



Language-Game-Object

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Abstract

Wittgenstein, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, shows how language as a human phenomenon manifests in our everyday lives. He uses the idea of language-games to present language as a kind of human activity. In this essay, I focus on the roles of individual words in these language-games. I refer to them as language-game-objects, in order to emphasize words as roles that take part in language-games. I show how by being part of the language-games used in everyday lives, language-game-objects (and thereby concepts and ideas) are shaped by language-games, but also have a role in shaping language-games (and thereby human activities) themselves. I conclude in the last part of the essay by synthesizing this idea with Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of language and being from his *Being and Time* and *History of the Concept of Time* in order to show how language-games and language-game-objects are fundamental parts of human lives.

Keywords: Language-games; Heidegger's; Phenomenology; Wittgenstein

Introduction

Human beings use language to understand the world and preserve this understanding. Language allows us to reach beyond our immediate perception and experience the world in ways beyond sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch. Language is not simply a tool that animals don't possess. It is not simply the case that we use words to describe our experience and disseminate them as if all that language does is to allow one to describe his sensations, thus giving him access to that particular memory or letting someone else access those sensations in some way by sharing its description. Not only can words describe sensations, but they can also form concepts that unify our experiences. Words such as "joy", "victory", "consciousness", "space", "time", etc. are much more abstract than those such as "stone" or "mouse". These words do not always describe a particular something, rather, they can describe existing things in ways that are much more sophisticated than what our sensory experience tells us, things that we think may or may not exist, things that we think exist but do not know a particular way

of describing them or even things that may be completely fictional. Human understanding of the world is built upon the usage of language, in particular, upon using concept words such as these, and they allow us to have subjects of studies such as philosophy, physics, history, sociology etc. And to perform these studies, it is not only a matter of knowing what we study and generalize upon them, we have to search for the hidden relation between things and actively build our understandings of them.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein introduces an idea called language-games. In §2 of the work, he gives an example of "a complete primitive language" between a builder A and an assistant B, where whenever A needs a particular kind of stone, he calls out words such as "block", "pillar", "slab", etc. and B passes A the stone which he learnt to bring after hearing such a call. Wittgenstein analogizes the process of using words as such to games and he calls these games "language-games". Besides just the usage of words alone, Wittgenstein also says "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the activities in which it is

woven, a 'language-game'" (*Philosophical Investigations*, §7) [1]. Language-games at large are activities that we perform to interact with other people and things in the world. Wittgenstein thinks that children learn language-games by a similar process to that between the builder and the assistant, i.e. they learn the situations that certain words come up or are necessary because of their own needs of interacting with the people and things around them, or by imitating those people around them. In this way, they learn to interact and be a part of their environment by learning how people within their environment behave. The purpose of a language-game is more or less to perform such interactions. Therefore, it is more important for a language-game to achieve its goal, so Wittgenstein says "'Inexact' is really a reproach, and exact is praise. And that is to say that what is inexact attains its goal less perfectly than does what is more exact. So it all depends on what we call 'the goal'" (*Philosophical Investigations*, §88). And because language-game is a learned process, therefore "the everyday language-game is to be *accepted*, and *false* accounts of it characterized as *false*. The primitive language-game which children are instructed in needs no justification; attempts at justification need to be rejected" (*Philosophical Investigations*, "Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment", §161). This is to say, there are certain activities we perform as human beings with those language games and are taught to children, that these activities exist are outside the realm of justification (since justification itself is a kind of activity that are performed in certain situations), therefore, these activities are primitive and the fact that they are taught also need no justification.

Language-Game-Object and Its Property as Use

We evaluate and understand our experiences by engaging the language-game that we think the experience elicits, and specific words are used whenever we find the "timing" or situation is correct. When we name something, or when we describe something, it can serve as an indicator of how a language-game is played with that thing, and the words we choose would impact the actions we take with that thing. For example, if I say "This table is fragile", how we interact with this object that we call "table" (since it is usually the interaction that is of concern for an everyday object like a table), and how it would behave toward us (i.e. being unreliable, or breaks easily) is thereby shown to anyone who has heard this sentence. Therefore, if a friend of mine doesn't recognize this object right away (perhaps he is not sure whether this is a table or a very large stool), and I tell him that it is a table and it is fragile, he would avoid sitting on it or placing heavy items on it, and perhaps he would even suggest that I should buy a different table.

Sentences like this, which we speak daily, are relatively

clear much of the time because it is clear what we are playing the language-games with, and how we can interact with them. After all, the objects can stand right in front of our eyes, and we are so familiar with them that we recognize them without being told anything about them. However, when the subject of the discussion, such as those in philosophical discussions, is much more abstract, confusion can easily ensue, because we don't know what is it that we are playing the language-game with, we don't have "a grasp" of it. In a situation like this, we don't know what is the object "in our presence". Such is the case when we raise questions such as "What is real?", "What is consciousness?", or "Do we have free will?" "Reality", "consciousness", "free will" are topics that come into very little contact with most people. Naturally, it means that most people never really played a lot of language-games with these concepts, so we fail to understand what we are supposed to do with them. Just like everyone can probably make a few moves on the chessboard after having watched someone else play a game or two, yet it takes an experienced player to know all the rules for each chess piece and being able to recognize the situation on the board and make appropriate decisions, it is also true that most people can form some opinions on matters such as consciousness, but are unable to elaborate too much on these topics.

