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What I would like to do this afternoon is to outline some of Joyce's thoughts on the subject of language, and to draw some parallels between his views, those of classical psycho-analytic theory, and the work of Wittgenstein. My primary aim will be to explore images or metaphors of language use, and not to engage with the never-ending complexities of Joycean studies, in which, some twenty years ago I occasionally indulged. Yes, I was one of these sad people who traced the movements of his characters on the street maps of Dublin, and subscribed to the delightfully titled Joyce Newslitter, and sometimes wrote replies on my tripewriter. But, in coming back to the subject after many years I find that my old anorak no longer fits. I still regard Joyce as the greatest creative novelist, but after having logged on to various websites to see the current state of Joycean play, I logged off fairly swiftly with Molly Bloom's favourite expression in mind: Oh, Rocks!

Although Joyce wrote much, he is primarily known for two novels, Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. Ulysses has been described as the ultimate novel of 'the common man', and Finnegans Wake as the ultimate use of the English language, although it contains references to dozens of languages. Ulysses takes place during the waking hours. Finnegans Wake explores the world of sleep and dreams. But, light or dark, both books are suffused with the theme of pattern and repetition. Human concerns repeat, and the events described in both novels lock into their different themes a with marvellous complexity. Nothing happens in isolation, and the multiple metaphors of language bind their various usage together. But one has to start somewhere--even if Joyce began Finnegans Wake with the word with which it ends. With Ulysses the beginning was more historical.

The original Ulysses is the story of a man's journey to return to his home and his wife, after having done his duty as a warrior. As was also the lot of Socrates, a soldier by profession, a philosopher by inclination. Ulysses' journey was riddled with many vicissitudes and temptations. While he fights his way through this and that, his wife -Penelope- has temptations of her own. With many thinking that she must be a widow after all those years, many suitors sought her hand. She half-promises to give herself to them when she has finished her weaving. But each night she unravelled the day's work. How odd, that to ravel--and to unravel--have the same dictionary meaning. There is no distinction between the making and the unmaking. The loom of language works in many ways. For the therapist, too, words move this way and that, and so we shuttle between the imaginings of their source and the possibilities of their intent. We ravel and unravel in equal measure. But Penelope was playing for time, or perhaps playing with it. As also happens in therapy. While we live, the work is never finished.

In his re-working of Homer's epic James Joyce turns the tale into the everyday. He situates it in Dublin on the 16th of June 1904, to commemorate the day on which he first 'walked out' with the woman who was to share his life, Nora Barnacle. On learning of her surname, Joyce's father remarked "she'll never leave him". And indeed, she did not, despite having many good reasons for a departure. Joyce's father had a good sense of humour. For a time he held a post as a Council official, and was once challenged on his spelling of a name in a legal document. He had put two L's where only one was needed. He asked "Which 'L' would you like me to remove?" Like his son, he was clearly a man of letters. And this question, I suspect, might also have amused Wittgenstein, as it is a very good example of a confusion of language games. After all it makes sense to ask which of two identical objects, such as chairs or vases you might wish me to remove, but to ask that of two identical letters ...

But to return to Dublin.

Joyce's tale begins at 8'o clock in the morning and continues into the early hours of the next day when the of the bells the Angelus are ringing, and the abandoned wife lies, masturbating, in her bed, thinking about life and love, and in particular her current lover, Blazes Boylan.

The novel has two main characters, Leopold Bloom, who holds echoes of the Wandering Jew legend, and Joyce as a young man, calling himself Stephen Dedalus. In the Greek legend Daedalus, was the designer of the minotaur's labyrinth--which for Joyce was the labyrinth of language with its maze of possibilities--in which

many blank walls are found, forcing the seeker to return, once again, to where he comes from, and from what he is trying to escape. As good a metaphor for psychotherapy as you're likely to find.

