

We may begin by remarking on Wittgenstein's decision to turn Augustine's theory of language in particular into the paradigm of the Wrong Side. An immediate idea is that Wittgenstein wanted to show just how pervasive this wrong-headed analysis of language happens to be: All the way back to 400 A.D., and maybe more. Augustine's theory of language is the *obvious*, in some sense *intuitive* one. Even though Wittgenstein appears to spend more time with the question of why it is the incorrect one, I wish also to understand why it is the intuitive one.

One suggestion: The fact that this is so intuitive to us may just be a historical artefact, so that its certainty can be ran through (and the contingency of this apparent necessity revealed) with the sharp blade of a good genealogy (akin to Nietzsche's genealogy of morals).

So, here's Augustine's neat idea of how language works:

Words name objects, and sentences are combinations of names. The meaning of a word is the object it represents. Understanding consists in an individual internally making the right connection between word and object.

The pervasiveness of this notion comes from the fact that our canonical ideas about language are only put forward through a certain *pause*, a distancing of the self from it, followed by philosophical reflection; there is a transparency about its everyday use which makes it slips through one's fingers. We make the mistake of dealing with an abstraction of thought instead of the concrete phenomenon. This is just what tricks us into thinking we know everything about a hammer when we know its physical attributes. Wittgenstein's deep insight comes from considering language's being *in its active use* (just as how Heidegger's radical shift came from recognizing the irreducibility of a hammer's ready-to-hand modality—Dreyfus mentions the affinities between later Wittgenstein and Heidegger).

Consider the transition from abstract to concrete, from static to dynamic, from thought to life. Further, consider the meta-methodological transition; instead of going from one inadequate system of static categories of thought to a—perhaps more detailed yet still inadequate—system of categories, we must abandon static concepts for a *living* philosophy which *listens* to the *activity* of phenomena.

And so, when we consider language in use—here comes the example of the shopkeeper—there is simply no such thing as *meaning* required in a complete description. "But the meaning of the word 'five'? No such thing was in question here, only how the word 'five' is used."

Well, that somewhat explains why we make this mistake. But why is this a mistake in the first place? Now, we may begin going through Wittgenstein's arguments against some of Augustine's basic ideas.

- i) Names don't represent things the way we think they do: This unduly homogenizes all names; whereas their uses can be as diverse as tools in a toolbox.
- ii) Not all things are names: This unduly homogenizes all words; whereas their uses can be entirely unlike that of a name.
- iii) There is no easy way to tell if something is a name or not: One cannot stand outside of the language-game one is engaged in and pass judgement on whether or not something is a name. Language is like an ancient city which is continually growing and changing in a natural manner.

"To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life."

An interesting remark that was made at this stage was that it is only the second point which is directly contrary to early Wittgenstein's ideas in TLP; the first and the third are perfectly at ease in the older framework.

These varying deep arguments may, perhaps, be viewed all as consequences of a uniform *methodological* shift: From considering what is important words to be meanings in abstraction, to their *functioning* in everyday life.

Another important point that has emerged by now is Wittgenstein's meaning externalism: That is, the meaning of a sentence isn't given by what was in the speaker's head when it was said, but rather, how the utterance is embedded in the language-game the speaker is engaged in.

When one learns a new language ostensively, one could always fail to grasp what precisely was in the teacher's head, due to a certain Quinean indeterminacy in communication (see 28 for an explicit example). The point with externalism is that, to learn the meaning of a phrase, one does not *need* to know what exactly was in the teacher's head, as long as one learns how to use the phrase appropriately.

"The meaning of a word is its use in the language."

That settles *what* it is we need to learn; the next natural point of investigation would be: *How* do we learn what we need to learn, and so in particular, how does ostensive learning work? Wittgenstein's answer: *Context*. It is a certain background situational context which informs the process of learning and enables one to use the phrase appropriately.

Now, we can see that not only do we have the above three problems with Augustine's account, but, perhaps most damningly, it is essentially *circular*. Its account of language acquisition only works when applied to someone who already knows a language, because it does not account for the indispensable, ever-dynamic factor of *contextuality* (mentioned above) in the process.

"Because we cannot specify any one bodily action which we call pointing to the shape (as opposed, for example, to the colour), we say that a *spiritual* activity corresponds to these words. Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a *spirit*."

A quick note on the process of naming: It is *only* when we employ the methodology of static observation that it appears to be a "strange" connection of word with object, a "baptism" of the latter with the former.

We have established that names are neither as pervasive, nor as clear, nor as closely related as Augustine thought they were. But there are some more "nice" theories of naming which *could* be consistent with these points which need to be dismissed; for one, the idea that names signify simples.

- i) Names continue to have meaning even if their correspondent/bearer ceases to exist. (The counterclaim, combined with the observation that sentences about nonexistent objects *aren't* nonsense, was being used to motivate the suggestion that words must be broken down into proper names which associate with these indestructible simples.)