Situations, where one does not know how to continue on the discussion of a certain topic, are as if we are presented with an object but do not know what to do with it. In these situations, people that are presented with the subject and asked to form an opinion on it are like someone who has never watched a game of chess and suddenly given a chessboard with chess pieces on it and start practicing or playing a game without the game ever being explained. A game we play puts us into a relation with the objects within this game. The rules and the goals of the game demand that certain actions in the game are allowed and desired while some others are not allowed or are undesirable. Those who have never played a game of chess and do not know the rules of chess are unsure of the relations among the chess pieces on the board. Therefore they cannot make the best decision in how to lead the opponent into a situation where they have an advantage. On the other hand, as someone gets more and more proficient in playing chess, he starts seeing more than each of the individual chess pieces and where they are on the board, rather, he starts seeing repeated situations where the positions of various pieces together form particular kinds of patterns or scenarios, and he wins by handling these scenarios. The same thing can be said regarding language-games. As we learn how to play the language-games of our daily lives, we get more and more familiar with the "objects" in these language-games, and we recognize how these "objects" impact our daily lives in large or small ways, so we act accordingly. In the language-game of bargaining, we learn how bargaining is played and thereby becomes more and

more aware of the meaning of “salesperson” and “customer” (i.e. the roles that salespersons and customers play in the language-game of bargaining), and that the “product” has a different meaning to the seller and the customer (i.e. they use, or better, they “play” with this word according to different rules). The salesperson and the customer, therefore, act differently in the language-game, in order to get an upper hand over the other person. When A and B plays the language-game of bargaining, where A becomes the “salesperson” and B the “customer”, they enter into a relation that was otherwise not there, and the item of the bargain that is called the “product” also enter into a relation with both A and B that was otherwise not there. I call the roles that need to be fulfilled in language-game—whether it is the players of the language-game, or what we might label as “resources”, “tools”, “items”, or “goals” as we do in some real games—the language-game-objects. “Salesperson”, “customer” and “product” are all language-game-objects in the language-game of bargaining. A language-game-object is a role in a language-game that would have to be taken up by something (a person, an object, an abstract concept, imagined beings, etc.), and a language-game is played by having the language-game-object present and its role being played. Whenever someone takes such a role, he then acts and reacts to other language-game-objects in the language-game in a way that befits his role. Whoever that takes such a role in a language-game thereby becomes related to other some language-game-objects, and it is by virtue of this relation between each language-game-objects in the language-game, words like “salesperson” or “customer” becomes really meaningful.

Physical objects that exist in the real world have certain properties. They have certain sizes, certain weights, are made out of certain materials, etc. it is by virtue of these properties that they are what they are. We can say language-game-objects, likewise, also have “properties” of their own. The properties that they have, are the uses of the word. Although we might say it is by virtue of a table’s material and sizes that we can put food on them, it is not the properties of *this* or *that* table to have food placed on them, and have chairs surrounding them so that we can have a meal. Rather, as a child learns the word “table” by being shown what a table is, he is being told that food should be placed on what is called a “table” rather than on what is called a “chair”, and he sees that adults sit around a table to have meals and chat. This is a language-game, in which a child gets familiarized with the use of the language-game-object “table”, the roles it plays in terms of the child’s communication with the parents, and also the relation between other language-game-objects, such as “table” and “chair”. Once learned, if the child recognizes a particular object as a “table”, he acts towards the table as how he learned it. We can imagine perhaps there is an object that resembles both a table and a chair at the same time, without completely resembling either of them as we normally

recognize them (perhaps in a way similar to Wittgenstein’s duck-rabbit). An adult asks the owner of the object what is this thing, and the owner says it is a table. An adult is likely to behave toward this object as he would behave toward a table, e.g. he would not sit on this object, since it has become a table *to him*. On the other hand, a child that is less bound by customs and rules might use it both as a chair or as a table, depending on the game he wants to play at the moment. Language-game-objects have properties in this way, and thereby become meaningful, i.e. they insert themselves into language-games by having certain uses and signifying relations between different objects in those language-games. Even though when we talk of abstract concepts, we might think that there is some kind of essence (or nature, or reality) that belong to “number”, “consciousness”, “mass”, etc., and they are the key to understanding these concepts, whatever are the “essences” that we might think as belonging to these concepts, they do not belong to the properties of the language-game-objects, since, as far as a language-game is concerned, the “essence” (in the sense of, e.g., reference) of a concept such as “mass” or “consciousness” is irrelevant. They are “the as yet uncomprehending process in the as yet unexplored medium” (*Philosophical Investigations*, §308). Any consideration of such “essence” would be a part of the playing of the language-game of the study of physics or a related area of philosophy. When we only consider them as parts of a language-game, the concepts “mass” or “consciousness” differ not in terms of something intrinsic that they supposedly possess or correspond to, rather, the difference comes from the language-game they play and how they play their roles in those language-games. It is the purpose of those language-games to unravel these “essences” through the methodology of their respective field of studies.