In the Greek legend Deadalus was the father of Icarus, who flew too close to the Sun, and melted his wings. He got too close to Apollo, the god of reason, and paid the ultimate price of those who seek the position of perfect knowledge. Nowadays, reason often devolves to the theories of Descartes--also a soldier and a philosopher--who meditated much on whether wax was 'really' a solid or a liquid, but did not take account of the small splash in the Aegean that might have answered his question a thousand years before. Joyce, I suspect, would not have been troubled by the various states of wax. For him, as with Wittgenstein, words do not return to fixed meanings, but gain their sense from the ebb and flow of their application in the moment. Or, in Icarus' case, in the spiral of their descent.

And in that image we find Joyce's central, philosophical theme: the spiral of life and death. His abiding philosopher was Giambattista Vico, with whom he felt a great affinity. This affinity was intellectual, emotional and magical. Joyce was a deeply superstitious man, who shared with the Ancients the ability to spot omens in everyday events--as indeed do many psychoanalysts. While analysts may not be too good at spotting the significance of a flight of crows, they are excellent when it comes to interpreting the forgotten umbrella. But what clinched Vico's importance for Joyce was that he once lived in Vico Road, Dublin. Again, the magic of words. And he shared with that philosopher a dread of thunder storms. A friend suggested "I supposed thunder affects your nervous system". "No" replied Joyce. "I'm frightened." (Ellmann 1982:394)

And here, too, there is a moment of connection between Joyce and Wittgenstein. Joyce was offered a 'technical' explanation for his emotional response, a conjectured causal affect upon his nervous system. Exactly the kind of pseudo-scientific thinking that Wittgenstein (1998c:18) consistently rejected when it was applied to the realm of human psychology. Such ways of thinking "lead us only into complete darkness."

Vico's philosophy was one of circles and cycles. Everything repeats in a spiral form, both up and down. Vico called these returns ricorsos, and like Nietzsche drew on philology to explore how the development of language, specifically metaphor, shaped the history of ideas, and the manner in which a particular age was framed. Of course, the return of the past in variant forms is the bread and butter of much analytic theory, be it Freudian or Jungian. Both of these thinkers returned to the image of the sea, whose capricious moods were also the source of so many of Ulysses' travails. Freud with his concept of Inherited Racial Memory, in which he conjectured that all of us of held latent sensations of the amoeba, the fish, the earliest creatures; and Jung with his vision of the Collective Unconscious, and though holding a less genetic paradigm also endowed us with ancient memories. Here, Joyce undoubtedly rejoiced. His work is full of arcane, mythological references. Ancient words surface unexpectedly in pub conversations. But, for him, the past of childhood and the inheritance of history has no 'iron memorial aspect', but holds an 'individuating rhythm'. As Ellmann (1982:145) puts it, for Joyce the human being is a river rather than a statue. Innumerable themes wind their ways within our life, but the real source of the river's power can never be found. It is immersed in the waters of life, as symbolised by Joyce in the flow of the Liffey.

With regard to the founders of analytic theories, Joyce had this to say about the two men whose work sets much of today's agendas: My imagination grows when I read Vico, as it doesn't when I read Freud or Jung. (Ellmann,1982:693)

Joyce had an uneasy relationship with both analysts, but for very different reasons. After the publication of Ulysses, many sections of which are written in the style of an internal monologue, or the so-called 'stream of consciousness', Joyce was often accused of stealing this idea from Freud's description of 'free association'. This particularly irked Joyce as he explicitly credited the influence of a French writer, Edouard Dujardin, (1991) for developing the idea of the internal monologue, and actually offered to pay for the re-publication of this author's work as a tribute. But, most importantly, Joyce's use of the internal monologue is anything but 'free association'--frier einfall. It is highly structured, and his character's thoughts are artfully arranged to repeat the various themes that Joyce is drawing together. In fact, specific words in his working manuscripts were often underlined in different colours as an aide memoir for their development in future chapters. It might be more fair to suggest that a writer such as Jack Kerouac, who insisted on recording his immediate reactions to the world (Charters, 1974:130), albeit a world generally experienced under the influence of more exotic chemicals than Joyce's favoured white wine, was the closer literary heir to Freud's primary injunction. But what of Jung?

