

SIMPLICITY AND RIGIDITY

READING SECTION 50 OF WITTGENSTEIN'S *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS* AFTER KRIPKE

Jean-Philippe Narboux

Draft

What I always do seems to be – to emphasize a distinction between the determination of a sense and the employment of a sense. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, III §137

The standard meter in Paris would not be accepted as the definition of the unit of length, if it were not protected from influences of temperature, etc., by being kept in a vault. If an earthquake should ever throw it out of this vault and deform its diameter, everybody would agree that the standard meter would no longer be a meter. Reichenbach, *The Philosophy of Space and Time*, §5

§1. In the first lecture of *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke singles out for criticism the following pair of sentences from section §50 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*:

- C₁ There is *one* thing of which it can be stated neither that it is 1 m long nor that it is not 1 m long, and that is the standard meter in Paris (*das Urmeter in Paris*).
- C₂ But this is, of course, not to ascribe any extraordinary property (*merkwürdige Eigenschaft*) to it, but only to mark its special role in the game of measuring with the meter-rule (*seine eigenartige Rolle in Spiel des Messens mit dem Metermaß*).

Kripke regards this a “very puzzling” pair of remarks. The second of the two above denials figuring in §50 is evidently meant to deflate, or at least to mitigate, the apparent paradoxicality of the first. Kripke objects to both:

This seems to be a very “extraordinary property”, actually, for any stick to have. I think he [Wittgenstein] must be wrong. If the stick is a stick, for example, 39.37 inches long (I assume we have some different standard for inches), why isn't it one meter long?¹

¹ Kripke NN p.54.

² Kripke NN p.54.

³ Kripke NN pp.55-56.

⁴ Ishiguro (1969)

⁵ See Narboux (2014).

⁶ Two notable exceptions in this respect are Gert (2002), (2010) and Diamond (2001).

Kripke goes on:

Anyway, let's suppose that he is wrong and that the stick is one meter long. Part of the problem which is bothering Wittgenstein is, of course, that this stick serves as a standard of length and so we can't attribute length to it.

Be this as it may (well, it may not be), is the statement "stick *S* is one meter long", a necessary truth? Of course its length might vary in time. We could make the definition more precise by stipulating that one meter is to be the length of *S* at a fixed time t_0 . Is it then a necessary truth that stick *S* is one meter long at time t_0 . Someone who thinks that everything one knows *a priori* is necessary might think: "This is the *definition* of a meter. By definition, stick *S* is one meter long at t_0 . That's a necessary truth." But there seems to me to be no reason so to conclude.²

There follows an extended argument turning upon the central distinction of *Naming and Necessity*, that between *giving the meaning* and *fixing the reference* of a designator, and whose upshot is that the statement "*S* is one meter long at t_0 " (hereafter "L") is best construed as at once contingent and *a priori*.³ To the extent that to give a stipulative *definition* of a designator (like "meter") is to assign it a *sense*, the former notion inherits, according to Kripke, the ambiguity concealed in the latter. Kripke argues that the definition assigns "meter" a sense *only* in the sense that it stipulates what "meter" is to refer to, not in the sense that it supplies a synonym for it (*i.e.* a linguistic expression with the same sense). Given how "meter" is defined, *S* could not turn out not to be one meter long at t_0 . But it cannot be concluded on this basis that *S* could not have failed to be one meter. That we cannot make sense of the (epistemic) hypothetical possibility that *S* should turn out not to be one meter long at t_0 after all, does not imply that we cannot make sense of the (non-epistemic) counterfactual possibility that *S* should have failed to be one meter long at t_0 .

After having thus shown that, from the assumption that statement L has sense, together with the definition of "meter", it cannot be inferred that L is necessary, Kripke proceeds to a second argument. He argues that it is in fact *true* that *S* could have failed to be one meter long at t_0 , given that the length of an object cannot be regarded as an essential property of it. From the truth of the statement that *S* could have failed to be one meter long at t_0 , he draws the conclusion that L does *make sense*. Though still indirect in character, this second, positive argument for the falsity of C_1 is evidently stronger than the first, purely negative argument *against* the argument to which Kripke traces C_1 . Finally, Kripke adduces a direct argument. This third argument runs as follows: since stick *S* can be measured to be 39.37 inches long by means of an inch-ruler, it would seem that, provided that the conversion rule "1 meter = 39.37 inches" be accepted, it *can* be said of *S* that it *is* 1 meter long. (Note that this is by no means to claim that *S* can be *measured* to be 1 meter long.)

The suspicion raised against Wittgenstein is that he may well have deemed L and \neg L nonsensical on the basis of a systematic failure to see how a statement like L could be construed otherwise than as *true in virtue of the meaning of* "meter". The possibility that a statement of that form should be true *a priori* without, for all that, being necessarily true, is obliterated from the start by his conceptual outlook. A lingering *positivist bias* as to how to construe the conventionality of meaning will have kept Wittgenstein under the spell of a dogma as to what definitions accomplish. The irony is that such a dogma fuels the very sort of metaphysical illusion that Wittgenstein meant to dislodge.

This chapter divides into four main parts. In the first part, I try to demonstrate the

² Kripke NN p.54.

³ Kripke NN pp.55-56.

philosophical (as distinct from the local exegetical) appropriateness of Kripke's Response to PI §50. In the second part, I bring out some of the difficulties that stand in the way of a satisfactory reading of PI §50 with an eye to showing that on the whole they hardly have been addressed by commentators. The third part is devoted to the Tractarian view of simplicity. Drawing on Ishiguro's seminal work on Tractarian names⁴, I contend that the Tractarian view of simplicity stands much closer to the view of simplicity generally regarded as that of PI §50 than to a Russellian one; and that it constitutes a first attempt at construing simplicity in terms of rigidity. Finally, in the fourth part, I articulate an alternative reading of PI §50, under which PI §50 bears critically on the *Tractatus* precisely to the extent that it attains a more resolute understanding of the internal relation between simplicity and rigidity.