The use of a language-game-object is simply what we do with these language-game-objects in a language-game. Through use, we maintain language-game and language-game-objects. We learn these uses as a kid through watching and imitating the language-games adults perform and also actively learning the language-games of those language-game-objects in school. As long as we need language-game-objects for their roles in language-games, we need to and do maintain their uses, thereby maintaining the same relations among language-game-objects in language-games. When discussing the existence of a particular colour such as “red”, Wittgenstein says: “we quite readily say that a particular colour exists, and that is as much as to say that something exists that has that colour” (*Philosophical Investigations*, §58). In other words, the word “red” has meaning insofar something is ready to take the role of the language-game-object “red”. If, hypothetically, one were to raise a retort: “If everything red in the world disappears, it does not make sense to simply say that ‘red’ becomes meaningless, or red does not exist.” One could respond by saying that it is the

because “red” has always played a particular role in our language-games due to the physical phenomenon of red exists as part of our lives, the disappearance of the physical phenomenon of what takes up the role of “red” leaves a hole in our language-games, and we think something should always be there to take the role so as to not break our language-games. However, it does not make sense to say that a hypothetical colour ‘ket’ always exists somehow, since whatever ‘ket’ is, it is not a part of our lives to be in a relation with us (i.e. there is no language-games in which “ket” has a role), and “[i]f we forget which colour this is the name of, the name loses its meaning for us; that is, we are no longer able to play a particular language-game with it” (*Philosophical Investigations*, §57), i.e. the role has become obsolete.

How Language-Game-Objects Evolve

These use that language-game-objects have can evolve through the passing of history and adapt themselves to the culture within which they are used, just like architectures and fashion change throughout history. We can just think of how many English words that we use regularly have a French origin. Before there was what we now recognize as England and the English language, the people in England were the Anglo-Saxons with Germanic origins. In 1066 CE, William of Normandy from France entered England and became its new ruler, being brought with him is the French influence upon the English ruling class, and naturally the Anglo-Saxon language changed because of it. This is no surprise since the subjects of this new ruler would have to learn to do things more similar to the French way. As an example, it is often the case that some English words for an animal such as “sheep” has an Anglo-Saxon origin, while its counterparts for food, i.e. “mutton”, has a French origin, since it was the Anglo-Saxon farmers that raised the animals, but French nobilities that enjoyed the meat.

It is in ways like this that history and culture shape language-game-objects. Wherever a language-game-object has its origins, it is used by the speakers of those languages in certain ways for certain purposes. As long as people still perform a language-game with its language-game-objects, they maintain this language-game and language-game-object through the use of those language-game-objects in the way necessary for the language-game. Playing the same language-games using the same language-game-objects means that these people have a mutual understanding among each other, and any foreigner landed here needs to learn how to play the same language-games to understand the locals and be a part of this new land. When a collective of people have always performed language-game X with the language-game-objects a, b, c , and have been using language-game-object a in language-games X, Y, Z, then whenever one recognizes the language-game X is being played, he expects

it to be played with a, b, c , and whenever he encounters language-game-object a without knowing which language-game is being played, he expects the language-game to be one of X, Y, Z. For these people, suddenly playing language-game X with a previously unrelated language-game-object, say, n , is hard to justify. This is why we cannot simply decide one day, that we are going to use the word “bed” to replace the word “soul” entirely, or only in the context of religion, or invent a new role for “bed” to play in those context without any other part of the language-game also being replaced. On the other hand, when a language-game becomes obsolete, meaning people no longer perform the activities of this language-game and no longer need to achieve what the language-game achieves, the use of a language-game-object naturally changes, meaning that language-game-object now has a different role in a language-game, therefore a different relation to the language users than before. When a sailor went to sea in ancient Greece, he would have needed to say all the prayers and make all the proper sacrifices to Poseidon in hoping for a good wind and a safe trip. Now, a sailor can simply check the weather report before sailing out. Praying to Poseidon and checking the weather report both have the same goal of ensuring a successful and safe trip. However, the language-game of communicating with a god has been replaced with a more reliable language-game of checking the weather report. Now, “Poseidon” to a modern Greek no longer represents nature itself, instead, it has become simply a character of mythology. Communicating with Greek gods is no longer a language-game that people play, and now it has mostly become an interest of literature or history, which is why “Poseidon” is mostly featured in those language-games nowadays and stands in a different relation to us.