Joyce knew Jung, for he sought him out to treat his daughter, Lucia, who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and at the time Jung also offered to analyse Joyce. A suggestion that was turned down flat, even though Joyce's patron at the time, Edith Rockefeller, who happened to be in therapy with Jung, offered to pay for it. Before too long this frame deviation was to have serious consequences for Joyce, when Edith Rockefeller abruptly terminated the monthly payments. Joyce's main biographer, Richard Ellmann (1982:468), interviewed Jung about this in 1953. Jung acknowledged that he had advised Edith Rockefeller to cease her patronage of another of his patients, for he felt that her bounty interfered with the man's ability to stand on his own feet. Jung couldn't recall if he had made the same suggestion regarding Joyce, but neither did he mention the fact that Edith Rockefeller was also instrumental in setting up a foundation in his own name. Much more could be said of the two men's relationship, for Jung was both complimentary in print about Joyce's work, and highly critical of his personality, which he described as that of a latent psychotic (Ellmann, 1982:628) Ultimately, Joyce came to believe that his own name, when translated into German, was anathema for Jung, for Joyce in German is Freud. In Finnegans Wake he relegated both men to tweedledum and tweedledee, and, when referring to the psychic problems of infants observed that children 'were jung and easily freudened'. But enough of this. For the moment let us just acknowledge that some names carry greater weight than others, for all sorts of conjectured reasons, and start to explore a general background from which all our thoughts might emerge, as Joyce saw it.

Although not influenced by Freud, there are moments of striking similarity. Or, perhaps more accurately, strikingly similar observations on the nature of language. For Joyce this reaches its peak with Finnegans Wake. This is a book about a pub landlord dreaming. His dreams interweave his family, his neighbours and his customers. They are part of an enormous cast that acts out the whole of Irish history as he sleeps. Each character has many meanings, and often their names shift and change to denote their new roles. By playing with the syllables of their names, by shifting the associations can than be made from them, and by attending to the actual sound of the words, underlying themes can be found. For example, the landlord nurses dark desires for his daughter. The word 'incest' never appears, but when he dreams of her, he also dreams of 'insects'. In his dream the landlord takes on the name Earwicker acoustically close to an earwig. He is also know as Persse O'Reilley. In French the earwig is perce-oreille.

As another example, the four saints, Mathew, Mark, Luke and John (who symbolise the four provinces of Ireland) gradually come together as one character, called Mamalujo. A single name created from the first phoneme of their individual names. Joyce, like Freud, catches meanings in associations, condensations and acoustic similarities.

While Joyce rejected the idea of an unconscious process (Ellmann, 1982:436), he did however have a concept of what he called the 'underthought', and this plays a very important part in his creation of the interior monologue. What we read on the page--an apparent stream of free associations--in many cases requires the reader to supply the missing elements that underpin the presented text: the half-formed thoughts and sensations that appear to be responded to by the thinker. The thoughts that the thinker appears to know, but does not wish to acknowledge, at the same time as he is actually responding to them.

Joyce was trying to capture the complexity of thought, and the fact--as Wittgenstein and Heidegger have also wrestled with--that it's very hard to say what thinking actually is, as there is no clear paradigm. We all know that we can sit down and 'think' about something, and at such moments our thoughts are essentially silent speech, which take a certain amount of time to formulate, just as spoken language demands. But, in such instances speech appears to formalise the sensation or idea that the words we use now attempt to portray, but are part and parcel of the thoughts themselves and make them comprehensible. As Heidegger (1996:4) puts it: language is always ahead of us. At a mundane level, we may be awakened at night by an unfamiliar noise, and immediately respond to the possibility that a burglar is in the house, without that thought being spelled out. This comes moments later, when we may also consider the possibility of a noisy neighbour, or a sudden gust of wind through an open window. While such experiences are extremely common, it seems impossible to capture what is actually taking place, as the experience itself is instantaneous, and our reflections are themselves framed by an unconsidered thought that, moments later, we attempt to consider, but generally without considering what has laid down the ground of our considerations.