I. The Relevance of Kripke's Response to PI §50

§2. Epigones of Wittgenstein have deemed it apposite to defend Wittgenstein against Kripke by arguing that the point encapsulated in the above pair of remarks has simply eluded Kripke and by mounting counter-attacks against Kripke's own train of thought on the matter. The latter's epigones have generally granted the former's claim to be speaking on behalf of Wittgenstein. Thus, that the above pair of remarks can be safely and unqualifiedly ascribed to Wittgenstein has generally been assumed, if only by default, by both parties to this dispute.

Now, I think that these attempted rebuttals to Kripke's critique on Wittgenstein's behalf can be shown either to be off-target or to misfire.⁵ They are to various degrees uncomprehending. The dispute between epigones of Wittgenstein and epigones of Kripke over the above pair of remarks is shaped by interpretations of both thinkers that betray serious misunderstandings and are best treated as expedient foils.

But the basic exegetical assumption that is common ground to both parties – that Wittgenstein's thought here stands at odds with Kripke's – does not withstand scrutiny anyway. In this essay, I shall contend that this exegetical assumption can and must be resisted if we are to attain a proper understanding of PI §50. Kripke's response to PI §50 is indeed predicated upon a misreading of this section. The main flaw of Kripke's reading of PI §50, however, does not lie in some failure to appraise the point of the above pair of remarks, as epigones of Wittgenstein have been all too prone to maintain. It resides in his outright and unqualified ascription of that pair of remarks to the author of PI, whereby he fails properly to construe their function within PI §50 and to realize that his qualms are quite congenial to the overall drift of PI §50 and the sections surrounding it. In other words, Kripke's reading of PI §50 is flawed on account, *not* of some failure to appraise the point encapsulated in this pair of remarks *per se*, but of some failure to appraise *Wittgenstein's* point in having it made in the course of PI §50. In that sense, the standard response to Kripke's critique of PI §50 on the part of epigones of Wittgenstein has got things almost exactly wrong.

Commentators of Wittgenstein have taken issue with Kripke's ascription to *Wittgenstein* of the paradox that is the subject of his study *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, arguing (rightly, to my mind) that Kripke mistakes Wittgenstein's dissolution of an apparent paradox (which accordingly Wittgenstein by no means endorses) for the solution of a genuine one. This makes it all the more surprising that on the whole it should not have

⁴ Ishiguro (1969)

⁵ See Narboux (2014).

occurred to those commentators that Kripke might be making the same sort of exegetical mistake in *Naming and Necessity* in his discussion of “what Wittgenstein says” about the standard meter in Paris.⁶ My own view is that Kripke is not wrong in thinking that the second of the two remarks fails to mitigate the air of paradox assumed by the first; he is wrong in adhering to the conventional view that Wittgenstein endorses these two remarks. Concurrently with this uncritical assumption, the narrow focus of the dispute between Wittgenstein’s and Kripke’s respective adepts on the pair of remarks that Kripke singled out for criticism, coupled to a failure on both sides to read Kripke’s discussion of PI §50 against the backdrop of his overall philosophy, has induced a failure to discern the relevance of that discussion to the issues of concern to Wittgenstein in PI §50.⁷ It has obfuscated the perspective from which Kripke’s thought engages with these issues and deflected attention away from the resources that Kripke’s thought affords for an interpretation of PI §50.

For such resources to come into view at all, some convergences between Wittgenstein and Kripke with respect to method must be given their due. In particular, Kripke’s claim to be putting forward alternative *pictures* rather than alternative *theories* must be paid more than lip service. This goes against the grain of the standard way of reading Kripke. In what follows, however, I make no sustained attempt at fleshing out a non-standard reading. Nor do I rehearse the grounds for holding that Kripke’s qualms over the above pair of remarks, not only are to the point, but are in order. Instead, I set out to elaborate and defend a reading of PI §50 that builds on insights afforded by Kripke’s thought. On the proposed reading, the overall drift of PI §50 and the section surrounding it proves to be quite congenial to Kripke’s thought.

The reading of PI §50 to be developed here is meant to provide a genuine way out of a certain exegetical predicament which I take to confront any interpretation of that section and in which I take current interpretations to be caught. Accordingly, in order to motivate my reading of PI §50, I delve into the sources of this exegetical predicament. In a nutshell, the exegetical predicament takes the following shape: either PI §50 is shown to take issue with the *Tractatus*’ picture of simplicity, but only at the cost of ascribing to the *Tractatus* the very picture of simplicity that it was in fact already concerned to challenge; or the *Tractatus*’ picture of simplicity is done full justice, but only at the cost of no longer regarding it as falling within the target of PI §50 and of thereby rendering PI §50 nearly redundant. Of course, the trivial way out consisting in holding PI §50 to assail a caricatured version of the *Tractatus*’ picture of simplicity is hardly more palatable. Our aim is to steer a path between the Charybdis of an irresolute interpretation of the *Tractatus* and the Scylla of a redundant interpretation of the *Philosophical Investigations*.⁸

§3. The ultimate concern of PI §50 is none other than the issue underlying the countenancing of simple objects or elements in the *Tractatus*: namely, the issue of the *determinacy* of sense. In effect, PI §50 is ultimately a reappraisal of the line of reasoning through which the *Tractatus* argued for the requirement that “simple signs” (*einfache Zeichen*) – *i.e.* signs designating “proto-elements” (*Urelemente*) – be possible (TLP 3.23), on the basis of its prior commitment to the requirement that sense be determinate. PI §50 reopens the question of why the determinacy of sense should have assumed the form of a *requirement* in the first place.

It is precisely at the level of this issue that the respective thoughts of Wittgenstein and Kripke engage one with another. While this is evidently true of Kripke’s study of PI §§ in

⁶ Two notable exceptions in this respect are Gert (2002), (2010) and Diamond (2001).

⁷ Two notable exceptions in this respect are Diamond (2001) and Dolev (2007a), (2007b).

⁸ This is the aim of any “resolute reading” of Wittgenstein’s work, properly understood: see Conant (2007).

Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, it is no less true, I think, of his critical discussion of PI §50 in the first lecture of *Naming and Necessity*. Arguably, a concern for the false requirements laid by philosophers upon our very ability to *mean* our words permeates Kripke's entire work. In *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke is concerned with tracing the false strictures laid upon our very ability to use *names* to a certain picture of how their meanings are *fixed*. His aim is to expose that picture for what it is, a mere *picture*, by making room for an alternative one.