The culture and history of a language-game-object are the environments that decide its characteristics: we cannot suddenly demand that “soul + 3 = xyz” in the same way that we cannot demand a rook to suddenly move like a bishop in chess. Although, when new language-game-objects do emerge, the “creators” of them are relatively free in how they shape their language-game-objects, and they can do that to a great effect. By choosing the expression “Apple” as the name of a consumer-oriented computer company, the company sets itself apart from its potential competitors of the day such as IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) and Hewlett-Packard by invoking the image of a familiar household object as well as a source of inspiration for Newton. This name is an easily recognizable success. What needs to be recognized here is that the choice of using “Apple” goes hand in hand with the brand image of Apple, and it stands out due to the mainly business-oriented conception of the computer industry during the time of 1980s. “Apple” is a creative name that stands against its competitors at the time precisely because of the industry culture of that time. It would therefore make different moves in those language-

games of selling computers. “Apple” played those language-games differently, therefore was a different kind of language-game-object to those such as “IBM”. A language-game-object can be creative by virtue of its unique roles in the language-game, and it can only be conventional or creative when there is a language-game with its language-game-objects each playing their set roles, which are undoubtedly shaped by the culture of the language.

Language-Game-Object’s Relation to Phenomena

As shown above, it is use that gives a language-game-object its substance. However, it is also true that when a physicist says “friction” or “energy”, they know exactly what they mean by these language-game-objects, i.e. they refer to real natural phenomena in the world that they have observed or discovered and put into words, and when they think of these words, they by no means think of them as just part of the “reflex” in solving a problem. They are not some kind of make-belief or role-playing—the phenomena “friction” and “energy” are real and physically exist, even though when put into words, the language-game-object “friction” and “energy” are no more than their roles in the language-game. We know these phenomena are real—they are parts of the natural world that we interact with regularly, which is to say, their existence itself demands that we act in a certain way and thereby also demand a role in language-games, and these roles have to conform to their existence, instead of something that could change depending on the cultural practice of a people.

Language-games are part of our interactions with the real world, and we learn about the real world beyond its mere linguistic components through these language-games, even though the purpose of the language-games that we play do not always involve us learning a description of the real world. Just as we could eat bread every day without even thinking about how we know it is a loaf of bread or how we know every time we eat a bread our hunger could be satiated, but whenever we are asked to describe a loaf of bread, we nevertheless remember and are able to report on its appearance, its taste, and its ability to satiate our hunger, in the same way, we come to a recognition of language-game-objects such as “space”, “consciousness”, “causation” etc. without ever consciously think about them due to the roles they play in various language-games. That is to say, we start having intuitions regarding what such concepts are supposed to mean even if they were never explicitly told to us (i.e. we have a sense of how those words should be used). These recognitions lead us to associate certain phenomena with language-game-objects. For example, when asked, most regular people would probably think causation involves some kind of “agency” or “power” (it is not necessary to

qualify what these descriptions are supposed to mean here because regular people do not qualify them, but we still understand what they try to say), maybe because experience tells them that if it said that event A “causes” event B, next time they should try to stop A if they want to prevent B from occurring as if we are trying to bind a person’s hand so that he cannot commit a crime. However, when we say “A causes B”, there is generally no observable phenomena that justify us suggesting some “agency” or “power” unless these ideas are already specified in an observable way (e.g. by having certain rules or criteria that suggest if such and such is directly observed, we say it has “agency”), but that is generally not the case. The aspect of involving “agency” or “power” is not always necessary for “causation” to be played in language-games, and these aspects generally do not appear unless asked, but the fact remains that we somehow think this is what “causation” is. When given a rigorous description of a language-game-object like “consciousness” or “causation”, some people might just find them to be somehow inadequate, due to the fact that we mostly encounter these language-game-objects in other language-games and our attempt to describe them have to contend with the roles that we recognize they play in various language-games (e.g. we want them to both describe how they normally occur to us, but still meet the scientific standard, and in the end, one might be forced to yield to the other).

The recognition of a language-game-object is, in a sense, the opposite side of the same coin of what Wittgenstein calls the *family resemblance* of language-games in *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein describes the idea of family resemblance as this: “I can think of no better expression to characterize the similarities [of games] than ‘family resemblances; for the various resemblances between members of a family — build, features, colours of eyes, gait, temperament, and so on and so forth — overlap and criss-cross in the same way. — And I shall say: ‘games’ form a family” (*Philosophical Investigations*, §67). What he suggests here is that while the games (e.g. pokers, pool, tennis, games in which we make up the rules as we go, etc.) we play have nothing unifying that let us definitively call that a game, we nonetheless know a game is a game when we see one, due to some similarities between this particular game and some other particular games. Because of these similarities that can happen among language-games, when we encounter a certain language-game-object *a* in a language-game X and also a language-game Y, the general recognition and usage of *a* can lead us to conceive that *a* is generally related to, say, *b* and *c*, now we might be reasonably led into thinking that *b* and *c* could both have a role in both X and Y. Now, it could be possible that *b* and *c* both have a proper role in X and Y, but it could also be possible that *b* only has a proper role in X and *c* a proper role in Y—“a proper role” here means that the use of the language-game-object helps to move the language-game