(If names continue to have meaning even when what they signify ceases to exist, when do names become nonsense? Wittgenstein's answer: When we're no longer able to play a particular language-game with it; when it is no longer usable as an instrument of our language, for whatsoever causal reason.)

The example of “Red exists”: One images the contradiction in “Red exists” to be due to the fact that if red did not exist ‘in and of itself’, it could not be spoken of at all. However, the real contradiction lies in the fact that it looks to be saying something about the colour red, whereas what it is supposed to do is merely inform us about the use of the word “red”.

- ii) An entity can be a simple or a composite only within the framework of a given language-game. (For Wittgenstein, language-games trap us into being unable to make any metaphysical determinations; only grammatical ones.)
- iii) Within the context of a language game, one could imagine the objects used as *means of representation* (example: the meter scale in Paris) as playing a grammatical role as these indescribable simples.

The following paragraph is based on a short conversation with Matze:

At this point, there are two ways to frame the chasm between early Wittgenstein and late Wittgenstein. If one reads Wittgenstein as somewhat engaging in genuine metaphysics in TLP (e.g. Hacker), then it is quite straightforward to notice his move to become a complete anti-metaphysician here. But there are also readings of TLP which see him as *already* adopting an anti-metaphysical standpoint, in which case he is contiguous insofar as that is concerned, and a lot more of the later Wittgenstein is anticipated in TLP. In this case, the chasm is the difference in the way with which he thinks one can shun metaphysics: In TLP, Wittgenstein thought this could be done in a globally principled manner, whereas PI Wittgenstein thinks the deflationism must be done on a more case-by-case basis. A possible example would be that of simples, wherein in TLP, Wittgenstein gives one big reductio ad absurdum against metaphysical judgments about them, while in PI, we must consider the game within which each (apparent) simple is embedded before divesting it of ontology.

There seems to be even a third way to look at it, which Shyam sir explained to me as his view:

Neither early nor later Wittgenstein wanted to do away with metaphysics altogether; only with *bad* metaphysics. Early Wittgenstein wanted to do this by minimizing metaphysical structures; later Wittgenstein wanted to encompass bad metaphysics by enriching metaphysical structures (to include things like language games). For the one who believes later Wittgenstein was a through-and-through anti-metaphysician who dissolved it all to language and grammar, one may ask questions such as: Where could language-games be placed in this conceptual scheme?

(Of course, one should ultimately keep in mind that the absurd succinctness of TLP may just mean that all interpretative endeavors are essentially underdetermined.)

Now, back to the text:

Various examples of *different* language-games were given to motivate the idea that there is no universal rule for what counts as a simple. But now comes the obvious question: Can we characterize what is *essential* to a language-game?

No.

However...“there are many different kinds of *affinity* between them”. Now comes the wonderful analogy with games, and the idea that there is no single commonality, but rather, “family resemblances”.

“We extend our concept...as in spinning a thread we twist fiber on fiber. And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fiber runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibers.” Vagueness and ambiguity are no criticism; vague concepts are still perfectly well used and understood, often advantageous (and perhaps sometimes even necessary?).

With this, Wittgenstein launches into various arguments against an oft-imagined sharpness one wishes to make this vagueness vanish into.

In TLP, vagueness would have been due to our articulation of something falling short due to its inarticulable nature. Here, it's simply because it *really is* vague, and that it, by nature, simply *doesn't* afford of sharp boundaries. The idea of something *common* to all games, standing outside any context: A chimera, as illustrated nicely in 73 with the example of green leaf. Ethics and aesthetics have, likewise, gone for Wittgenstein from something inarticulable to something *blurred*.

Having given us this general thesis, Wittgenstein applies his argument for a real vagueness over an inarticulable sharpness to the concept of meaning: We are not equipped with rules for every possible application of a word. This does not mean that we attach no meaning to it; rather, that we attach no *fixed* meaning to it. There are no definite rules. Think of any of those silly ball-games you played as a child.

Not only is the idea that language is sharp divorced from reality, it is also internally contradictory.

Here, Wittgenstein revisits the Quinean line of thinking. There is never a fixed way to interpret a rule—except by means of another rule. But for *that* rule, we need yet another...*ad infinitum*. In truth, the vagueness in the rule is of a kind which simply does not call for a clarification, *except* if there is threat of misunderstanding!

Next, Wittgenstein begins to explain why—in spite of appearances—logic is not really “sublime” in any metaphysically deep sense. Logic is interested not in the actualities but in the possibilities of language; it is the attempt to understand that which is (in some sense) in ‘plain view’, but impossible to articulate when ‘called to mind’.

But words like ‘thinking’, ‘proposition’ and the like must have a use as *humble* as ‘table’, ‘lamp’ and the like. To think otherwise is the misunderstanding and illusion our signs, forms of expression, language, induces unto us. The desire for a lack of vagueness through logic is more of the same.

