1. *PI* 36 concludes the early material on ostensive definition. Ostensive
   definition had seemed (for instance to Russell) to make the essential
   connection between a name and what it names; and from the late 30s
   onwards there is an extended discussion of this and associated
delusions. But first (*PI* 37) Wittgenstein sketches his own view of what
that connection is. The most important things to understand about it are
(a) that the basic phenomenon is not reference but linguistic use; (b)
there is no one pattern of use underlying the cases in which a name
refers to a thing.

2. The meaning of (a) is that ‘Jones’ referring to this person doesn’t
   explain the way we use the word ‘Jones’; it is rather because we use
   the name Jones in such and such a way that we say “Jones” refers to
   this person’. This is the point of 43b: typically the meaning of a word is
   its use in the language, and this meaning – this use – can in the case
   of a name be explained by pointing at a particular object. “Jones”
   refers to this person’ does not explain or underlie but sums up, in an
   elliptical but useful way, what we do with that word.

3. Well, what do we do with it? ‘Among many other things, this relation
   may also consist in the fact that hearing a name calls before our mind
   the picture of what is named; and sometimes in the name’s being
   written on the thing named or in its being uttered when the thing named
   is pointed at’. This and many other things are what we call ‘reference’.
The vagueness and open-endedness of ‘and many other things’ brings
us to point (b). There just is no one thing in which the relation of
reference consists. Contrast this with (for instance) Kripke’s ‘causal
theory of reference’ (see Lecture II of *Naming and Necessity*).

4. Wittgenstein moves on to discuss other superstitions about names and
   the things that they name, the most important of these being connected
   with his motivations for logical atomism in the *Tractatus*. One of these
   is the idea (*PI* 46a) that real names are simple elements of language
   that refer to simple elements of reality. One of the thoughts behind this
   is the characteristically Tractarian idea that whatever can be said at all
   can be said with complete clarity. This in turn led him to the quasi-
   Russellian doctrine that sentences of ordinary language could be
   analyzed in a way that made their logical connections fully explicit. This
   analysis terminates in names for simple objects (*TLP* 2.0201; cf. *PI*
   87a). But Wittgenstein rejects that (*PI* 60). He denies that what ‘The
   broom is in the corner’ says is revealed more clearly by its analyzed
   form: as it might be, ‘The brush is in the corner and the broomstick is in
   the corner and the broomstick is attached to the brush’ (*PI* 63).

5. Another argument that names refer to simple objects (*PI* 46a) is from
   Plato: names being simple cannot by themselves describe any
   situation in reality. So (a) it cannot make sense to say ‘A exists’ or ‘A
does not exist’ when ‘A’ is a real name. But (b) it always makes sense
to say ‘A exists’ if ‘A’ refers to a complex (e.g. ‘London exists’),
because you are saying that the components of the complex are
connected. Hence names must refer to the simple, indestructible elements of reality.

6. But Wittgenstein denies (b) by analogy with the standard metre rod (Pl 50). This is something of which (he thinks) it makes no sense to say either that it is or that it is not 1m long. Why? Not because there is anything special about that rod but simply because it plays a certain role in the practice of measurement i.e. that it is the final arbiter. Similarly, if in a given language it makes no sense to say that X exists or does not, this doesn’t mean that X has any magic powers: it is just that ‘X’ plays a certain role in that language: they are the things whose names in that language have no further explanation (e.g. names for the kings on a chess board in a language for describing the disposition of the pieces). ‘What looks as if it had to exist, is part of the language’.

7. You might object that a language of which (b) is false somehow fails to match up to reality. For it presents as simple what is really complex and so in a sense misleads us as to the structure of reality. So could not the names of an ideal language denote simples? Wittgenstein denies this on the grounds that there is no absolute notion of ‘simplicity’ or ‘composition’; there is therefore no saying absolutely whether a language approaches more or less closely to such an ideal (Pl 47).

8. At Pl 65 Wittgenstein raises the objection that his former self would have wanted to make from around section 19. The discussion so far has looked at many ‘languages’: ones whose terms do not refer (1), whose sentences do not represent (2, 8, 15), whose names can be meaningful without referring (41) or whose sentences are complexes of names (48). But why are these activities more properly called ‘language’ than e.g. monetary transactions? Doesn’t language have an essence? So what is it? (cf. TLP 6)

9. Here we reach the famous comparison with games, implicit all along in the term ‘language-game’ (Pl 7). One reason for that term was to emphasize that words only become a language if connected with human activities (Pl 23). But another reason was to bring out this similarity between languages and games: no one thing makes us use the same word for all (Pl 65). ‘Language’ like ‘game’ is a family resemblance concept.

10. Thus there are different similarities between games. As Wittgenstein says (Pl 66b) these can be criss-cross: some games resemble one another in respect of being played with cards (like poker and snap), others in respect of involving a gambling element (poker and backgammon). And they may overlap: snakes and ladders resembles backgammon in that they are both board games and both dice games. So no one thing makes us apply ‘game’ in all cases. If you reply that the disjunction of all these makes us apply ‘game’ in every case, then that defeats the whole point of distinguishing between cases in which and in which there isn’t one thing (Pl 67c; cf. 14).