towards its goal. Regardless, the more such instances could happen the more we start to think that X and Y are similar somehow, and when the similarities are falsely attributed, we could arrive at a false conclusion or falsely attribute some phenomena to a subject of study, where there are in fact no such phenomena. In this way, family resemblances of language-games and recognition of language-game-objects are in a cycle constantly reinforcing each other, each adding layers of conception upon the other. Wittgenstein describes such a process with regard to the concept “number”: “And we extend our concept of number, as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole, but the overlapping of many fibres” (ibid.), and he considers that if we insist on thinking that this is one unifying entity (i.e. calling the “overlapping” of the fibres a singular entity), we are “only playing with a word” (ibid.).

This might lead one to the conclusion that phenomena derived from language-game-objects can be arbitrarily or is the result of confusion, and the only justification for positing some natural phenomena is the observation of them, since, how else could we know that those phenomena are real, but that would be a premature conclusion. After all, just because it is the language-games and language-game-objects that make us think of the existence of a phenomenon, does not mean that this phenomenon does not really exist or only stays in the realm of language. In fact, we do consistently posit natural phenomena through positing language-games and language-game-objects in the realm of science in a justifiable manner and then proceed to showcase the real existence of these phenomena, i.e. hypotheses and experiments. In such a scenario, experiments are part of the language-game, as if we are unfolding a puzzle, and the experiments are the showcase of whether our guesses are correct. In these games, we not only make hypotheses with existing language-game-objects, but we are also likely to suggest new ones. For example, with the knowledge of Newtonian physics at hand, we might start positing an object, whose mass is so great, resulting in such great magnitude of gravity that would attract everything nearby towards it, and anything that cannot move faster than the speed of light cannot be observed in that area, and we name this object the “black hole”. A language-game-object posited through this kind of process, even if unobserved, still gives us a reasonable ground to think that a real object that matches the description *could* exist, because this language-game-object is part of the language-game, in which, when rules are correctly observed (e.g. in this case, hypothesizing base on the correct mathematical and scientific knowledge rather than pure fantasy), showcasing observable phenomena is frequently part of the conclusion of this game, with the addition that being able to qualify a certain phenomenon with concepts and units of measurement that are universally accepted by

the community. Therefore we can expect such phenomena to be observable if we have the technical capabilities to do so, e.g. we can reasonably assume that the language-game *can* achieve its goal. This comes in contrast with the positing of some other language-game-objects, such as “ghosts”, “free will”, “imaginary numbers”, etc. These language-game-objects are spawned out of many different reasons, and they generally are a part of language-games that have different goals than the studies of physics, such as scaring kids so that they obey their parents, concerns regarding our own existential status, or expanding the horizon of mathematics, therefore asking whether they are real in the sense of asking whether black holes or frictions are real can be a mistake, because unlike studies of physics, the language-game that they are a part of may not be intended to help to surmise the existence (physical or otherwise) of anything at all, such as in the case of a ghost. But our general usage of them in language-games still gives us that kind of recognition that we might come to with any other language-game-objects, this recognition tells us nothing except that there seem to be something behind these words that can be in a relation with us, and we can be tempted to think that all “something” is created equal. And again, if one were to argue that their role in the language-game or this “something” we recognize is ground for any kind of existence, it is to be reminded that this is only “playing with words” (ibid., §67). This mistaking of words for phenomena is described by Wittgenstein like this: “We feel as if we had to *see right into* phenomena: yet our investigation is directed not towards *phenomena*, but rather, as one might say, toward the ‘possibilities’ of phenomena. What that means is that we call to mind the *kinds of statement* that we make about phenomena [...] Our inquiry is therefore a grammatical one.” (ibid., §90) Still, it is true that things like ghosts can still exist, regardless how, or for what purpose they are expressed in language, since how or for what purpose something is expressed in language bears little to no relation to their existence in reality. However, for us to acknowledge something like ghosts or soul should exist, we would require a language-game that offers tools of investigation and conditions for existence (i.e. “rules” of that language-game that allows us to say that ghosts exist because of so and so), just like what we have with science (although it may not always be the scientific standard that we need to prove a particular thing). In other words, we need to have proper criteria for acknowledging their existence, and these supernatural or metaphysical language-game-objects do not necessarily have a part in the science-language-game, their existence needs to be posited on a different standard.

