon, who served as editor of a special issue of the Romanian Journal of Cognitive and Behavior Therapies, argued that a rational cause resided in its effect. Thus, parental genes resided 50-50 at the outset in their offspring (although specific genes from one parent could penetrate into the environment given the right circumstances), God as creator of the universe resided in each cell of each human being as life itself, and B resided in C and C in B in Ellis's A-B-C model (so that B and C and C and B were end of the same process: thinking-feeling was a continuum).

From these various points, then, a reader perhaps can conclude that even irrational thinking is logical (the world is flat and if I sail my boat out far enough I might fall off the earth), but that a goal in counseling would be for thinking-feeling to be both logical and rational. All of the above descriptions however distill into the issue of how do human beings give meaning to what they like, what they dislike, what they prefer, and that with which they would rather not be associated. The ultimate question for a reader would be: what is the purpose of your life? From this perspective, then, the purpose of your life is you (and for the religious believer the purpose is you in constant relationship to God). Counseling and psychotherapy language games are designed to achieve both goals, and some language games seem to do so more simply and eloquently than other language games (some of which seem to this writer cumbersome - as in either multiple causation or over-determination of a symptom: the idea is to be simple as in Einstein's formula of $E=MC^2$ but not to be simplistic).

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Some Final Thoughts on Language

Some of the main players in semantics or language games within the RE & CBT field have been Korzybski, the Kodish husband and wife team, and Robert More. Korzybski was a Polish immigrant logician teaching at the University of Florida when he asked some students to avoid using the infinitive (verb) to be. Thus, he asked students to describe themselves or their behaviors without that verb: e.g. I feel depressed at night rather than I am depressed at night. The former statement described a limited state of feeling whereas the later statement implied that the person was born to feel depressed at night. Korzybski noted that when he compared student groups who used this rationale, those who eliminated descriptions of themselves as a state of being (that they were born that way) tended to be more flexible, less anxious, and less depressed: they achieves higher grades in their courses as students. Robert More, an REBT adherent, named this phenomenon E-Prime language: the more a person could eliminate the verb to be in self and other descriptions argued More, the better s/he would feel. The specificity of language usage in good mental health has been studied carefully by the Kodish couple, especially in the current literature by Bruce I. Kodish. Albert Ellis argued for specific language based upon much of the work of those mentioned here, and he argued against over-generalizations (such as, I am depressed rather than I felt depressed when I got the news that I didn't get the job …). This language game - eliminating the verb to be in self descriptions - seems workable in most languages and so it might be something that the reader might wish to apply to him or herself. Conversely, the reader is urged not to get into the sloppy habit of saying things like, "I feel that she is a liar …" when in fact what the reader more nearly means is, "Based on my experience with her, I judge that she has lied often in my presence". That she is a liar means that she was born that way whereas the latter more specific statement is a good trainer of accuracy while teaching a person how not to over-generalize.

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