As Wittgenstein (1993:154) observes:

We could try a guess--in other words conduct a thought experiment but Wittgenstein (1993:155) reminds us that:

It is not just that a real experiment is something that is physically carried out, it is the fact that a real experiment might have a totally unexpected outcome. While I might conjecture many possible outcomes to a thought experiment, it stands to reason that I couldn't imagine an outcome that I can't imagine. This might have some implications for those who engage in self-analysis. While a rigorous and honest self-appraisal may throw up some unpalatable truths, and force us to reconsider our ourselves, the endeavour is inevitably constrained by the parameters of the project itself a form of underthought--that in their different ways both Descartes and Freud did not address. Freud in particular, who sought insights into his 'unconscious' motives. But how could such a conjectured backdrop be brought to language?

Wittgenstein (1993:155) challenges this idea with the request that we

He (1993:107) also asks us to consider the question:

"Did you mean something different when you said each word, or did you mean the same thing throughout the whole sentence?"

So what--if anything--actually accompanies my thinking? Wittgenstein (1998c:148) observes that the only obvious accompaniments are my tone of voice, my gestures, and so on. After all, we know that the truth or falsity of a statement such as "I'm very pleased to meet you." is not held in the words themselves, but is perceived in the general behaviour of the speaker. So would we call a certain tone of voice or movement of the hand 'thinking'? Although Wittgenstein points out that no one is likely to do this, he does not discount his question. And those who have read the work of Eugene Gendlin, much influenced by Wittgenstein, might suggest that physical sensations and gestures could indeed be an aspect of language. Indeed Wittgenstein (1994:17) also pursued this, somewhat cryptically, when he commented "I really do think with my pen, for my head often knows nothing of what my hand is writing." Of course, Freud (1991:197) also wrote much on the manner in which language shows in the body, with his concept of 'organ speech', but it's a theory entangled with assumed psychic energies, mental mechanisms and so on, that tend to distract us from the immediacy of gesture, and returned him--and us--to a priori assumptions. The underthought.

Freud seeks a cause, a return to something essential, which highlights a wish to provide 'thinking' with a single meaning; but this it does not have. Once again, we have become bewitched by language, and are hoping that the word 'thinking' can point to a specific form of behaviour in the manner what words such a 'running' or 'jumping' can accomplish. But the word 'thinking' does not necessarily apply to some form of cognitive process, and we risk being bewitched by images of gear wheels turning in the brain, or microscopic amounts of dopamine leaping from synapse to synapse like chemical goats.

So let's now turn to an example of the underthought that Joyce gives us, and see if this has any parallels within Wittgenstein's ideas.

In Ulysses Leopold Bloom is walking around Dublin, not wanting to go home because he suspects--rightly--that his wife is entertaining her lover, Blazes Boylan. Joyce does not spell out Bloom's concerns, for Bloom's underthought is assumed to be shared by his readers. Instead he describes a scene, and leaves it to us to make sense of it by filling in the 'gaps'. We 'know' what thought Bloom is trying to withhold, and it is this persistent thought that underpins those aspects of the world that come to his attention. He is surrounded by a million sights, but only some attract his eye, as they obliquely reflect what he does not want to reflect upon.

Bloom is walking by the Liffey, watching seagulls flying above a small boat which is anchored in the water, and to which is attached an advertising sign: Kino's 11/--Trousers. Two thoughts occur to him, firstly that seagulls might 'carry diseases' and also what a good idea it might be to advertise a product in such a manner.