Language-Game-Object as Interpreted Through Heideggerian Phenomenology

In his lecture course, *History of the Concept of Time*, Martin Heidegger says: “There is *verbal expression—language—only*

insofar as there is considering, and such a consideration of something as something is possible only insofar as there is interpreting; interpretation in turn is only insofar as there is understanding, and understanding is only insofar as Dasein has the structure-of-being of discoveredness, which means that Dasein itself is defined as being-in-the-world" (p. 261) [2]. The use of language-game-objects in language-games coincides with the idea of categorial intuition from the Husserlian and early Heideggerian phenomenology (ibid. §6). By acting in the language-games involve the language-game-object "table", we are, in more Heideggerian terms, comporting ourselves in ways according to the categorial intuition of a table, this categorial intuition is the ideation of our experience with the object that is a table, language-games and language-game-objects can therefore be seen as human beings acting out this ideation through language (still, these are by no means completely equivalent ideas, since, for Heidegger, categorial intuition is involved even when language is not explicitly used). So we can see that it is natural that the idea of language-game-objects could tie in with Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of being, and through the Heideggerian analysis, we can understand how language-games and language-game-objects are fundamental parts of human lives.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that the phenomenon of language "has its roots in the existential constitution of the disclosedness of Dasein" (p. 155) [3]. By the term "Dasein" (there-being, or being-there), Heidegger means "[t]his being [Seiende], which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of being" (*Being and Time*, p. 7). A simplified, though sufficient way of describing Dasein for this essay is to say Dasein is the being that can possess what we normally think of as humanity. Heidegger also writes that "[i]f language is a possibility of the being of Dasein, then it must be made evident in its basic structures in terms of the constitution of Dasein. Henceforth, the a priori of the structures of Dasein must provide the basis for linguistics" (*History of the Concept of Time*, p. 262). Put it differently, particularly in terms of language-games, we shall say it is on the basis of the structure of Dasein that we play language-games. If we attempt to understand language's relation with Dasein, then we need to understand a few particular phenomena mentioned by Heidegger and their relations with language-games and language-game-objects, i.e. considering, interpretation, understanding, discoveredness and being-in-the-world, as shown above. By Heidegger's formulation, considering is part of interpretation, interpretation is part of understanding, understanding is part of discoveredness and discoveredness is part of being-in-the-world. We shall proceed in this order and explain them in terms of language-games and language-game-objects (therefore, these Heideggerian concepts are not exhaustively clarified in themselves in terms of Heidegger's own phenomenology).

Of considering, Heidegger qualifies in his statement as "consideration of something as something". This "as what", to Heidegger, is brought out by interpretation, as he says: "[t]he interpretation appresents the what-for of a thing and so *brings our* the reference of 'in-order-to'. It brings to prominence 'as what' the encountered thing can be taken, how it is to be understood. The primary form of all interpretation as the cultivation of understanding is *the consideration [Ansprechen] of something in terms of its 'as what', considering something as something.*" (*History of the Concept of Time*, p. 261). Meaning one interprets, by considering something as something. Considering is what allows one to say this thing *is* something, it is therefore the identifying act. Accordingly, interpretation is what cultivates this identifying act. Since to say that (the entity) *a* is (known as, or identified as) *a*, it must be possible in the first place to also say, that (the entity) *a* is (identified as) *b* or *c*, otherwise, the identifying act (i.e. considering) would be completely meaningless. There is no point in considering, and thereby also interpreting, in the context where *not-a* can never be the case. This cultivation of consideration, i.e. interpretation, is therefore to "find out" the "as-what", so that consideration can become possible. It is, so to speaking, finding the piece that best fits the puzzle. This considering is indeed what we discuss language-game-objects achieves in a language-game. When some object is considered "as something", it means the language-user lets that object to take the role of that language-game-object in that language-game, and he acts accordingly. "In thus bringing out the *what-for* and the *for-the-sake-of-which* of something, the incomprehensibility is removed, the meaning of meaningfulness is made *explicit, it is put into words*" (ibid.). When something is "*put into words*", it therefore receives the role of that language-game-object and its associated properties, we can therefore use those language-game-objects to achieve our goals through language-games, i.e. the what-for and the for-the-sake-of-which. Furthermore, Heidegger says: "[t]he interpretation can draw the conceptuality belonging to the beings to be interpreted from these themselves, or else the interpretation can force those beings into concepts to which they are opposed in accordance with their kind of being" (*Being and Time*, pp. 145-146). By considering an object as something, thereby giving them the role in that language-game, one can give that object a role that it properly fulfills or not. This is, for example, what we do when making hypotheses after observing natural phenomena. When we find some odd physical phenomena around us hard to explain, we can state explicitly what we think this phenomenon is, and the next step of the language-game is to formulate an experiment according to what we learned from science and perform it, if the hypothesis were wrong, we do not observe the phenomenon that should occur if it were correct. By forming falsifiable hypothesis and attempt to use an experiment to falsify it, we try to test whether we have assigned something

a proper role in the language-game, to test whether we can really consider this something as that language-game-object. Considering something as something is not only a matter of forming scientific hypothesis, in our everyday lives, we are always considering things around us *as something* and act toward those things the way we consider them to be. It is because of this considering and interpretation, we can make mistakes, or even deceive and manipulate by “[forcing] those beings into concepts to which they are opposed in accordance with their kind of being” (ibid.), in other words, mislead others into letting those things be the improper language-game-objects and play improper roles in language-games.

