

Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Ordinary Language

- The surface grammar of language concealed its true nature
- Language is interwoven with the world in many very different ways
- Philosophical problems with language arise when we take words and sentences in isolation and try to understand their meaning apart from the ways they are ordinarily used
 - It is a mistake to think that most words are names of anything in particular
 - Language has many uses and functions : giving orders, describing the appearance of an object, reporting an event, speculating about an event, making up a story, testing a hypothesis, guessing riddles, translating from one language to another, etc
 - Called these various activities *language games*
- *Language games*
 - *Games* exhibit the same kind of variety as linguistic activities do
 - There is a **family resemblance** among the things we call games – a network of similarities
 - “He is playing a game” – may be a description, a report, an explanation, or a condemnation of his behavior

Knowledge

- Instead of asking himself “What is knowledge” the Ordinary Language philosopher asks himself under what circumstances do we ordinarily speak about knowing
- “I know” vs “I believe”
 - Reasonable to say, “I believe that it will rain, but I may be wrong”
 - Not reasonable to say “I know that it will rain tonight, but I may be wrong”
 - If I am wrong it follows that I didn't know
- The word *know* like the word *game* has a family of uses: we know how to do things, we know certain subjects, we know people
- Philosophy shows us the essence of language by bringing into clear view the way in which we use words

Metaphysics

- Attacked metaphysical representations of the mind as a mysterious medium and the notion that *meaning* is a mental process
 - There were “mental processes” – such as the recitation of a poem in one's head
 - Philosophers were wrong in believing that *meaning* a sentence, and *understanding* a sentence, was a mental process underlying the utterance, or accompanying the hearing, of the sentence
 - “I wish he would drop dead?” – I don't mean it

- I hum in my mind a Russian folk-song - but I don't understand the words meaning
- *Meaning* and *understanding* are not processes – they resemble verbs like “say” and “breath” we expect to find processes which correspond to them
- Criticized the notion of a “**private language**” -- **Solipsism** is the philosophical idea that only one's own mind is sure to exist
 - Considers the way the word “pain” functions as the name of a sensation
 - Tempted to think that for each person ‘pain’ acquires its meaning by being correlated with the individual's own private sensation
 - Concluded that there cannot be a language whose words refer to what can only be known to the individual speaker of the language
 - Language is not *my* language; it is *our* language
 - The home of language is the human community
- Wittgenstein's attack on private definition refutes solipsism by showing that the possibility of the very language in which it is expressed depends on the existence of the public and social world
- Philosophy was not a house, nor a tree, but a web – not a single problem, but many

World-views

- In his later years, *On Certainty*, became interested in the propositions which make up the world-view of a society or individual
 - Any *language game* presupposes an activity which is part of a form of life
 - To accept the rules of a language is to agree with others in a form of life
 - The ultimate given in philosophy is not an inner basis of private experience: it is the forms of life within which we pursue our activities and think our thoughts
 - Forms of life are the datum which any philosophical inquiry itself presupposes
 - Lions have a different form of life than humans – therefore if they could speak we would not understand them
 - Can be differences between forms of life within the human species too
 - Differences in cultures
 - Our world-picture includes propositions which look like scientific propositions: water boils at 100 centigrade
 - Others look like empirical propositions: the earth has existed for a long time
 - These propositions are not learnt by experience – they are part of our world view