At a certain level of generality, the two authors might even be said to concur in their diagnosis of the modalities along which the plain determinacy of our meanings is turned into philosophical strictures on our ability to mean what we say, whose tenor ensures that they cannot be met – at least not *effectively* met. According to them both, in our effort to secure the distinction between the standards of sense and their employment, and to make sure that the former hold fast regardless of what happens to be the case, we are prone: first, to mistake the logical fixity of the standards of sense for some kind of supra-physical rigidity (call it the 'indestructibility' of the fixed; second, to "predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representation" (PI §104), thereby turning the standards of sense into elementary constituents of reality.

Part of the special significance accruing to Kripke's critique of PI on the matter of the length of the standard meter is due to the fact that the notion of a metrical *standard* (*i.e.* that of a standard of measure) – such as "the standard meter in Paris" (*das Urmeter im Paris*) – is overdetermined in the works of both Kripke and Wittgenstein, in different albeit related ways.

Like the common non-literal notion of rigidity (one talks of a *rule* being "rigid"), Kripke's notion of "rigidity" involves a *logical* extension of the original *physical* notion of rigidity (one talks of a *body* being "rigid", meaning that it cannot be bent or deformed beyond a certain definite degree). When Kripke introduced his new term of art, the notion of congruence (*i.e.* of the equality of length between bodies) had long been shown to involve two distinct notions of rigidity, at two distinct levels. The question whether a measuring rod retains its length when transported is one that it is not physically but *logically* impossible to settle (that is, settling it makes no sense). It can be settled only by stipulation: two measuring rods shown to be equal in length by local comparison at a certain space point are *defined* as equal in length at a distance (hence as equal in length *simpliciter*). Such a convention possesses the *rigidity of an arbitrary rule*. However, this is not merely a linguistic convention. For one thing, the concept of congruence (*i.e.* of equality of length) is defined by "coordinating" to it a certain physical structure (namely the two measuring rods shown to be equal by local comparison at a certain space time), just as the definition of the concept of the unit of length "meter" is defined by "coordinating" to it the standard meter. For another, what makes that coordinative definition at once unique (*i.e.* independent of the path of transportation) and uniquely practical is a fact, knowable only *a posteriori*, regarding the behavior of measuring rods *as rigid bodies*, namely the fact that

Two measuring rods shown to be equal in length by local comparison at a certain space point will be found to be equal in length by local comparison at every other space point, whether they have been transported along the same or different paths.⁹

As for rigid bodies, they are just "those bodies that constitute the physical part in the

⁹ Reichenbach (1957) §4 p.16. In the same manner, the coordinative definition through which successive time intervals are defined as equal is both unique and uniquely practical in virtue of the fact, knowable only a posteriori, that "all periodic processes, and furthermore inertial motion and the motion of light, lead to the same measure of time." (Reichenbach (1957) §17 p.117)

coordinative definition of congruence and that by definition do not change their size when transported”¹⁰. That their shape is “unchangeable” is not some *fact* about them¹¹. For their shape to be “unchangeable” is for it to be *logically* rigid. To hold otherwise is to “predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representation” (PI §104).

One issue that is implicitly addressed by Kripke’s account arises from the fact that the stipulation that the metal bar chosen as standard stays the same length when transported stands in need of an important qualification. The length stipulated to stay the same can only be the *corrected* length of the metal bar chosen as standard, *i.e.* its length after theoretical correction for the action upon it of perturbational influences, including “universal forces” (*i.e.* forces deforming all bodies in the same way, independently of differences in internal resistance to deformation).¹² However, while the stipulation that universal forces should vanish falls short of explaining how the reference of the term “meter” can be *uniquely* fixed by means of the coordinative definition,¹³ the strictly stronger stipulation that the metal bar should be free from all *known* physical influences (universal forces do not count among known forces) makes the fixation of reference depend upon *knowledge*. On Kripke’s alternative account, all that is required is some actual relation, possibly mediate, to the metal bar itself and so to its actual length.¹⁴ Crucially, the length stipulated to stay the same is the corrected *actual* length of the metal bar.

§4. Wittgenstein apprehends the normativity of sense – as reflected in the “distinction between the determination of a sense and the employment of a sense” (RFM III §37) – on the model of the normativity attached to units of measure (like the meter or the yard). Thinking of the normativity of sense in such terms enables one to do justice to its autonomy and thereby to its determinacy. What must hold fast in order for so much as a negative description determinately to engage with reality is best thought of as a unit for the measure of a determinate magnitude:

“I haven’t stomach-ache” may be compared to the proposition “These apples cost nothing”. The point is that they don’t cost any money, not that they don’t cost any snow or any trouble. The zero is the zero point of one scale. And since I can’t be given any point on the yardstick without being given the yardstick, I can’t be given its zero point either. “I haven’t got a pain” doesn’t refer to a condition in which there can be no talk of pain, on the contrary we’re talking about pain. (...) I don’t describe a state of affairs by mentioning something that has nothing to do with it and stating it has nothing to do with it. That wouldn’t be a negative description. (PR §82)

If I say I did *not* dream last night, I must still know where I would have to look for a dream (*i.e.* the proposition ‘I dreamt’, applied to this situation can at most be false, it cannot be nonsense). I express the present situation by a setting – the negative one – of the signal dial ‘dreams – no dreams’. But in spite of its negative setting I must be able to distinguish it from other signal dials. I must know that *this* is the signal dial I have in my hand. (PR §86)

The determinacy of sense and the determinacy of its reversal through negation are one and the same. What they require is not the ability to recognize the presence of something (say, pain), if that is something distinct from the ability to recognize the absence thereof,¹⁵

¹⁰ Reichenbach (1957) §5 p.22.

¹¹ Reichenbach (1957) §5 p.20.

¹² See Putnam (1975) p.172.

¹³ See Putnam (1975) p.174, pp.186-191.

¹⁴ See Putnam (1975) pp.176-177. See also Putnam (1973) pp.198-204.

¹⁵ See PR §86.

but rather the possession of a ‘paradigm’ (*Paradigma*) with which to compare reality, akin to the standard meter in Paris (*das Urmeter im Paris*).¹⁶ In the thoughts that *this is red* and that *this is not red*, the possibility that this be red must show forth, yet not be assumed to obtain, even in the most shadowy way.¹⁷ Arguably units of sense in the *Tractatus* are already conceived of as units of measurement. Only, such units (the Tractarian objects) are *yes-no* units rather than scales, and they are not the result of *stipulation*.

