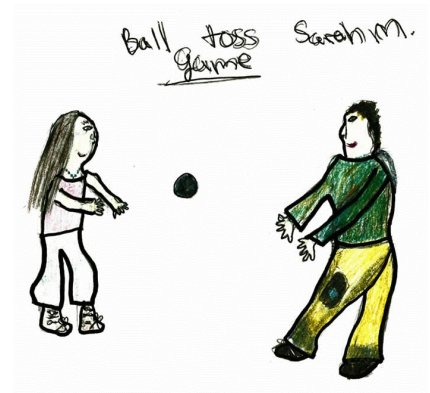


**Philosophy 308**  
***The Language Revolution***  
**Russell Marcus**  
**Fall 2014**

Class #19 - The Private Language Argument  
Wittgenstein and Kripke

# Locke and Augustine on communication

- Locke's picture of language takes communication to be like playing catch.
  - B1. I hold the ball in my hands.
  - B2. Then, I toss the ball.
  - B3. Lastly, you catch and hold the ball
- Analogously, when we communicate:
  - C1. I have a sensation, which I label with a word: apple, ball, cat.
  - C2. Then, I speak: The cat ate an apple.
  - C3. Lastly, you associate my words with some inner sensations of your own.



# Not a Something Not a Nothing

“But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior accompanied by pain and pain-behavior without any pain?” - Admit it? What greater difference could there be? - “And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a *nothing*.” - Not at all. It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said (*Philosophical Investigations* §304).

# Starting with Language

- Wittgenstein says that sensations are neither a something nor a nothing.
  - ▶ pain
  - ▶ your impression of a color, or an odor or taste
  - ▶ beliefs about how to continue in a number series
- Locke started his analysis of language with the presumption of the existence of sensations and our direct awareness of them.
  - ▶ Empiricism: sensations are the basis on which all of our knowledge is built.
  - ▶ We construct a language which refers to them.
  - ▶ Embracing Frege's context principle and even abandoning atomism and doesn't give up the empiricist's starting points.
  - ▶ Quine: the boundary conditions on our theory construction are our sense experiences.
- Wittgenstein works in the other direction.
  - ▶ Let's start by looking at language and working backwards to its grounds.
  - ▶ We begin to doubt the sensations which Locke and the rest took for granted.

# Meaning and Use

## *Investigations §1-§7*

- While 'apple' works the way Augustine and Locke say it does, 'five' and 'red' seem different.
  - ▶ They do not represent objects.
  - ▶ They provide instructions for action.
  - ▶ We might, as Plato did, reify redness or the number five.
  - ▶ Nevertheless, the uses of those terms are different from the uses of 'apple'.
- When we use a word, we follow conventional guidelines.
  - ▶ The grocer compares the term 'red' with a patch of red, and counts.
  - ▶ Such terms require instructions for how to use them.
- A language of mere representation is unfamiliar (§2).



# Same Objects, Different Labels

- The same object, under different instructions, in different contexts, may have a different label.
- A child's stick can be a rocket, or a sword, or a pony.
  - Shimmer
- §6: A brake and lever can be anything or nothing.
- Terms of language have no meaning apart from their use in a larger theory.
  - Compare to Quine's semantic holism.
- Meanings of the terms 'brake' and 'lever' depend on the uses we make of those objects.
  - §23



# Pointing?



- Like color terms, number terms also function differently from the Locke/Augustine account.
- Pointing can not settle any matter.
- The very act of pointing is already an action, with rules for use.
- We could point by tracing the line from the tip of our finger backwards (§185).
  - See p 29 of Permanent markers
  - Sandia report, see p 150 et seq. and p 262 et seq.
- For Wittgenstein, there could be no hope of communicating danger to a community completely disconnected from our own, since the meanings of our signs are connected to the practices for which we use them.



# The Community

- Number terms are directions for how to proceed.
- We use them for counting apples, for example.
- In addition, there are directions for how to proceed using the number terms alone.
- If we want to understand the number terms, then we have to analyze how these terms function.
- In particular, we have to determine how we learn the rules for counting.
- As far as we agree on the rules for counting, we have some common language, we can communicate.
- If we were to disagree on the rules, we would not understand each other.
- “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him” (*Investigations*, p 223).
- Different “forms of life”

