Early and late Wittgenstein on theory of meaning

Katarzyna Gurczyńska–Sady

Early Wittgenstein on theory of meaning

1. The idea of logical form.

Early Wittgenstein's philosophy focus around the problem, what is the relation between language and reality. By building its ontology, Wittgenstein asks the question of how must the world looks like to sentence could picture it, reflect. During this period, he is convinced that what provides this capability is the existence of logical form, something that is common to language and the world. What it is? Logical form is define as a possibility of a logical structure of both: the world and the language. The sentence reflects the situation and can do so because the logical structure of the state of affairs and elementary sentences are identical with each other. The specific structure of the language is compatible with the structure of the world – in this way a sentence says something about the world, is sensible.

2. The idea of logical analysses

The role of logical analysses is to test the adequacy of whether the one occurs or not. It revealed the various levels of the logical structure of the world and language – the sentence and

described situation, elementary sentence and a corresponding state of affairs, and finally reach the names which on the side of the world are assigned as objects. They are irreducible blocks, atoms of the world (TLP 2.02, 2.021). The analysis therefore ends with reaching that which can not be further decomposed, the simple elements: simple sign and simple object.

3. The idea of checking a meaning

While analyzing the sentence we have to arrive to the elements precisely defined. This is what is a very clue: it ensured the existence of simple signs, which correspond to simple objects. The thing which is important is that the sentence is not "loosely" associated with reality. It is associated with reality in a way a word has a meaning. And here lay the idea of the possibility of checking the meaning. What can we check? A meaning. We can aswer a questions: does the word have got a meaning(?), does a sentence have got a sense(?).

4. The idea of a nonsens

Assessing the accuracy of what we say is done by comparing the logical structures of the world and of language — such is the task of logical analysis. Why is it so imprtenet?Our language is ful of nonsens. Especially a language of a traditional philosophy. It seems to be saying something about the world, contain meaning, but it is nonsens. (Although Wittgenstein thinks philosophy is classified like the noblest manifestation of the human spirit.

5. The idea of bundaries of the language

But no matter how noble motives lie behind the philosophy - thera are boundaries of the language — limits set by the logical form — metaphysical claims contain components which has got no meaning. They are propositions created by the misunderstanding of the logic of our language. The role of logical analysis, is to show what can be said and what cen be not said becouse has got not meaning.

Late Wittgenstein on the theory of meaning

1. Criticism of early ideas

The views on language are the most amazing thoughts of philosophy of the late Wittgenstein. They appear in place of the rejected onces. They can be included in two fundamental propositions.
First: the language is not only a communication system. Second: there is no mirror of reality in which reality is reflected. The language does not cause images in the soul of man (or a speaker, or a listener).
Naming, communicating something to someone, describing reality belong to the language features, but — so to speak — highly specialized, and therefore marginal.

2, What are the fundamental features of the language?

The simples answer is that the language is used to coordinate human behavior. Instead of

showing something with his hand, pushing a person in a specific location we use language. Do we picture anything when we say: "Look there.", "Bring it to me!", "Wrong!", "Great!". Language does not serve by naming things.

Saying that we have got a headake — we do not describe our internal state, as it may seem to us, but we want our responer to react in some way. We suggest the others for exampeles to bring painkillers, or we want them to keep silence or we would to feel their sympathy etc., etc. The is no aim like reflecting something.

3. An idea of a man as a creature who speaks.

We speak but it does not mean we give a name, we represent a world in our minds. So what is the aim of a language? In a way a man builds his worlds out of his words. Makes home for himself. Like a spider a man build a network, a path on which he can move. He can do it solely not by naming anything. With the help of language: we thanks, ask for something, we pray, ask for directions, we introduce someone, tell jokes, we explain something, we gossip, we do business etc. Do we still think our primary function of language is to describe how things are?

4. The idea of language games.

The language does not speak about things, it does not represent them in speech. Wittgenstein rejects the classical conception of the meaning, understood as a thing in the world that the language gives name by like "fixing" a plate with it. What does a name fit to then? It fits not the objct in the world but the place in a game in which is used.

5. The new ideas

The language is a set of tools that serves specific purposes. The words of our language to be significant do not have to match with things, but need to know the language games.
Example: to see a hamer as a hamer is not to see the thing but it it is to know how to operate with it. The meaning of it is in knowing what-to-do-with it.

We use the language, in order to achieve specific aims. When we teach children language we do not teach them names but we teach them: how to use them, in what situation, what for.

It is believed that learning a language involves naming objects, namely: people, shapes, colors, pain, mood, numbers, etc. But according Wittgenstein a name goes last. That what have to be done is to prepare a place.
Example: a chair. We say to a child: "Sit in a chair.", "Move a chair", "Watch out not to fell over." and so on. The sentence" It is a chair" is used for those who already know a language and learn a new (foreign) language.

To know the name is to know what you can do with it, in what situation it can be used and what for (what kind of an activity you want to gain). The child knows what we call a chair, not when he/she can point to, but when he is able to speak about him: for example does not ask whether the chair is sad.

So what is an origin of a meaning? Not the world, not things in the world but the game. A game with the word we must learn first to speak rather than a dictionary composed of nouns verbs, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns etc. It is not the world which is a prototype of the language but the forms of our life which are reflected in the language.