In Wittgenstein’s later work, the assimilation of units of sense to units of measurement is, if anything, more *literal*. On the one hand, the establishment of a unit of measurement is literally a rule of grammar, *i.e.* a rule for the use of a word (such as “red”). On the other hand, *any* rule of grammar may be conceived as the specification of a unit of measurement (such as “the meter”) to the extent that “rules of grammar are arbitrary and are not arbitrary in the same sense as is the choice of a unit of measurement”. In the sense in which an ascription of length is answerable to reality (it is ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’), a rule of grammar is *not*. As the specification of a unit of length (*Maßeinheit*) is not a specification of length, so the specification of the use of a word is not the specification of a fact. But in the sense in which the choice of a unit of length is answerable to reality and suitable to us (it is ‘felicitous’ or ‘infelicitous’, because ‘practical’ or ‘impractical’), a rule of grammar *is*.¹⁸ The logical ‘rigidity’ attached to the standard meter or to a ruler (or more generally to a rule of grammar) *as a standard* is not *of a stricter kind* than the literal, physical rigidity that is required of it as a body. Nor does it depend upon the latter. This is the sense in which “a rule *qua* rule is detached, it stands as it were alone in its glory” (RFM VII §3). *For all that*,

You can’t say: “yes the measuring rod (*der Maßstab*) measures length in spite of its corporality (*Körperlichkeit*); but a measuring stick that had only length would be the ideal, would be the *pure* measuring stick”. No, if a body has length, then there can’t be any length without a body – and even if I understand that in a certain sense only the length of the measuring rod does the measuring, yet what I put into my pocket is still the measuring rod – the body and not the length. (BT p.352e.)

The defined length *is* abstract: it is not *maximally* unalterable, but *logically* unalterable. This does not mean that we have no reasons to keep the standard meter in a vault and “to manufacture rulers out of ever harder, more unalterable material”. It only means that we could have reasons to employ *elastic* rods *as our rulers*.

§5. Kripke’s *positive* contention about the standard meter in Paris – namely, that statement L (“*S* is one meter long at t_0 ”) is best construed as at once *a priori* and contingent – has seemed to fly in the face of Wittgenstein’s insistence that “the justification inherent *in* grammar *as such* doesn’t exist *for* grammar.”¹⁹ It has seemed to arise from conflating a rule for the use of the words “one meter” with a special use of these words and from failing to distinguish the sense in which a rule can be turned back on itself from the sense in which it cannot.²⁰ The very picture of logical necessities as truths holding in all possible worlds might indeed seem to betray the temptation, against which Wittgenstein warns his reader, to equate logical necessities with ‘super-rigid’ states of affairs.²¹ Now, Kripke does not deny what Wittgenstein asserts, namely that the establishment of a unit of measurement is a rule for the use of its designation, while an

¹⁶ See PR §11; PG §95.

¹⁷ See PG §95.

¹⁸ BT p.186e. See also LFM p.249.

¹⁹ BT p.185e.

²⁰ See Fogelin (2009) pp.104-108.

²¹ See Diamond (1991) p.192, p.198.

ascription of length in terms of this unit makes use of that rule.²² Nor does he assert what Wittgenstein denies, namely that the stipulative definition of a unit of length, *is* an ascription of length.²³ But even in the circumstance that the above suspicion should be funded, it would still not follow that Kripke's qualms about the pair of remarks he extracts from PI §50 are at odds with the overall argument of PI §50. Kripke's cautiousness in advancing his positive contention²⁴ and his subsequent qualifications of it²⁵ do not extend to these qualms. Conversely, some at least of Wittgenstein's sayings about ascriptions of lengths might bespeak the sort of verificationist strictures criticized by Kripke. Even so, however, such strictures need not be readable into PI §50.

I shall argue that Kripke's qualms *need not* be defused on Wittgensteinian grounds. Therefore, that Kripke's qualms *cannot* be so defused anyway, as I also argue elsewhere, counts as no objection to Wittgenstein's overall argument in PI §50. The latter argument lies outside the compass of this paper. I shall merely indicate its overall shape.

Attempts at rebutting Kripke's critique of PI §50 on (allegedly) Wittgensteinian grounds may be sorted into two groups, depending on the kind of diagnosis on which they turn. According to the first kind of diagnosis, it can only look to us as if the truth of L ("S is one meter long at t_0 ") were at once a priori and contingent, to the extent that we unwittingly oscillate between two ways of apprehending S – namely, as *the* standard for the unit of measurement called "meter" (by reference to which any other metal bar is to be assessed with respect to its length) and as *a* mere metal bar (which, like any other, can be assessed with respect to its length) – that are in fact mutually exclusive. Such oscillation tempts us into thinking that our grammatical knowledge of the features of a system of representation and our empirical knowledge of facts represented by means of that system are of a nature to overlap, so that L can be construed in both ways at once. Equating the reference of "meter" with some abstract object distinct from the metal bar S instead of equating it with S itself is, on this account, but the other side of the same mistake. The same failure to keep sight of the distinction between a grammatical feature and a property of an object leads Kripke to mistake a feature of the use of the word "meter", now for some accidental property of the metal bar S, now for the essence of some abstract object distinct from S. As against the former move, it is objected that S is not *found*, let alone *measured*, to be one meter long. As against the latter move, it is objected that the abstract object allegedly supplying the reference of "meter" evidently stands in need of, yet conspicuously lacks, *criteria of identity of its own*. This diagnosis typically helps itself to the view that the significance of the qualification entered by C₂ is that the assertion of the nonsensicality of L and ~L alike by C₁ should be seen as an expression or even a *consequence* of the grammatical truth that L can be seen to convey – or at least to gesture at, in spite or rather in virtue of its very failure to convey it (due to either its emptiness or its nonsensicality) – and which, put in the material mode, is none other than the *necessity* that S be one meter long at t_0 . On this account, Kripke's lapse into nonsense can be traced to a *violation* of the grammatical rule which "S *must* be one meter long at t_0 " tries to formulate in the material mode and which we can be said to have *laid down* in laying down the use of "meter".