The possibility of comparison (of language) with logic, which appears as this idealistic alternative, is manufactured into the core of the structure of language, and so always rears its head when we use language. This comparison impresses us enough to transfigure our attitude (towards all these problems at the limits of language) into a theoretical one of trying to discover and reconstruct this alternative as the “right” one.

In conclusion, logic *does* have its rigor; it is just not a metaphysical one. (The question is left unanswered: Of what kind is this rigor, then? For it is now a grammatical model, a language-game, an object of comparison.)

One could find something questionable about Wittgenstein bracketing all language-games as objects of comparison (recall the example of the meter-scale in Paris). Wittgenstein's idea is that, while there is no overarching representational structure to any language game, one can have limited, situational means of representations. Satbhav thinks that this isn't entirely right, and that one *can* do things with language which “break free” of affording of representational understandings.

I agree with him insofar as I think there should be a movement away from representation and towards the non-representational—even in Wittgenstein's “local”, restrictive sense—but I don't think *language-games* will ever achieve this, because *language* is representational to the very core.

Perhaps this can be done through other activities, other games which afford of no objects of comparison, but when it comes to language, it is as Nietzsche says: "I am afraid we are not rid of God [here, read as representation] because we still have faith in grammar."

Somewhere in the middle of all this, Wittgenstein's philosophical quietism comes to the fore. Philosophy only describes (says he), and does not explain; philosophy cannot interfere or justify with the actualities of language, and must leave everything as it is. All philosophy does is lay everything open to view; and what is hidden is of no interest.

(Here, Satbhav and I paused. This made him uncomfortable because of the political implications; he felt that action, or a call to it—reminiscent of that famous Marx quote, perhaps—is well in place, and perhaps even *should* be present, indeed, in a substantive philosophical finding. I had a different way of looking at this quietism: I do not think descriptions are neutral. We, perhaps, need to broaden our understanding of what descriptions do; for a genuine, *true* description, which runs deep, will come—*naturally*, in a certain sense—with a call to action within itself. In this deepened conception of it, describing alone *does* suffice, and there is no need to introduce actions from the outside upon it; because descriptions are *never* apathetic with regards to the world, and come equipped with propensities. Of course, I'm not necessarily suggesting Wittgenstein held all this.)

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What is rule-following? Wittgenstein seems to eliminate every possible option (including the behaviourist one, by most readings), suggesting that it really is something very elusive: Conformity to normativity. This involves committing to norms as something external, thus allowing for a *right* interpretation.

Kripke thinks the right interpretation is recognised by behaving in a way which agrees with other people's expectations (the skeptical solution). McDowell and Brandom's readings disagree that norms are expectations in people's heads; and they also disagree that it boils down to behaviour (the straight solution). You could also believe that norms are real but claim that you only recognise conformity with them through behaviour, which is another variant of the straight solution (reductive dispositionalism).

Brandom: "[Use is specified in a way that is] neither so generous as to permit semantic or intentional vocabulary [understanding, interpretation, etc.], nor so parsimonious as to insist on purely naturalistic vocabulary [behaviour, etc.]."

The private language argument: The problem is the absence of a criteria of correctness. An imagined criterion of correctness is no more useful than the imagined result of an imagined experiment.

The beetle-in-a-box argument: A Something that everyone can only access on the inside, and so can effectively say nothing about, renders the same service as a Nothing.

The relationship between thought and speech: Wittgenstein tries to show (335-345) that it makes no (grammatical) sense to speak of thought without speech, or of the two as independent components. He then offers a truth-conditional theory of meaning, which is used to argue that deaf-mutes having an internal language is a misleading, meaningless picture. ("It is five in the afternoon on the sun.")

For Wittgenstein, "I" cannot be analysed away into any objective or definite description—it points inwards.

Critique of the picture theory: The chimeric ideality of the picture misleads us from the reality of use.

Wittgenstein appears to invoke a space of reasons (defined by Sellars in contrast with a realm of law), in order to give a pragmatic dimension to language, sentences and the like. From this, he moves

to understanding language; and tries to show how similar it is to understanding music, understanding facial expressions.

Rules may be essential or inessential. Which side they lie on depend on the directedness (or the “point”) of the game. (560-570)

Inferentialism: The Goldbach conjecture example (578).

The hypostatisation of feelings: A tendency of the philosopher. Sometimes, there may be no familiarity—and the space left by it may not be filled up by unfamiliarity.

Against representationalism: “Describe the aroma of coffee!—Why can’t it be done? Do we lack the words? And for what are words lacking?—But where do we get the idea that such a description must, after all, be possible?” And also: “If it was spurious, we think of another one, as it were behind it.—This is the face he shows the world; inwardly he has another one.—But this does not mean that when his expression is genuine, he has two identical faces.”

Wittgenstein differentiates between willing and doing. There is no willing in doing (or willing, under duress of infinite regress).

Finally, the difference between the grammar of meaning and thinking is outlined.