Wonder if he pays rent to the corporation. How can you own water really? It's always flowing in the stream of life. Because life is a stream. All kinds of places are good for ads. The quack doctor for the clap used to be stuck up in all the greenhouses. [A slang term for a public toilet] ... Got fellows to stick them up or stick them up himself for that matter on the q.t. running in to loosen a button. Flybynight.... Some chap with a dose burning him.

If he ...?

O!

Eh?

No.... No

No, no. I don't believe it. He wouldn't, surely.

No, no.

Mr Bloom moved forward, raising his troubled eyes. Think no more about that. After one. Timeball on the ballastoffice is down. Dunsink time. Fascinating little book that is of Sir Roberts Balls ... on Parallax.... It's Greek.... O rocks. (Ulysses, page 126.)

Bloom's underthought shows itself in various ways. He sees seagulls, possibly carrying diseases flying over a boat that advertises trousers. He ponders on who can own the nature of flowing water, and then thinks of a public toilet, in which he has seen advertisements offering cures for venereal diseases; but who can own that which both flows into us, and from us--like life--but what may happen if they do? The underthought--that Blazes Boylan might infect his wife is addressed, but is met with a series of denials. Think no more about that. Clearly the underthought is not unconscious, as Bloom knows only too well what he does not want to think about. But instead he moves into the abstract, into the architecture of the day, as often happens within therapy. Bloom observes that the timeball is 'down'. Possibly like the floating trousers. In 1904 Dublin held, not to Greenwich meantime, but to Dunsink time, there was an observatory which held a large ball on a tower which dropped at 1:00pm. Who is dropping what at this moment? But still Bloom's underthought continues to inform his concerns. He starts thinking about Sir Robert Ball, a name not unconnected with his concerns, who has theory of 'parallax'. Parallax describes the phenomena of double vision. Of seeing a certain scene either this way or that. If you place a finger in front of your left eye, so that it occludes the object of your vision, but then shut your left eye, your right eye will see something previously hidden. Having two eyes--and the pun in English is hard to resist--always gives us a problem. There is 'this', but there could be 'that'. All words hold their opposite. Which view is denied, and which is brought into light? Joyce is drawing our attention to the denied by describing how its shows itself in what has just been thought. And when it shows itself to us, in conversations, therapeutic or otherwise, it is this shared, conscious sense of the world and its possibilities that allow us to 'fill in the gaps' and make some sense of what is being related to us. But, as is so evident when working with those whose language and culture differs from our own, we cannot be complacent.

Here Joyce plays with this possibility, again giving words to Leopold Bloom that convey something to the reader that--in this case--seem to pass Bloom by. Bloom is familiar with Catholic words and customs, but only at second hand. He watches a priest enter a church and speculates on what might be taking place within. But the words he uses convey something else. Observing the priest he thinks:

Of course, this is Joyce having a go at priests, and their unwanted attention in his youth. The rere, the door behind the alter, is followed by sodality, a brotherhood, but together have other connotations. Bloom knows the words, but is oblivious to their implications in his own thinking, for the rites and wrongs of the Catholic church were never a lived part of his world. Thus he is thinking something that holds a meaning of which he is unaware. This is quite unlike some observation from classical psychoanalysis, which might suggest that an innocuous phrase reveals a latent, and personal wish in symbolised form, but illustrates more how the collective use of words can pass the thinker by, not for reasons of pathology, but for not listening to the various implications of their usage.

As Wittgenstein(1993:108) claims: It perplexes us that there is no moment at which the thought of a sentence is completely present.

In his talk at the Dialectics of Liberation conference in 1967 R.D Laing (1968:14) addressed the matter of 'the obvious', declaring it to be:

'that which stands in our way, in front of or over against oneself. One has to begin by recognizing that it exists for oneself'.