Of understanding, Heidegger says: “*The enactment on the level of being [Seinsvollzug] of those possibilities of being which we call discoveredness we shall designate as understanding*” (*History of the Concept of Time*, p. 257). “[A]s understanding, Dasein projects its being upon possibilities [...] Interpretation is not the acknowledgment of what has been understood, but rather the development of possibilities projected in understanding” (*Being and Time*, p. 144). On the level of language-games, the as-a-language-game-object is achieved through interpretation, while the possibilities for language-game-objects to be what they are exist in language-games. Only because there are language-games, can there be roles in it that need to be fulfilled, so that language-games are played. Furthermore, Heidegger says: “[i]n its character of project, understanding constitutes existentially what we call the sight [Sicht]” (*Being and Time*, p. 142), this sight is a “circumspection” (*Umsicht*, or around-sight) that looks around, and “[t]he seeing of this sight is always already understanding and interpreting. It contains in itself the explicitness of referential relations (of the in-order-to) which belong to the totality of relevance in terms of which what is simply encountered is understood” (*Being and Time*, pp. 144-145). To understand is to know one’s way around the language-game, it is, therefore, an “enactment”, since it is not only about the language-game-objects in language-games, but also about their relation and relevance to each other. This is perhaps made clear by another statement from Heidegger: “When I say to another, ‘you have understood me’, I mean thereby, ‘You know where you’re at with me as well as with yourself.’ Understanding in this sense gives the authentic original sense, that is, *understanding is the discoveredness of the whereat-being with something*, how matters stand with it, the discoveredness of the standing [*Bewandtnis*] which it has with the environing world, my own Dasein, and the being of others” (*History of the Concept of Time*, p. 257) We know our friends and family’s standing with us, so we know the kind of language-games we play among them, and because they also know their standing with us, they reciprocate the relation. On the other hand, when we do not know our standing with someone or something, we do not understand

each other, we form false conceptions and play the incorrect language-games and give them roles that do not befit them, we, therefore, do not understand that person. The same can be said with regard to impersonal language-game-objects as well, such that it is possible that when we do not understand a topic of discussion and try to form opinions on it, we can come off as not knowing what we are talking about.

Understanding is the *enactment* of discoveredness. Regarding discoveredness, says Heidegger: “the disclosedness of the world itself along with the fact that being-in-the-world is in turn co-discovered, define the unified phenomenon which we call *discoveredness*.” (*History of the Concept of Time*, p. 253) Discoveredness is therefore related to the disclosedness of the world and being-in-the-world. Of disclosedness, Heidegger says: “The world is at any given time not only *disclosed*, in letting something encountered in concern, in its meaningfulness as the oriented wherein of the being of Dasein, [...]” (ibid.) The world is therefore disclosed by letting something encountered in concern. *Concern (besorgen)* to Heidegger is a mode of what he calls *care*. Furthermore, Heidegger writes: “Since being-in-the-world is essentially care, being-together-with things at hand could be taken in our previous analyses as *taking care* of them, while being with the Dasein-with of others encountered within the world could be taken as *concern*.”¹ (*Being and Time*, p. 186) As previously mentioned, because “being-in-the-world is essentially care”, that means *care* and *world*, where those which we *care* about exist, require our attention.

Our encounters with things “under the guidance of the everyday being-in-the-world” (*Being and Time*, p. 66) is called by Heidegger, our “*dealings in [Umgang in] the world with innerworldly beings*” (ibid.). “Such dealings are already dispersed in manifold ways of taking care. [...] Phenomenologically pre-thematic beings, what is used and produced, become accessible when we put ourselves in the place of taking care in the world” (*Being and Time*, p. 67). Our dealings in such innerworldly beings (the “as-what” or language-game-objects) is our way of taking care of the things around us. Heidegger calls “the beings encountered in taking care *useful things [Zeug]*” (*Being and Time*, p. 68) and “[a] useful thing is essentially ‘something in-order-to.’” (ibid.) Furthermore, Heidegger says:

1 The word concern in *Being and Time* has the original German expression of *fürsorge*, the phrase taking care has the original German expression of *besorgen*, while in *History of the Concept of Time*, concern is translated from *besorgen*. Both *besorgen* and *fürsorge* have their roots in the German word *Sorge*, which can be translated as care in English, a translation that both books agree on. Both *fürsorge* and *besorgen* are modes of *Sorgen*, i.e. care, the difference is that *fürsorge* “involves human issues” (SuZ, Translator’s Preface, XXV) while *besorgen* “refers more to errands and matters that one takes care of or settles” (ibid.). For the purpose of this essay I shall simply use care or taking care to suggest a general usage of this idea in order to avoid confusion since the differentiation is unnecessary here.

