

A. Pichler & S. Säätelä:
Introduction to Wittgenstein

6th lecture 25.9.2018:
From the *Tractatus* to the
Philosophical Investigations

From the Tractatus to the later philosophy

- From exactness to acceptance of vagueness
- Meaning re-visited – and re-defined: From reference to rules
 - From rules to practice

Some of the driving force behind
the Tractatus: The search for exact
language

A fact about ordinary language

Typically, the meaning of expressions and phrases of everyday language is vague, ambiguous and context dependent.

Science

«But science
(Wissenschaft) needs
exactness!»

Vagueness, ambiguity, context dependency

- Vagueness: Many expressions have vague meanings.
 - "There are **about** thirty people in this room", "She is a **good** student" ...
- Ambiguity: Many expressions have a range of meanings.
 - The expression "**is**", "Die **Bank** ist teuer" ...
- (Speaker) context dependency: Many expressions have context dependent meanings.
 - Deictic expressions, : «this», «here», «now», «I», «tomorrow» ...

Context dependency vs. Proper names and definite descriptions

«Thank God: Ordinary language also includes some not speaker context dependent proper names and definite descriptions!»

– «Simo Säätelä», «Bergen», «The Finnish professor at the Philosophy department in Bergen» ...

Exact language: A possible way out?

- «We need exact language; let's create it.»
- Or (Frege and *Tractatus!*): «Let's make the exactness, that actually already is *inherent* in our existing language (in our **thought**), explicit in a *Begriffsschrift*.»
- «In such an exact *Begriffsschrift*, we must be maximally *formal* and should as little as possible have to stress with vague, ambiguous, context-dependent meanings – 'messy'! contents.»
 - An artificial and formal language, a **logical syntax**.
Syntax rather than semantics!

«We need an exact language that ...»

- is context independent
- permits exact operations on the basis of logical syntax alone
- can in principle be processed by machines!
 - An artificial language («Artificial intelligence»!)
- is as much as possible a *calculus: a formal system with exact rules for how to process signs*
- establishes the truth of complex propositions on the basis of their *logical form alone*
 - The *Tractatus'* truth tables calculus!

Promotion of logical syntax is *one* ambition / tendency in the *Tractatus*

TLP #3.317

... Die Festsetzung wird also nur von Symbolen, nicht von deren Bedeutung handeln.

Und *nur* dies ist der Festsetzung wesentlich, *daß sie nur eine Beschreibung von Symbolen ist und nichts über das Bezeichnete aussagt.*

... The stipulation will therefore be concerned only with symbols, not with their meaning.

And the *only* thing essential to the stipulation is *that it is merely a description of symbols and states nothing about what is signified.*

TLP #3.33

In der logischen Syntax darf nie die Bedeutung eines Zeichens eine Rolle spielen; sie muß sich aufstellen lassen, ohne daß dabei von der *Bedeutung* eines Zeichens die Rede wäre, sie darf *nur* die Beschreibung der Ausdrücke voraussetzen.

In logical syntax the meaning of a sign should never play a rôle. It must be possible to establish logical syntax without mentioning the *meaning* of a sign: *only* the description of expressions may be presupposed.

So, how does it work?

- Create a calculus for identifying the truth value of a complex sentence purely on the basis of running the distribution of truth values for the simple sentences it is composed of.
 - Presupposition: If it shall be possible to distribute the truth values of the simple sentences arbitrarily, then the simple sentences (elementary propositions) must be logically independent from each other.
- By running a complex sentence (e.g. "p & q") through the truth table calculus we *show* how its truth value series results from the truth values of the simple sentences it is composed of (i.e. "p", "q").

– "&" is shown by the T, F, F, F truth value series :

p	&	q
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	F	T
F	F	F

"~" is shown by through the F, T truth value series:

~	p
F	T
T	F

- TLP #4.31: The truth-possibilities can be presented by schemata of the following kind ("T" means "true", "F" "false". The rows of T's and F's under the row of the elementary propositions mean their truth-possibilities in an easily intelligible symbolism).
- See TLP #5.101 for all (16!) possible truth value series for two elementary propositions p and q.

Problems?

- Well, no problem – as long as the concept of elementary proposition is presupposed and does its work as it is introduced in the *Tractatus*: esp.: as long as the elementary propositions do in no way exclude or include each other.
- But what happens if they *do*? I.e. if p and q actually exclude each other on the basis of their meaning, like for example colour statements can exclude each other?
- Replace "p" with «This is red», and q with «This is green»:

$$\frac{p}{T} \quad \frac{\&}{T?} \quad \frac{q}{T}$$

- «a is red» *could* be thought of as a candidate for elementary proposition. But, according to the *Tractatus*, it *cannot* be an elementary proposition precisely because of the exclusion problem.