In many respects the underthought is an expression of the 'obvious'. It is what forms the unconsidered background of who we are, and gains it power from the prevailing collective, which frames us all in space and time. Perhaps it is the central language game which expresses a commonality of a particular culture. While Laing demands that we take steps to recognise this for ourselves, essential for the psychotherapist, whether working with those who share our language or do not, Joyce assumes that his readers already have this facility, or they wouldn't understand what he was describing. But he also shows how language may pass us by. In the first example Bloom knows only too well what he doesn't want to engage with, in the second not a syllable catches his attention. He hears no significance in what passes through his thoughts: the obvious is what he sees, caught by the literal description.

But the literal does not take us very far, for it omits the complex backdrop to its own expression; a background that might defy any ultimate analysis. Wittgenstein(1980:107) puts it like this:

This observation seems to capture much of Joyce's attitude towards the capacity of language to delineate our experience. There is no single cause or explanation for human activity, but it might become comprehensible through repetition, although, unlike traditional psychoanalysis, there is no assumed starting point. Life exists in the 'hurly-burly--where our actions are all 'mixed up together'. One would be hard-pressed to find a novel that captures the hurly-burly and the bustle of life more acutely than Ulysses. But I was particularly struck by Wittgenstein's description of the background to our understand as being 'a very complicated filigree pattern', and speaking of this in the metaphor of a picture. Joyce was very taken by the images in the Book of Kells, and kept reproductions of its pages by his desk. For him these are depictions of the complex intertwining of words and images, from which meanings emerge. They refer to something clearly illustrated, but at the same time push us beyond it, if we grasp the underthought, the world of the illuminators. It is a world that hints at a world beyond. Much as Freud also wished to direct our attention.

In Wittgenstein's words (1994:16)

And also (1998:36) that:

Of course, the concept of an 'dynamic unconscious' could fill the gap. Here we have an underground world in which intra-psychic elves ply their endless trade, hastily shifting our embarrassing moments out of sight, or artfully converting them during the night into more amenable forms; of pokers, umbrellas, handbags, vases, of priests with their crosiers raised as they march into the nave, of tables waiting to be laid, and so on, and so in. In fact the very kind of symbolism that Joyce derided as 'mechanical' (Ellman, 1962:382) Joyce was not persuaded by the concept of the unconscious. "Why all this fuss and bother about the mystery of the unconscious?" he said to his friend Frank Budgen. "What about the mystery of the conscious?" (Ellmann, 1982:436). Instead of the shared unconscious that many analyst conjecture, Joyce's underthought suggests more of a shared consciousness. And here he might agree with Nietzsche (1974:298) who believed that language and consciousness arose together out of a need to communicate our desires and feelings, and this in turn demanded that we 'know' what we are thinking and feeling so that we can share what we sense.

Here Nietzsche is clearly identifying the function of language with consciousness, and it is interesting that this conflation tends to be reversed by those analysts who were influenced by the trend of thought he set in motion, and who see 'unconscioness' as the unifying element. Joyce focuses on those moments when a thought is evoked by the circumstances in which we find ourselves--the shared world that we inhabit--and our personal responses to it, which also ultimately return to shared concerns. If I have no awareness of burglars, and the part they play within the current systemization of the world, the unexpected sound at night could not evoke their possibility. Brought up in another time and place, I might surmise an attack of demons, or the wandering souls of the undead.

Wittgenstein's use of the metaphor 'a very complicated filigree pattern', implicitly references his concept of 'family resemblances' and his image of a length of rope that is made up of innumerable strands. None of the fibres run the full length of the rope, but taken together they make the shape of the rope unmistakable. With his image of 'family resemblances' (1997:32) he draws our attention to how we see similarities within a group, and also the intricacy of this observation. Many members of the same family may have a similar shape of nose, a certain complexion, a common shade of hair colour. But, of course, people totally unrelated may also have the same shape of nose, the same colour of hair; but they lack something else that separates them from the general sense of their being related. It is never one, isolated factor that allows us to see the father within the son, the grandmother within the granddaughter. All of these observations are a part of

Wittgenstein's general attack on psychological reductionism, where the language game of science, so useful when employed in chemistry for identifying essential elements, is illegitimately transposed to the exploration of human behaviour, as if clear and perfect functions can similarly be established. This central contribution that Wittgenstein has made to philosophy--the language game--draws our attention to the fact that words do not have fixed meanings, but gain their sense from how they are employed in the moment. The dictionary may define certain historical usage with its focus on etymology, but it lags behind language and in some ways sterilizes it.

