

ARGUMENT AND METAPHYSICS

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This paper explores the idea of linguistic meaning in the case of metaphysical referents or entities, quoting Plato's view assumed by Wittgenstein that there couldn't be a language for metaphysical referents like the Good or God. In order to expose the conceptual situation recourse is made to the thesis of a Logical Proper Name and to the thesis of Private Names as contrasting views of the nature of names and language. Furthermore, it is surmised that the Wittgenstein view helps to realise why there cannot be metaphysical arguments. But all of that is presented in a very sketchy way and has to wait for further development.

Keywords: meaning, reference, Wittgenstein, metaphysical arguments

РАССУЖДЕНИЕ И МЕТАФИЗИКА

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В данной статье исследуется идея языковых значений в ее отношении к метафизическим сущностям (например, к Благу или Богу), для которых, как полагал Витгенштейн, следуя за Платоном, язык не пригоден. Обзор данной темы предполагает рассмотрение проблем имен собственных и личных имен, отражающих различное видение природы имен и языка. Кроме того, автор считает, что позиция Витгенштейна помогает понять, почему в данном случае невозможны метафизические рассуждения. Однако все доводы представлены лишь в форме предварительных соображений и нуждаются в дальнейшей разработке.

Ключевые слова: значение, референция, Витгенштейн, метафизические рассуждения

Plato famously posed *Kalos-Kagathos* (KK) as the supreme Metaphysical reality: it is what really is, and our world is only appearance, phenomenon, something subject to change that is only in the measure that it **participates** of the supreme reality. We cannot know or refer to KK, for it is necessarily beyond our epistemic powers that are designed only for appearances or phenomena. This has been a paradigm metaphysical thought through millennia. It is a central tenet of many thinkers to set the true reality beyond our grasp: what is truly real, the most firm and enduring reality is



necessarily beyond our grasping powers. Still, we can think that ultimate metaphysical reality even if we cannot grasp it. This regal thesis wraps a paradox of a special kind.

The paradox arises from entertaining the thought that there is something most important that is absolutely and necessarily real, the most real, so much so that we cannot grasp it: how can we think of such tremendous reality and at the same time not being able of grasping and expressing it? How can we think an ontological reality and not being able to enter it and discern its nature? There is here a problem of accessibility and of elucidation of that that is the utmost reality.

Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* gives the linguistic turn to Plato's thesis and speaks of meaning and reference not of knowledge.

He takes Plato's thesis and states that we cannot refer to KK, we can only refer and mean particular things or facts – states of affairs: KK lies beyond any possible language-meaning, it lies in the realm of non-sense or beyond the realm of sense; still it shows itself. Let's consider Plato's thesis in the linguistic turn.

Wittgenstein takes the case of Plato's Good as the main Idea among all Ideas. Good has been considered the subject of a paradigm philosophical discipline that is called Ethics – with a capital – to distinguish it from the many ethics and morals that we hold in the parish. Wittgenstein addresses an idea of a science of Ethics or the Good:

... what Ethics really would have to be if there were such a science... that nothing we could ever think or say should be *the* thing... if a man could write a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world. Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, *natural* meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I were to pour out a gallon over it¹.

We can generalize the thesis making recourse to the canonical notation of quantificational logic: That Metaphysical entities are never the value of variables in the canonical notation, and thus we cannot quantify over metaphysical entities. Such is the limited scope of variables in canonical notation.

Our logic is not designed to cope with Metaphysical entities. Worst still, there cannot be a logical notation that could house metaphysical entities like God, the Cosmos, the Eternal, etc.

Lets look into the conceptual situation closely: there is this idea of a Logical Proper Name (LPN) discussed by Bertrand Russell. According to it a LPN is a name that is always necessarily tied or accompanied by its sense and its referent; the LPN is the perfect name, a paradigm of namehood, for

¹ See: [Wittgenstein, 1993, p. 40].



it never could be an empty name, it will always be saturated keeping its content and referent necessarily tied up. The case of Good is at the other end, opposite radically to that of a LPN, for in the case of the Good the referent of such a name is always necessarily beyond the name 'Good' and can never be contained in that name.

Stated generally, the main Metaphysical entities cannot be the meanings or referents of words in any language; if there were to be set as meanings, such referents will blow up the words and the whole of language. One other way of setting the point is to say that the semantic powers of ordinary words and sentences are not enough to contain and convey the meanings and referents of the great metaphysical entities like Good or God.

In the case of Ethics – that is necessarily linked to will – the absolute road is one that we will follow with logical necessity, no matter what we think or wish: that absolute thing will impede us to follow with absolute necessity, automatically, straightforwardly. The absolute thing will push our impending will to want to get it and it will act straightforwardly to attain it. We cannot just grasp the Good, but grasping it amounts necessarily to throw ourselves into action to attain it. No weakness of will is possible in the case of the Good; such is the nature of that Metaphysical entity. We can easily see that there is no name or predicate in our language that is furnished with such an outstanding power, and that in the case of our 'good' there is always the possibility of having weakness of will.

There is one another conceptual monster in this area, namely, the metaphysically private language² (PL). In the PL the private names are necessarily tied to the private objects or referents which are owned by subjects and the tie is of such nature that necessarily only the owner of that private object can get to its referent and thus can understand the private names. This resembles the conceptual situation of the LPN but in the case of the PL such LPN are private names.

Thus we arrive to a fourfold types of languages and words and sentences, namely:

1. Ordinary names and sentences that refer and mean diverse things and states of affairs at different times and situations;
2. The LPN in a perfect logical language;
3. The private names in a PL;
4. The Metaphysical entities for which there cannot be a language, and no meaning nor reference in any possible world.

This may help to understand why we lack demonstrative arguments in Metaphysics: logic does not work there and arguments cannot be framed. But this is the subject of another disquisition.

² See: [Villanueva, 1983].



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