This diagnosis is deeply flawed. The charge that Kripke's critique of PI §50 rests on a gross misreading of PI §50 itself rests on a gross misreading of both Kripke's critique *and* PI §50 *itself*. For one thing, Kripke does not take the point of C₁ to be, nor should the point of C₁ be taken to be, the simple point that S cannot be found, let alone measured, to be one meter long at t_0 . Kripke knows better than to deny such a point (which is of course

²² See BT p.189e.

²³ See BT p.190e.

²⁴ See NN pp.56-57.

²⁵ See Kripke (2011) pp.304-305.

correct), just as he knows better than to read it into C_1 (whose point he rightly takes to be the much stronger one that S cannot *at all* be *stated* to be one meter long at t_0). For another thing, in eschewing ascribing to Wittgenstein the view that L and $\sim L$ *contravene* to a grammatical rule, Kripke's reading of PI §50 is arguably far more consonant with Wittgenstein's own view of grammatical elucidation than the above account.

These distortions are explicitly disavowed by the line of response to Kripke's critique that turns on the second kind of diagnosis. This second line of response takes issue, in particular, with the verificationist strictures tacked on by the first on Wittgenstein's text. On this alternative diagnosis, no invocation of grammatical rules could establish that Kripke has unwittingly lapsed into nonsense. Nonsense does not stem from infringing grammatical rules; nor do grammatical rules set bounds to the realm of sense. That Kripke's claim that we have a priori knowledge of the truth of L is nonsense in disguise can be shown, on this alternative diagnosis, by bringing out the parallelism obtaining between this claim and the *patent* nonsense of a boy's claim to show you how tall he is by laying his hand on his head (see PI §279). The second line of objection thus stands or falls with the claim that such a parallelism obtains. Although far more compelling than the first, it too is unpersuasive. Or so I argue. Be that as it may, this second line of response to Kripke's critique, by contrast with the first, only disputes Kripke's positive contentions; it does not dispute his qualms. These are thus left intact.

II. PI §50: Stakes, Background and Problems

§6. The pair of remarks with which Kripke takes issue occur in the course of a lengthy section whose main point turns on an analogy between the logical impossibility (*i.e.* nonsensicality) of attributing (*beilegen*) either being (*Sein*) or non-being (*Nichtsein*) to elements and the impossibility of stating (*aussagen*) of the standard meter in Paris (*das Urmeter in Paris*) either that it is 1 meter long (*es sei 1m lang*) or that it is not 1 meter long (*es sei nicht 1 m lang*). According to this analogy, *being said (not) to be 1 m long* is to *being said (not) to be* what *being the standard meter* is to *being an element*. This analogy is set against the background of an interrogation, initiated in §46, as to “what lies behind the idea that names, genuinely speaking, designate what is simple (*dass Namen eigentlich das Einfache bezeichnen*).” (PI 46a) In §46, Wittgenstein traces this idea to the picture exemplified by the presentation (*Darstellung*) constituting the main bulk of “Socrates' Dream”, a well-known passage in Plato's *Theaetetus*. The closing paragraph of §46 attests to his having heard in Socrates' Dream a version of his own foregone Tractarian dream:

Both Russell's ‘individuals’ and my ‘objects’ (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) were such primary elements.

Thus, at stake in PI §§46-50 is the *Tractatus* view of simplicity.

The mode of criticism deployed in §48 is the same as the one that was deployed in §2²⁶. Accordingly, it is called in retrospect “the method of §2”. The language-game introduced in §48 stands to the presentation (*Darstellung*) from Plato's *Theaetetus* as the language-game introduced in §2 stands to the presentation from Augustine's *Confessions* on which the book opens: it is one for which the presentation holds (*gilt*). Just as the excerpt from Augustine's *Confessions* was meant to exemplify the picture (*Bild*) of (the essence of) human language in which a certain idea (*Idee*) about language is rooted – namely, the idea that to every word corresponds, as its meaning, the object for which that word deputizes –

²⁶ On this parallel, see Gert (2002) p.58; Stern (2004) pp.10-21; Jolley (2010) p.115.

so in §46 the excerpt from Plato's *Theaetetus* is meant to exemplify the picture of naming in which the idea (*Bewandtnis*) that “names, genuinely speaking, designate what is simple” is rooted. And just as §2 cashes out a certain “primitive conception (*Vorstellung*) of the way language functions” in terms of “the conception (*Vorstellung*) of a language more primitive than ours.” (PI §2a), so does §48 with respect to the conception of naming that emerges from Socrates' Dream. A philosophical concept of naming is criticized on account not of its falsity but of the primitiveness and the parochialism of the language-game and the form of life to which it *does* prove appropriate. In between §46 and §48, Wittgenstein interpolates a lengthy section (§47) that paves the way for the consideration of language-game (48) by showing both that the ontological question as to what *being simple* comes to cannot be severed from the logical question as to what *counting as simple* comes to, and that the latter only makes sense relative to a certain context.

The language-game introduced in §48 is characterized thus:

The language serves to present (*darzustellen*) combinations of colored squares on a surface. The squares form a complex like a chessboard. There are red, green, white and black squares. The words of the language are (correspondingly (*entsprechend*)) “R”, “G”, “W”, “B”, and a sentence is a series of these words. They describe (*beschreiben*) an arrangement (*eine Zusammenstellung*) of squares in the order:

And so for instance the sentence "RRBGGRWW" describes an arrangement of this sort:

(PI §48)

Wittgenstein goes on to observe that, in the context of such a language-game, a “sentence is a complex of names, to which corresponds (*entspricht*) a complex of elements” and that one could hardly find something that more naturally deserved to be called the “simple” (*das Einfache*) than the colored squares making such elements. This evidently parallels the claim that, in the context of language-game (2), one could hardly find something that more naturally deserved to be called the “meaning” of a word than the object for which it stands. Equipped with the language-game of §48, Wittgenstein can then proceed to address in section §49 the question of what it means to say, as the presentation from Plato's *Theaetetus* does, that “we cannot give an account of (that is, describe) elements, but only name them” (*dass wir diese Elemente nicht erklären (d.h. beschreiben) sondern nur benennen können*) (PI §49a). The question is raised and answered with reference to, and in the terms of, language-game (48).

