We considered the first of Wittgenstein’s arguments against the Augustinian picture of language.

First, the many uses of language suggest that meaning is not denotation.

Second, definition by *ostension* will often fail, and certainly cannot succeed everywhere.

We also saw the introduction of the following themes:

- PI’s quasi-dialogue form
- Meaning-is-use
- Our internal states are often irrelevant to what we mean
Talk outline

Analysis

Atomism

Family resemblance
Next, Wittgenstein considers the naming relation. Two ideas about naming concern him:

Analysis Ordinary names are not real names.

Atomism Real names name simple objects.

Famously, 1. was Russell’s view. Wittgenstein accepted it in TLP:

Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it. (4.002)

It was Russell who performed the service of showing that the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one. (4.0031)

Wittgenstein looks at two arguments for 1.
First argument for: Ordinary names are not real names

First argument (from PI 39):

1. Real names lose their meaning when their bearers are destroyed.
2. Ordinary names do not lose their meaning when their bearers are destroyed.

∴ 3. Ordinary names are not real names.

Clearly, the argument is valid.

Is it sound?
Premise 1: Real names lose their meaning

Let us first discuss the following point in the argument: that a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it. It is important to note that it is a solecism to use the word “meaning” to signify the thing that ‘corresponds’ to a word. That is to confound the meaning of a name with the bearer of the name. When Mr N.N. dies, one says that the bearer of the name dies, not that the meaning dies. And it would be nonsensical to say this, for if a name ceased to have meaning, it would make no sense to say “Mr N.N. is dead”. (40)
Premise 1: Real names lose their meaning

- When a person dies, their name loses its bearer but not its meaning.
- Of course, proper names aren’t real names.
- But why think things are different for real names?
- Generally, it doesn’t seem that names have to exist at the same time as their bearers to be meaningful.
- Perhaps a name, once meaningful, remains meaningful after the bearer is destroyed.
But have even names that have never been used for a tool got a meaning in that game? – Let’s assume that “X” is such a sign, and that A gives this sign to B – well, even such signs could be admitted into the language-game, and B might have to answer them with a shake of the head. (One could imagine this as a kind of amusement for them.) (42)
Premise 1: Real names lose their meaning

- The name ‘X’ here never had any significance, unlike ‘Mr N.N.’.
- Yet we can imagine it having a role.
- Similarly, fictional names like ‘Sherlock Holmes’ have never referred.
- But we generally regard them as meaningful.
- Do we have good reason to think anything is different for real names?
- Response: how about ‘this’?
- Wittgenstein replies that names are not necessarily paired with a pointing gesture (45).
A second argument (p.I 46):

1. Real names are not analysable into simpler terms.
2. Ordinary names can be analysed into simpler terms.

∴ 3. Ordinary names are not real names.

Wittgenstein’s response is to undermine the motivation for 2.
Premise 2: Ordinary names can be analysed into simpler terms

When I say “My broom is in the corner”, is this really a statement about the broomstick and the brush? Well, it could at any rate be replaced by a statement giving the position of the stick and the position of the brush. And this statement is surely a further analysed form of the first one. – But why do I call it “further analysed”? – Well, if the broom is there, that surely means that the stick and brush must be there, and in a particular relation to one another; and previously this was, as it were, hidden in the sense of the first sentence. Then does someone who says that the broom is in the corner really mean: the broomstick is there, and so is the brush, and the broomstick is fixed in the brush? – If we were to ask anyone if he meant this, he would probably say that he had not specially thought of either the broomstick or the brush. And that would be the right answer. (60)
Premise 2: Ordinary names can be analysed into simpler terms

- Wittgenstein denies that the meaning of
  \textit{B} The broom is in the corner.
  is more clearly shown by
  \textit{B*} The broomstick is in the corner and the brush is in the corner
  and the broomstick is attached to the brush.

- Nevertheless, might \textit{B*} be implicit in \textit{B} in some way?

- E.g. suppose I ask you to count to 100.

- I may not especially think of the step from 58 to 59 but, if you miss it, I’ll think you’ve failed to follow the instruction.
Premise 2: Ordinary names can be analysed into simpler terms

- But does this show that $B$ and $B^*$ don’t nevertheless mean the same?

- Wittgenstein considers two language-games: (a) only the composite objects have names; (b) only the parts have names.

  Does he do the same when he carries out an order in (a) and the corresponding one in (b)? – Yes and no. You may say: “The point of the two orders is the same.” I would say so too. – But it is not clear everywhere what should be called the ‘point’ of an order. ... The essential thing is that this is a lamp, that it serves to give light – what is not essential is that it is an ornament to the room, fills an empty space, and so on. (62)
Premise 2: Ordinary names can be analysed into simpler terms

- This account considers what the person hearing the order goes on to do.
- In this way, it seems to presuppose that meaning is use.
- Meaning is use had previously been applied to names and is here applied to sentences.
- Is there a threat of Wittgenstein begging the question?
Talk outline

Analysis

 Atomism

Family resemblance
 Atomism

- The second doctrine was: real names are names for simple objects.