Some months ago I overheard a man purchasing a lottery ticket. He told the sales assistant that he hoped that his numbers would come up.

Who would not wish for this? But remove the 's', and we have someone wishing that their number comes up. A most unlikely request, given that such a phrase is a metaphor for their death. With the aid of the Oxford English Dictionary we can trace the historical derivation of this phrase to 1834, but we can't offer a rule as to how the addition or subtraction of a single letter can so dramatically alter what is being conveyed in an, otherwise identical, sentence. Such a suggestion would imply that we can formulate rules as to how language can be used in meaningful ways. As this claim would demand that we have access to all future usage of language, it is patently absurd. A thought to bear in mind for anyone who has to write a syllabus with its attendant 'learning outcomes', or is asked to delineate 'effective practices' for their therapeutic modality. How can we possibly know the outcome of a seminar for each of its participants, or what might be an effective intervention in a particular case?

With such demands increasingly imposed on those who teach and practice psychotherapy, and whose work is endlessly constrained by a burgeoning variety of regulations, each one attempting a greater precision of meaning, and by doing so implicitly acknowledging the hopelessness of such a task, we have to ask if such attempts to control the language of 'effective practice' is the best undertaking for a profession that simultaneously seeks to encourage a client's spontaneous response to their various encounters with life. In this respect I believe that Joyce, perhaps more than most writers, gives us endless examples of how language shows itself in our thoughts and action. He illustrates its complexities, puns, tropes, and its sheer capacity to delight and surprise us. Not that everyone was impressed. One critic rounded on Joyce, declaring that he found his puns trivial. "Very true" Joyce replied, "But some of them are quadrivial". (Ellmann, 1982:546)

Many years ago I attended a workshop on the subject of 'supervision'. As I understand the concept of supervision, it is undertaken so that therapists have the opportunity to explore their attitudes, and possible confusions, with regard to the client's issues, in order to gain a clearer picture of what might be taking place. In short, how well do I know myself, how well do I understand my client, and--most importantly--how well do I understand our shared and different worlds. In this workshop I offered the suggestion that it might have useful to have been in supervision with Dostoevsky, Joyce or Proust, for such writers have dipped their pens deep into the dark wells of human complexity, and have described human frailties with a keen eye. This observation did not meet with general approval. These writers had not been formally trained, they had no grasp of theory, and worst of all, they had not been analysed.

Of course, these were the main reasons for my suggesting the value of their conjectured input in the first place. As psychotherapists, we tend to live in our various small worlds--perhaps getting smaller by the moment as we are forced to demarcate our differences by the UKCP--and when we do engage with films or literature, there is a marked tendency, not to open ourselves to the different views presented to us, but to unravel the threads of their stories, and then re-string them on our familiar loom. Assuring ourselves that our re-weaving depicts what is really going on, and that the garment that emerges has been improved by our additions ...

It can be remarkable difficult to see another side of language, so to speak, especially when our habitual understanding often serves us well. Wittgenstein (1997:194) explored this problem at some length, beginning by asking us to look at an optical illusion, a drawing that can be seen in two different ways. His example was that of a picture that could be seen either as a duck or a rabbit. When we see it as a duck, we do not see it as rabbit, and perhaps we can see only one. He coined the term 'aspect blindness' to describe the phenomena of not being able to understand different usages of the same word, drawing a parallel with colour blindness.