§7. We can now, at last, turn to PI §50 itself. I quote it in full:

Now, what does it mean to state, of the elements (*Elemente*), that we can attribute (*beilegen*) neither being (*Sein*) nor non-being (*Nichtsein*) to them? — One might say: if everything that we call “being” and “non-being” consists in the existence and non-existence of connections between the elements (*im Bestehen und Nichtbestehen von Verbindungen zwischen den Elementen*), then it makes no sense to talk (*sprechen*) of an element's being (non-being); just as when everything we call “destruction” (“*Zerstören*”) lies in the separation of elements (*in der Trennung von Elementen liegt*), it makes no sense to speak (*reden*) of the destruction of an element.

One would, however, like to say: being cannot be attributed to an element, for if it *were* not, one could not even name it and so one could state nothing at all of it. — But let us consider an analogous case! There is *one* thing of which one can state neither that it is one meter long, nor that it is not one meter long, and that is the standard meter in Paris (*das Urmeter in Paris*). — But this is, of course, not to ascribe any

extraordinary property to it (*nicht irgend eine merkwürdige Eigenschaft zugeschrieben*), but only to mark its peculiar role in the game of measuring by means of the meter-rule. — Let us imagine samples of color being preserved in Paris like the standard meter. We define: “sepia” means (*heiße*) the color of the standard sepia (*Ur-Sepia*) which is there kept hermetically sealed. Then it will make no sense to state of this sample either that it has this color or that it does not.

We can put it like this: This sample (*Muster*) is an instrument (*Instrument*) of the language, by means of which we make color-statements (*Farbaussagen*). In this game (*Spiel*) it is not something that is represented, but a means of representation (*nicht Dargestelltes, sondern Mittel der Darstellung*). — And just this holds of an element in language-game (48) when we name it by pronouncing (*aussprechen*) the word “R”: we have thereby given to this thing a role in our language-game [*Sprachspiel*]; it is now a *means* of representation (*Mittel der Darstellung*). And to say “If it *were* not, it could have no name” is to say as much and as little as: if there were not this thing, we could not use it in our game. — What, on the face of it (*scheinbar*), there *must* be, is part of the language. It is a paradigm (*ein Paradigma*) in our game; something with which comparison is made. And you can call it to make an important observation to observe this; still, it is with our language-game (*unser Sprachspiel*) – with our method of representation (*unsere Darstellungsweise*) — that such an observation has to do. (PI §50)

The standard meter is invoked in the course of an attempt at dislodging a certain picture of simplicity, one that Wittgenstein takes to inform both Socrates’ Dream and the *Tractatus*. The fascination exerted by this picture underlies the reluctance with which the first try at a deflationary account of the impossibility of attributing (*beilegen*) either being (*Sein*) or non-being (*Nichtsein*) to elements is met.²⁷ The argument broached at the beginning of §50b is meant to ward off the suggestion that the impossibility of attributing either being or non-being to elements results from a stipulation as to what to *call* being (*Sein*) and non-being (*Nichtsein*) and to that extent is a mere reflection of our ways of *talking*. Drawing from neighboring sections, we may rephrase the reluctance to which this argument lends support as follows: in the face of the deflationary account, we are inclined to insist that the impossibility of attributing combinatorial being to elements is a reflection of the fact that they “exist in their own right” (PI §46, §58). They have being in some other and more fundamental sense – call it “being in virtue of one’s own essence”. In a more Tractarian mood, we might say that what shows forth in some sign being used as a name, *i.e.* as a symbol for an element, cannot be said. But, one is inclined to think, what thus shows forth is precisely what “*A* is” (where *A* is the name of an element) tries and fails to say (see PI §58c). It is therefore as if “*A* is”, far from not making sense, only made *too much* sense. Note that nothing in these last, Tractarian (or pseudo-Tractarian) formulations implies that what “*A* is” tries and fails to say, *i.e.* what shows forth in ‘*A*’ being a name, is *that A is an object*, let alone *that A is*.

But *why* this should be so is a matter on which §50b says very little. All that is said is that if *A* did not exist, then it would not be so much as nameable, so that it could not be spoken of in the first place. From this, together with the premise (left implicit) that it makes sense to attribute being to *A* only if it makes sense to attribute non-being to *A* (*i.e.* to deny being from *A*), the conclusion that it makes no sense to attribute being to *A* is supposed to follow. The details of the underlying argument must be filled in, and the argument itself expanded. If what shows forth in “*A*” being a name, and which “*A* is” tries and fails to say, could fail to show forth, then a situation would be possible in which *A* would not be there to be named, so that we could not so much as speak of it at all. On the

²⁷ See Jolley (2010) p.111, p.119.

assumption, suggested by the combinatorial account of being and nonbeing, that names are the end-points of analysis, the argument calls for being expanded as follows. If names lie at the limits of all analysis, then it is perforce of elements that we always speak ultimately. If so, to envision a situation in which we cannot so much as speak of *A* is to envision a situation in which there are indefinitely many complex things that cannot be stated to be or not to be. But for such a situation to be conceivable, it would have to be conceivable that our very capacity to make sense might fail us. And that is absurd. Therefore, what “*A* is” tries and fails to say, cannot fail to show forth. Should this last claim turn out to be equivalent to the claim that *A* must “exist in its own right” or “with necessity”, then the argument will have established, by the same token, this last claim.²⁸

Construed along the lines, the argument broached at the beginning of §50b assumes the shape of a “transcendental argument”: that what “*A* is” tries and fails to say cannot fail to show forth is a condition of possibility of our ability to make sense. Of course, even so fleshed out, the argument is still schematic, as the notions of situation and possibility it invokes are conspicuously ambiguous.²⁹ As we shall see, one of the virtues of Kripke’s thought in this regard is that it can help to bring the ambiguity of these notions into light.

