

**Philosophy 308**  
***The Language Revolution***  
**Russell Marcus**  
**Fall 2015**

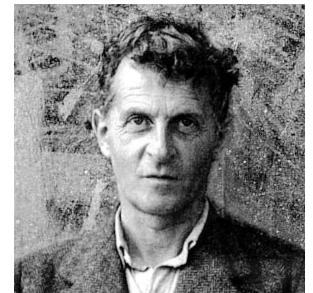
Class #22  
From PLA to IBS

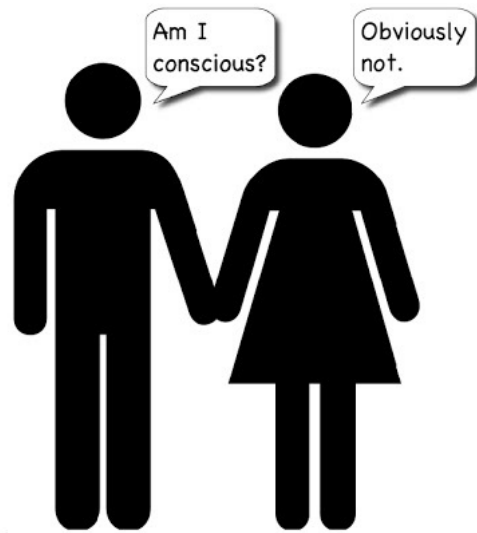
# Business

- Papers are due December 3 (Thursday after break)
- Next Thursday
  - Brief review of the meaning section and intro to pragmatics
  - (Amber on Austin, right after break)
  - Paper workshop
- Next Tuesday
  - Me on IBS
- Today
  - From PLA to IBS
  - Caleb on Grice on IBS

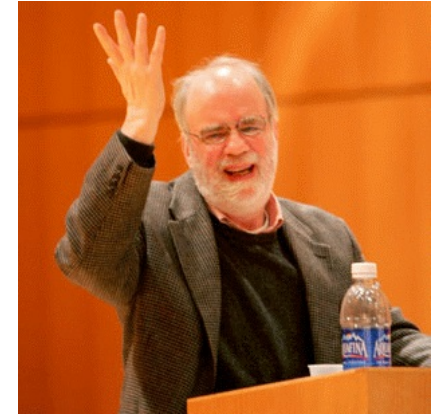
# The PLA and Meanings Skepticism

- Locke and Frege agree that we grasp meaning in our minds
  - ▶ Locke: the meanings of our terms are ideas
  - ▶ Frege: meanings are abstract objects which we can grasp, mentally
  - ▶ Also, Frege's context principle shifted us from terms to sentence-sized propositions.
- The logical empiricists tried to connect meaning with behavior
  - ▶ Maintained Frege's context principle
  - ▶ Atomism: the meaning of a sentence is its verification conditions.
- Quine
  - ▶ Agrees with the logical empiricism that meaning is tied to behavior
  - ▶ But disagrees on the unit of meaning: it's a whole language
- Quine and Wittgenstein (and the logical empiricists) share skepticism about abstract objects
  - ▶ Quine: meaning without meaningfulness
  - ▶ Despite deep differences, Quine and LW share much in their views of language and mental states.





# Does Kripke Get Wittgenstein Right?



- Is the PLA essentially a corollary of the arguments about rule following?
- Or are the claims about a language of sensations essentially focused on that specific case?
- An open question
- Kripke's case is certainly helped by Wittgenstein's claim:
  - "The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts - which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please" (PI §304).

# A Straight Solution

From Ruth Millikan



- Straight and skeptical solutions (Kripke 632)
  - ▶ A straight solution shows that skepticism is unwarranted; we do know.
  - ▶ A skeptical solution shows that the question is ill-formed.
  - ▶ Kripkenstein provides a skeptical solution.
- Millikan proposes an evolutionary explanation of rule-following.
- We follow the rules that we do because we are hard-wired as a result of natural selection to do so.
- We are justified in using plus, rather than quus, or for counting in the standard manner, by the rules which are grounded in our biology.
- “Whether this biological purposing is innate... or whether it is derived via learning, mechanisms of concept formation, etc., it must *ultimately* derive its content from the details of our evolutionary history. So, unless doing arithmetic results from a total breakdown of the cognitive systems... then *whatever* you mean to do when you encounter “plus,” that content has been determined by your experience coupled with evolutionary design” (648-9).

# Deriving an Ought from an Is

- Millikan derives a normative conclusion from her evolutionary biological solution.
- She says that it provides a standard, how one ought to add or count, and which predicates one ought to use (or see as justified in using).
- While we might defend an economy of free wood, or even of selling wood by the strength of the woodcutter, it seems that there are no real alternatives for measuring the wood.
- We ought to multiply in particular ways, add in particular ways, and count in particular ways.
- Biological purposiveness only supports rules which are conducive to survival.
- Mathematical facts and rules may be, and are traditionally, seen as independent of evolutionary imperatives.
- Of course, we might give up the traditional interpretation.

# **One Last Attempt at a Meaning Theory**



# Revenge of Locke 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.
- Wittgenstein's private language argument (PLA) takes this view to be utterly misguided.
- Still, we have thoughts.
  - They are not a nothing.
- We communicate our thoughts.
- Someone might believe that we could provide an account of meaning based on our thoughts, if not our sensations.



# Meaning Theories

- Theorems for all expressions of a language of the form:
  - ▶ (expression) x means that p
- For example:
  - ▶ 'Snow is white' means that snow is white.
  - ▶ 'Grass is green' means that grass is green.
  - ▶ 'The cat is on the mat' means that the cat is on the mat.
- Sentence (utterance) on the left.
- What's on the right?
  - ▶ Frege: Third realm abstract objects, mind-independent and language-independent
    - Russell too
    - Early Wittgenstein?
  - ▶ Ayer/Carnap/Hempel: observable behavior

# Grice's Program

- Define speaker-meaning
  - ▶ By saying 'snow is white', the speaker meant...
  - ▶ Explain the meaning of utterances in terms of intentions.
    - Reducing intension to intention
- Construct a meaning theory by using the meanings of individuals who use those sentences.
  - ▶ By saying 'x', S means that p iff ...
    - Any use of 'x' will have the same conditions on the right side of the 'iff'.
    - Any way of filling-in the right side will yield the same meaning.
  - ▶ By saying 'snow is white', S means that snow is white iff...

# Caleb on Grice's Program