  Socrates says in the Thaeatetus: “If I am not mistaken, I have heard some people say this: there is no explanation of the primary elements – so to speak – out of which we and everything else are composed; for everything that exists in and of itself can be signified only by names ... In consequence, it is impossible to give an explanatory account of any primary element, since for it, there is nothing other than mere naming; after all, its name is all it has. ...”

  Both Russell’s ‘individuals’ and my ‘objects’ (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) were likewise such primary elements. (46)
First argument for: Real names are names for simple objects

- Also consider:
  
  *being cannot be attributed to an element, for if it did not exist, one could not even name it, and so one could state nothing at all about it.* (50)

- The argument here seems to be:
  1. It never makes sense to ask whether the bearers of real names exist.
  2. It always makes sense to ask whether the bearers of names exist when those bearers are complex.
  3. Every bearer is either simple or complex.
  ∴ 4. Real names are names for simple objects.
Premise 2: bearers of complex names

- Wittgenstein questions 2. by analogy with the standard metre (50).

> There is one thing of which one can state neither that it is 1 metre long, nor that it is not 1 metre long, and that is the standard metre in Paris. – But this is, of course, not to ascribe any remarkable property to it, but only to mark its peculiar role in the game of measuring with a metre-rule.

- The question makes no sense because the standard metre is the final arbiter.

- But the standard metre has no special powers.

- Similarly, whether a question about names is sensible shouldn’t make us postulate a ‘remarkable property’.

- ‘What looks as if it had to exist is part of the language.’ (50)
Premise 2: bearers of complex names

- Perhaps there are standards outside of the language-game.
- E.g. if a name presents as simple what is really complex, it has failed to reflect the structure of the world.
- Perhaps, in an *ideal* language, the argument is convincing.
- Wittgenstein denies that there is such a standard:

  *What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? – The pieces of wood from which it is assembled? Or the molecules, or the atoms? – “Simple” means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense ‘composite’? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the ‘simple parts of a chair’.* (47)
But isn’t a chessboard, for instance, obviously, and absolutely composite? – You’re probably thinking of its being composed of 32 white and 32 black squares. But couldn’t we also say, for instance, that it was composed of the colours black and white and the schema of squares? And if there are different ways of looking at it, do you still want to say that the chessboard is absolutely ‘composite’? – Asking “Is this object composite?” outside a particular game is like what a boy once did when he had to say whether the verbs in certain sentences were in the active or passive voice, and who racked his brains over the question whether the verb “to sleep”, for example, meant something active or passive. (47)
Second argument for: Real names name simple objects.

- Another argument that real names are names for simple objects:
  “What the names in language signify must be indestructible; for it must be possible to describe the state of affairs in which everything destructible is destroyed. And this description will contain words; and what corresponds to these cannot in that case be destroyed, for otherwise the words would have no meaning.” I must not saw off the branch on which I am sitting. (55)
Second argument for: Real names name simple objects.

- The thought is that the world, at base, is made of indestructible, necessarily existent things.
- The real names names these things.
- The thought has its roots in TLP:

  *It is obvious that an imagined world, however different it may be from the real one, must have something – a form – in common with it. *(2.022)

- The argument seems to be:
  1. We can describe a situation where everything destructible is destroyed.
  2. If we can do this, the real names used must name indestructible objects.
  3. The indestructible objects are the simple objects.
  4. Real names name simple objects.
Premise 2: real names name indestructible objects

- Premise 2. again presupposes that bearerless names are meaningless.
- It also presupposes that, for an actual description of a counterfactual situation to be true, there must be something in the counterfactual situation to make the description meaningful.
- When we describe counterfactual scenarios, we only require that the description is meaningful, not that the description would be meaningful if the counterfactual were to obtain.
Talk outline

Analysis

Atomism

Family resemblance
Here we come up against the great question that lies behind all these considerations. – For someone might object against me: “You make things easy for yourself! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what is essential to a language-game, and so to language: what is common to all these activities, and makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you the most headache, the part about the general form of the proposition and of language. (65)
Language

- Does language have an essence?
- Here the word ‘game’ is crucial.
- Part of the reason is that language must connect to human activity (23).
- More importantly,

  *Instead of pointing out something common to all that we call language, I’m saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common in virtue of which we use the same word for all – but there are many different kinds of affinity between them.* (65)

- *Language, like game, is a family resemblance concept.*