It is worth emphasizing that *to the extent that* this argument can be said to argue in favor of the necessary existence of elements, it must be recognized to do so on the basis of a prior argument in favor of their simplicity, *rather than the other way around*.³⁰ The argument is also worth comparing to the argument on the basis of which ascriptions of existence to individual objects have been reckoned incoherent and analyzed out as ascriptions of the second-level concept of existence to first-level concepts. If we say *e.g.* that satellites of Mars exist, the argument runs,

Even if we were assured that Mars had some satellites, the question would arise, if existence were a property, whether all of Mars’s satellites had the property, or only some of them, whereas such a question is patently senseless; in fact the proposition that there are satellites of Mars embodies all that we wished to assert in asserting such satellites to exist.³¹

That is to say, “ ξ exists” is not a first-level predicate expressing a property of objects, but a second-level predicate expressing a property of first-level concepts (as for Frege) or a property of propositional functions (as for Russell)³². On pain of there being room for

²⁸ As will become clear, I doubt that the antecedent of this conditional can be ascribed to the *Tractatus*.

²⁹ See Proops (2007); Zalabardo (2012).

³⁰ By contrast, the argument rehearsed in §39, which is taken from Russell, argues in favor of the simplicity of elements through arguing through their necessary existence: “But why does it occur to one to want to make precisely this word into a name, when it evidently is not a name? – That is just the reason. For one is tempted to make an objection against what is ordinarily called a name. It can be put like this: a name ought really to signify a simple. And for this one might perhaps give the following reasons: The word “Nothing”, say, is a proper name in the ordinary sense. The sword Nothung consists of parts combined in a particular way. If they are combined differently Nothung does not exist. But it is clear that the sentence “Nothing has a sharp blade” makes sense whether Nothung is still whole or is broken up. But if “Nothing” is the name of an object, this object no longer exists when Nothung is broken in pieces; and as no object would then correspond to the name it would have no meaning. But then the sentence “Nothing has a sharp blade” would contain a word that had no meaning, and hence the sentence would be nonsense. But it does make sense; so there must always be something corresponding to the words of which it consists. So the word “Nothing” must disappear when the sense is analyzed and its place be taken by words that name simples. It will be reasonable to call these words the real names.” (PI §39) As we shall see, there is no reason to read this argument – “the Empty Name argument” (see Zalabardo (2012) p.119) – back into the *Tractatus*. But nor is there, anyway, any reason to take sections §§39-40 to be directed against the *Tractatus* view of simplicity. On both counts, I entirely concur with Zalabardo (2012).

³¹ Dummett (1993) pp.277-278.

³² See Russell (1918) pp.232-234.

quantifying over non-existent objects, “ ξ exists” must be none other than the second-level predicate “there is”, *i.e.* the so-called “existential quantifier”.³³

One is drawn to the same general conclusion if one attends to the old riddle of non-being arising in connection with negative singular existential statements of the form “ A is not”. It would seem that such statements are essentially self-defeating, insofar as we cannot so much as meaningfully *assert* that “ A is not” unless ‘ A ’ has a reference (*i.e.* unless A is, in some sense or other). The existential case is a limiting one: the point is that if A were not, then we should not be talking about anything when using ‘ A ’, so that *even* to say that A is not would be nonsense.³⁴

By itself, however, this last observation does not imply the radical and general conclusion that it is strictly and equally nonsensical either to ascribe existence to objects or to deny it of them. Rather, its limited upshot is that “ A is not” is either self-defeating (if true) or redundant (if its negation is true), while conversely “ A is” is either redundant (if true) or self-defeating (if its negation is true). One might be tempted to say that where ‘ A ’ is a name, what “ A is” would say, if only that could be said, is true (as Russell sometimes suggests); or even that “ A is” is just as self-evidently and as universally true as a statement of self-identity like “ A is A ” (as Frege sometimes maintains³⁵). Such claims support a “redundancy view of existence” (according to which existence, like self-identity, is a property that holds of every object) that is strictly speaking incompatible with the view that existence is a property of property. Whether Kant’s famous contention that existence is not a real predicate – *i.e.* that it is no additional character of the concept of the object (say, this particular bird) stated to exist, on a par with its other characters (like *e.g.* flying) – but rather the absolute position of the object in question (with all its predicates), prefigures one view or the other (if any) is unclear.

The converse argument, by contrast, carries through. From the general thesis that existence is a second-level concept, the claim does follow, that the affirmative existential “ A is” and the negative existential “ A is not” are strictly and equally nonsensical. But to arrive at the conclusion that “ A is” (where A is a name) is nonsensical, calling attention to the pair of puzzles attending singular existentials is not enough. Additional premises are required: that only what is simple can be named; that only what can be stated can be stated to be; that only what is not simple can be stated. These are premises that Russell and the early Wittgenstein can be said to share – if only *nominally* (a symptom of the skin-deep character of their convergence is that Russell endorses, while the early Wittgenstein rejects, the assimilation of facts and complexes).

In the light of these considerations, the first thing to note about the opening argument of §50b is that it does not give prominence to the paradox of negative singular existentials. The second thing to note about this argument is that, in stark contrast to the deflationary claim on which §50a opens and the less specific claim that “ A is” and “ A is not” are strictly and equally nonsensical, both of which take the form of a joint denial securing a strict *parity* between being and non-being, it has *imparity* built into it. Part of the objection to the deflationary claim is precisely that it treats “ A is” and “ A is not” as if they stood on a par. The *Tractatus* holds on to the parity more consistently than Frege and Russell ever did. Its stance remains ambiguous, however – at least when taken at face value. It is well captured by this later remark:

When one says that substance is undestroyable, what one *means*, is that it is senseless in any context to talk – whether affirming or denying – of ‘the destroying of a substance’. (PB §95)

³³ See Quine (1948), Dummett (1993).

³⁴ See Quine (1948) p.2.

³⁵ On this tension in Frege, see Mendelsohn (2005) Chapter 7.

In response to which one feels inclined to ask: why say it is “*undestroyable*” (rather than, say, “*irrefragible*”, or “*inedible*”, or what not) then? What makes *this* meta-linguistic denial more relevant than any other? This is an issue to which we shall have more than one occasion to revert.

The last tract of §50 is clearly concerned with disarming the above argument. It reaches the diagnosis that the appearance that there must be a certain thing – say, that there must be *this*, to which “*A*” refers – is but an artifact of language. Finally, it warns against the temptation to take such an artifact to be anything else than an artifact of *our* language.