The colour exclusion problem

TLP 6.3751

- Daß z.B. zwei Farben zugleich an einem Ort des Gesichtsfeldes sind, ist unmöglich, und zwar logisch unmöglich, denn es ist durch die logische Struktur der Farbe ausgeschlossen.
- Denken wir daran, wie sich dieser Widerspruch in der Physik darstellt: Ungefähr so, daß ein Teilchen nicht zu gleicher Zeit zwei Geschwindigkeiten haben kann; das heißt, daß es nicht zu gleicher Zeit an zwei Orten sein kann; das heißt, daß Teilchen an verschiedenen Orten zu Einer Zeit nicht identisch sein können.
- (Es ist klar, daß das logische Produkt zweier Elementarsätze weder eine Tautologie noch eine Kontradiktion sein kann. **Die Aussage, daß ein Punkt des Gesichtsfeldes zu gleicher Zeit zwei verschiedene Farben hat, ist eine Kontradiktion.**)

«Meaning»

If not reference – what could
meaning be?

From reference to rules

- *Tractatus*: Sense comes from elementary propositions composed of names which **refer** to simple objects in the world.
 - If there are no elementary propositions – how can sense and reference be accounted for?
 - "Middle period": Meaning is established through language-internal **rules** rather than language-external **reference**.
 - The meaning of a sentence does not come from reference to objects, but from a system of linguistic rules.
- **NB: RE-DEFINITION OF «MEANING»!**

The chess analogy

- The meaning of a chess figure does not come from a relation of representation (picture theory!), but from a chess-internal system of rules.
 - What would a chess figure represent?
- The rules of chess are purely conventional and not bound by reference to ontological entities.
 - Not even ostensive definition ("This is ...") is bound by a language-external world. Ostensive acts take place within a system of language and its rules.
- Language is autonomous and independent of the world.
- Meaning *is rules*.

From rules to practice*

- The "Meaning is rules"-view can be challenged on the basis of the "Rules regress" and the "Authority regress" problems.
- Rules regress: If not through reference to the language-external world – where do the words and sentences get their meaning from? From rules. But what rules the rules? Rules? And what rules the rules which rule the rules? Rules. ...?
- Authority regress: Who decides *which* rules? Rules can be agreed upon and changed (they are conventional) – but on the basis of what authority? And if one is supposed to follow rules – on what basis? Where does the authority come from? ?
- Wittgenstein's response to this challenge leads to his "Primacy of practice"- and "Meaning is use"-views.

* According to Newen & von Savigny, *Analytische Philosophie: Eine Einführung*, 1996; p. 92f

Back to the «messy» contents
of everyday language and
actual practice!

PI: Practice comes first

- Meaning and authority are established by our **practices** (linguistic and other)
 - Focus on practice
 - Focus on the *use* of words
- Language is
 - an activity
 - a social activity
 - an activity which is embedded in forms of life
- "Forms of life" (PI §19): It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle.—Or a language consisting only of questions and expressions for answering yes and no. And innumerable others.—And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.
- «Language games»: Exemplifications of language as embedded in activities / practices and forms of life.

PI: «Practice comes first»

A certain picture of the human language ...

PI §1: (...) the individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names. (...) Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.

- No human agents needed? Cf. PI §1: Now think of the following use of language: I send someone shopping. ...

Acting

PI §1:

Now think of the following use of language: I **send** someone shopping. I **give** him a slip marked "five red apples". He **takes** the slip to the shopkeeper, who **opens** the drawer marked "apples"; then he **looks up** the word "red" in a table and **finds** a colour sample opposite it; then he **says** the series of cardinal numbers—I **assume** that he knows them by heart—up to the word "five" and for each number he **takes** an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer.—**It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words.**—"But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word 'red' and what he is to do with the word 'five'?"—Well, I **assume** that he **acts** as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere.—But what is the meaning of the word "five"?—No such thing was in question here, only how the word "five" is used.

PI: «Meaning is use»

- If meaning is tied to use, then one method for dealing with philosophical problems arising from questions of meaning is to pay attention to actual linguistic usage.
- Studies of how words actually are used become key to the method of philosophy!
 - A range of relevant contexts: linguistic, extra-linguistic, social, cultural, historical ... **ordinary language**
 - Variety and multiplicity: Not *one* "general form of proposition"; not *one* meaning of "simple" ...
- Focus on examples of use.
- Focus on examples as constitutive parts of learning language and communication - see PI §208.

The PI are to “be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking”

PI preface

Four years ago I had occasion to re-read my first book (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking.

... against the background of my old way of thinking

TLP	PI
?	Persons, humans (PI §1)
?	Body language (PI §1)
?	Behaviour, but also acting (PI §1)
?	Examples (PI §1)
?	Real, everyday language and life (PI §§1, 108, 156, 241)
?	Criss-cross (PI preface, §68)
?	1-word sentences (PI §19)
?	Many kinds of sentences (PI §23)
?	Life, biology (PI §§19, 23, 142, 441, 472; PI II xii / §365f)
?	Development, change, variation (synchronic and diachronic) (PI §§ 11, 12, 14, 18, 23)
?	Many problems (PI §133)
?	Many methods (PI §133)
?	Use (PI §§ 1, 43, 432)
?	Vagueness and open-endedness (PI §§ 18, 66f, 71, 133)