In accordance with their character of utility, useful things always are *in terms of* their belonging to other useful things: writing utensils, pen, ink, paper, desk blotter, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These “things” never show themselves initially by themselves, in order then to fill out a room as a sum of real things. What we encounter as closet to us, although we do not grasp it thematically, is the room, not as what is “between the four walls” in a geometrical, spatial sense, but rather as something useful for living. On the basis of this an “organization” shows itself, and in this organization any “individual” useful thing shows itself. A totality of useful things is always already discovered *before* the individual useful thing. (*Being and Time*, p. 68)

“Being-in-the-world as taking care of things, is *taken in by* [benommen] the world which it takes care of.” (*Being and Time*, p. 61) To give it a short summary: being-in-the-world is our living among things and dealing with them such that they present their “in-order-to”. Such in-order-to has a sense of totality, meaning it’s context-based. A pen is placed on the desk in a study, such that one may sit in front of the desk and use the pen to write down one’s work, or a pen may be placed on the counter in a bank such that one can sign documents with it. One brings out the worldly character of a pen by using the pen in both cases, but the pens in these two cases have different relations with their surroundings. Having dealings with things as such is a *taking care* in the world. World, to Heidegger, is therefore the “space” where taking care of things as such can occur. Heidegger’s conception of world seems to be shared to a certain degree by Wittgenstein, even in his early work *Tractatus*, where he says: “The world is the totality of facts, not of things.” (*Tractatus*, 1.1), where “[w]hat is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts” (*Tractatus*, 2), and “[a]n atomic fact is a combination of objects (entities, things)” (*Tractatus*, 2.01), furthermore, he says “[j]ust as we cannot think of spatial objects at all apart from space, or temporal objects apart from time, so we cannot think of any object apart from the possibility of its connexion with other things” (*Tractatus*, 2.0121). The world is where *care* (for things and people) can happen, where objects have connections with each other, and therefore, where language-games can happen.

A language-game-object, *interpreted* through the *understanding* of language-games, in its relation with other language-game-objects is a display of how one *takes care* of things in the world. Furthermore, as Heidegger writes: “Interpretation does not, so to speak, throw a ‘significance’ over what is nakedly objectively present and does not stick a value on it, but what is encountered in the world is always in a relevance which is disclosed in the understanding of world, a relevance which is made explicit by interpretation”

(*Being and Time*, p. 145). As we use language, we do not first “decide” what language-game we play or what language-game-object we assign to some object present, we are always already interpreting and understanding, therefore in some way playing language-games with language-game-objects. If anything “decides” here, it is language-game-objects and language-games that are decided by our *care* and dealings with things around us, language-game-object is interpretation and understanding made explicit. Language-game-objects and language-games therefore bring out the character of one’s world and how one deals with it. Of course, as an example, in the case of not recognizing an object, someone can tell us what that object is, therefore deciding the language-game-object here, to guide (or even *decide*) our dealings with this object. However, even before this object is decided *as-a* to us, our own dealing with it, i.e. care, has already begun, which is why we would ask what this thing is in the first place, and that someone else tells us this thing is *a* means that this thing has already been cared as *a* before we have come into contact with it.

Wittgenstein says in *Philosophical Investigations*: “If a lion could talk, we wouldn’t be able to understand it” (*Philosophical Investigations*, “Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment”, §327) If a lion talks, its dealings with its world would be made explicit. We wouldn’t be able to understand it, because we wouldn’t be able to understand how a lion *takes care of its world*. We say lions hunt and feed. “Hunt” and “feed” are activities we humans perform, they are therefore *our* dealings with *our* world. A hunter says: “I’m going out hunting”, and is thereby expected to return with hunted animals for food, and their skin to be tanned for leather, etc. A farmer says: “I’m going to feed the animals”, and the animals are thereby expected to have their hunger satiated so that they can continue to be productive in ways as farmed animals. These are the language-games a farmer or a hunter with plays with their families or communities, thus these are their dealings with the world. We can understand the farmer and the hunter because we can be a part of such dealings. We say lions hunt and feed because we use our own ways of dealing with our world to understand how they can deal with their world. If a lion talks, its language-games and language-game-objects would be decided by its dealings with its world, and they would be meaningful only because of the way the lion deals with its world, “hunt” and “feed” would therefore become different and perhaps even feel absurd to us. “[T]o imagine a language means to imagine a form of life” (*Philosophical Investigations*, §19), we have to imagine how a lion would live as a lion in order to imagine a lion’s language that we can understand. To a lesser extent, this is just like how it can be difficult to understand why the ancient Greeks would worship their arbitrary and vengeful gods. We don’t *understand* their world, how they *took care* of those things, how the *worldly character* of things are presented through

their *understanding* and *interpretation* of things around them and the relations those things have with them, relations they established through the personification of nature as gods. Saying prayers, paying homages along with making sacrifices are the language-games that the ancient Greeks played in order to live as ancient Greeks among ancient Greeks. Language-game-objects in language-games present what Heidegger calls the worldly characters of those things that take on the role of those language-game-objects. In such a way, words are meaningful as language-game-objects in language-games because we use those words and establish relations and dealings with things and people around us. Such relations and dealings show our ways around those things, they are thus our ways of understanding. They are ultimately what, in a manner of speaking, open the world for

us [4].

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