The importance of the concept 'aspect-blindness' lies in the kinship of seeing an aspect and experiencing the meaning of a word, suggesting (1998b:100) that we want to ask:

Many people who are blessed with psychiatric labels experience language in radically different ways, or find satisfaction in the sound of certain words. Joyce, too. Several sections of Finnegans Wake need to spoken aloud, preferably with a Dublin accent, when their sounds will echo, for example, the ripple of water. But an inability to experience the metaphoric is often used as a diagnostic criteria for Asperger's syndrome. While there can be little doubt that this form of aspect blindness puts an individual at a disadvantage in today's world, those diagnosed with Asperger's can see aspects of language that are incomprehensible to the vast majority.

Consider Daniel Tammet (2006:4) who is capable of astonishing feats, such as memorising PI to over 22,000 decimal places. He describes such 'simple tasks' as calculating 13 divided by 97 to a paltry 100 decimal places thus:

"When I divide one number by another, in my head I see a spiral rotating downwards in larger and larger loops, which seem to warp and curve.... When multiplying I see two numbers as distinct shapes. The image changes and a third shape emerges--the correct answer. The process takes a matter of seconds and happens spontaneously."

Imagine trying to teach this method to a child. Imagine doing it yourself. While Tammet's description of calculation appears incomprehensible to me, it is undoubtedly better than mine. It would probably take me days of laborious work to achieve anything approximating his few seconds of spontaneity, much less his exactitude.

Tammet's ability is very rare, and he attributes it to his Asperger's diagnosis, but it is clear that numbers can be represented by abstract shapes and colours just as well as by the more familiar arithmetical notations, in much the same way as the same object can be called by thousands of different words in as many languages.

Of course, it goes without saying that, from Jung onwards, many have suggested that Joyce's facility with language indicated an unsound mind, and some web-sites devoted to an exploration of Autism claim that Wittgenstein, with his rigorous form of writing and his austere, socially isolated lifestyle, were clear evidence for an Asperger's diagnosis. However, as one of the diagnostic criteria for Asperger's is a difficulty in comprehending metaphor--which Tammet acknowledges in his own case-one would be hard pressed to ascribe this to Wittgenstein. But rather than take this further, I would like to end with the suggestion that it may be useful for those of us who, on a daily basis, engage with the problematics of language and thus live in the shadow of Penelope's loom, immerse ourselves from time to time in the works of those who use language so well, and whose novels will continue to illuminate the quandaries of human life with far greater appeal than any theory of human behaviour, however well referenced.

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Thought does not strike us as mysterious while we are thinking, but only when we say, as it were retrospectively: "how was that possible?

A thought experiment comes to much the same as an experiment which is sketched or painted or described instead of being carried out. And so the result of a thought experiment is the fictitious result of a fictitious experiment.

Say a sentence, perhaps "The weather is very fine today." ... Now think the thought of the sentence, but ... without the sentence.

The cold smell of sacred stone called him in. He trod the warm steps, pushing the swingdoors and entered softly by the rere. Something going on: some sodality ...

(Joyce. 1987:66)

We judge an action according to its background within human life, and this background is not monochrome, but we might picture it as a very complicated filigree pattern, which to be sure, we can't copy, but which we can recognize from the general impression it makes. The background is the bustle of life. And our concepts point to something within this bustle. And it is the very concept of 'bustle' that brings about this indefiniteness. For a bustle comes about only through constant repetition. And there is no definite starting point for 'constant repetition'... How could human behaviour be described. Surely only by showing the actions of a variety of humans, as they are all mixed up together. Not what one man is doing now, but the whole hurly-burly, is the background against which we see an action, and it determines our judgements, our concepts, and our reactions.

The inexpressible (what I find enigmatic and cannot express) perhaps provides the background, against which whatever I was able to express acquires meaning.

there is always to be found a dark background, which we are only

later able to bring into the light and express as a thought.

What are you missing if you do not experience the meaning of a word?
--If you cannot utter the word 'bank' by itself, now with one meaning, then with the other, or if you do not find that when you utter a word ten times in a row it loses its meaning, as it were, and becomes a mere sound.