(22)   PHILOSOPHER'S CORNER

Dennis Darland has proposed that "Philosopher's Corner" become a regular <u>RSN</u> feature for which all are invited to submit short philosophical articles. We are grateful to Dennis for preparing this first article. May we also hear from you?

Russell desired to apply the apparatus of <u>Principia Mathematica</u> to the problems of philosophy. He sought a logically perfect language which would allow the resolution of the puzzles of philosophy. Wittgenstein was originally seen as working on this task as well. His <u>Tractatus</u> was seen as a work of genius on this task. However, Wittgenstein radically altered his position, attacking his earlier (and Russell's) position as the result of illusions about language. Are Wittgenstein's criticisms of Logical Atomism valid? What is the fate of <u>Principia Mathematica?</u> What is the fate of Philosophy?--Is it reduced to linguistic therapy? What can be said about the philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics? Are these also to become, perhaps merely more specialized, therapies? These issues and more will be tackled in this and future Philosopher's Corners.

The method used here will rely upon the results of science and everyday knowledge as a starting point. No attempt to deduce this sort of knowledge from logic and immediate experience, as Russell as least at times desired, will be attempted. This author spent years agonizingly attempting to think through such a task--with no result. Although the task can readily be seen as impossible, there are also natural compulsions to return to the task. Both of these aspects of epistemology will be examined in the future, and this method of proceeding will be defended. The reasoning here will not withstand Cartesian Doubt.

Next I will examine Wittgenstein's initial criticism of Logical Atomism. Wittgenstein starts by quoting Augustine and saying he gives us "a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects--sentences are combinations of such names....In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands." Wittgenstein criticizes this view of language by saying it is a picture of a language simpler than ours. He gives examples of such simpler languages. He also gives numerous examples of uses of language which do not fit this simple picture.

Is this the demise of Logical Atomism? Well, in any case Logical Atomism cannot be used to give an adequate analysis of the many examples Wittgenstein gives. But cannot one of the many uses of language be to describe the world in terms of "atomic" entities? Isn't physics trying to do this? (I will use physics as my primary example, but it need not be assumed here that physics would be ontologically primary.) Wouldn't a completed physics (or whatever) provide a logically atomic language to describe the world? This isn't to say that the physicist could use this special language independently of orginary language. Ordinary language,

mathematics, logic, and the special languages of the sciences would provide a background in which this special language would have meaning. But does the fact that the usability of this language of physics depends upon ordinary language along with mathematics and the special practices of the physicists indicate that the meaning of the language is derived from these? The meaningfulness of the language may depend on these, but their combination gives the physicist the ability to describe "atomic" features of the world. These "atomic" features of the world can be maintained to have ontological primacy, without having primacy of meaning or primacy in knowledge.

Ordinary language sentences will not necessarily be analyzable into statements of the ontologically primary language. It would theoretically be possible to describe the uses of ordinary language in terms of the ontologically primary language, but in practice this would be far too complex. Some difficulties of this view will be examined latter. Thus we can concede to Wittgenstein that ordinary language is not "analyzable" into an atomic language, and that we are not acquainted with logically atomic entities, while maintaining that science will lead us to ontologically atomic entities, whose properties and relationships compose the world.

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(23)   "SEVEN DAYS FOR DISTURBING THE PEACE"

This political cartoon appeared in the Toronto Daily Star, September 14, 1961. Thanks to Harry Ruja who located it.

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