What is altogether unclear is the role played in all that by the invocation of the standard meter.³⁶ On the surface, the analogy at play is one between the nonsensicality of attributing (*beilegen*) either being (*Sein*) or non-being (*Nichtsein*) to elements and the nonsensicality of stating (*aussagen*) of the standard meter in Paris (*das Urmeter in Paris*) either that it is 1 meter long (*es sei 1 m lang*) or that it is not 1 meter long (*es sei nicht 1 m lang*).³⁷ But this leaves room for more than one way of construing the function of the analogy within §50.³⁸ And what function is ascribed to it has a direct bearing on one's understanding of the deflationary intent of §50. By way of consequence, it has a direct bearing on one's understanding of the kind of deflation secured by rephrasing logical necessities in grammatical terms.³⁹

§8. I now turn to the main tenets of reading of the “standard reading” of PI §50⁴⁰. Let me rehearse the two claims upon which Kripke fastens:

- C₁ There is one thing of which it can be stated neither that it is 1 m long nor that it is not 1 m long, namely the standard meter *S* kept in Paris.

- C₂ To assert C₁ is not to ascribe to the standard meter *S* any extraordinary property, but merely to register its unique role in the language-game of measuring in meters.

On the standard reading of PI §50, the first claim can be said to be endorsed without qualification by Wittgenstein provided it be seen in light of the second.⁴¹ On this reading,

³⁶ As we shall see, it is not even clear that the standard meter constitutes *itself* the second term of the analogy. See section 3.1 below.

³⁷ At bottom, however, the analogy at work proves to be one that involves existence *on both sides*. See section 3.1 below.

³⁸ See note 42 below.

³⁹ The diagnosis advanced in §50 resonates with the genealogy of the pseudo-problems of philosophy countenanced in §104: “We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representation (*in der Darstellungsweise*). Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we take it for the perception of a situation of the highest generality.” That the deflationary point made in §50 neatly illustrates the deflationary benefit of rephrasing logical necessities in grammatical terms is clear from these passages: “The difficulty arises in all such cases from mixing [*die Vermischung*] ‘is’ and ‘is called’. The connection [*Verbindung*] which has to be, not a causal or experiential one, but rather a much stricter and harder one, so rigid even that the one thing somehow already *is* the other, is always a connection in grammar [*eine Verbindung in der Grammatik*].” (*BGM* §§127-128)

⁴⁰ It bears emphasizing that this designation is *not* in line with the homonymous designation by which so-called “resolute readings” of Wittgenstein (early and late) designate the kind of reading that they charge with being “irresolute”. In fact, the distinction drawn in this chapter between “standard readings” and “non-standard readings” of PI §50 is orthogonal to the distinction marked by “resolute readings”.

⁴¹ As Kelly Jolley puts it, “Wittgenstein is speaking in his own assertive voice when he says what he says about the standard meter.” (Jolley (2010) p.107) At this level generality, the standard reading can be ascribed to the following commentators: Avital (2008); Baker & Hacker (1980a), (1980b); Bouveresse (2006); Fogelin (1995), (2009); Jolley (2010); Loomis (1999); Malcolm (1995); Pollock (2004); Dolev (2007a). It should be noted, however, that while they ascribe C₁ to Wittgenstein without qualification (or without any other qualification than that it should be construed in the light of C₂), Dolev and Jolley,

the reason why C_2 is called for is that the deflationary character of C_1 is bound to elude us as long as we are in the grip of the picture that C_1 means to dislodge. By showing C_1 for the deflationary point that it is, C_2 definitively dissipates the air of paradox that C_1 is initially bound to assume in our eyes. The point of the analogy is to expose the nonsensicality of the metaphysically loaded claim that neither being nor non-being can be attributed to an element by contrasting it with a claim which, although counterpart to the first, makes *plain sense*, presumably because the words it employs are plainly *at home* in the context in which it is uttered, whereas before they were done violence to.⁴² C_1 makes plain sense insofar as it merely lends expression to the *role* played by the standard meter as long as it serves as the standard meter. On the standard reading, where the *Tractatus* went astray was in failing to realize that the impossibility of stating of an element either that it is or that it is not did not reflect its *essence* but only the *role* played by it – that is to say, the role conferred to it. In a nutshell, it mistook samples for simples, *i.e.* for necessarily existing objects.

The standard reading passes over in silence a number of exegetical problems that a reading of *PI* §50 should address. Perhaps the most acute of these has to do with its account of the critical bearing of *PI* §50 on the *Tractatus*' view of simplicity. But the standard reading is also beset with problems of its own.

Firstly, any reading of *PI* §50 is confronted with the difficulty of making sense of the closing paragraph of §46, where Wittgenstein declares that Russell's "individuals" and the "objects" of the *Tractatus* equally count as primitive elements (*Urelemente*) in the sense of Socrates' Dream. On the face of it, aligning Russellian individuals on Tractarian objects flies in the face of the *Tractatus*' evident disavowal of Russell's semantic atomism.⁴³

Secondly, insofar as it takes for granted a combinatorial conception of being and non-being, the argument of §50, on the face of it, begs the question. In effect, the reluctance with which the first deflationary attempt of §50 is met can be read as a reluctance to concede that the meaning of "being" is simply exhausted by its combinatorial meaning. Surely such reluctance cannot be dismissed without a second thought. That the existence of anything should consist in the obtaining of a combination or a complex, that is to say in the obtaining of *something else*, is no trivial assumption. Not only is this assumption not incompatible as such with an analysis of existential statements as ascribing existence to, or denying it of, complex subjects, but it might seem germane to the latter analysis insofar as it is likewise committed to the assumption that existential statements are complex. Accordingly, some philosophers have imputed the puzzles allegedly posed by singular

unlike the rest of these commentators, do *not* take Wittgenstein to endorse C_1 "without qualification" if that means "without any consideration of context". According to both of them, Wittgenstein could not endorse C_1 as it stands if C_1 did not encapsulate an implicit restriction to the preparatory stage of introducing the word "meter".

⁴² According to one version of the standard reading (hereafter " S_1 "), C_1 is the result of the transposition of the metaphysically loaded claim about elements into a register in which it ceases to be so loaded. C_1 paves the way for a reinterpretation of that claim, which C_2 then shows how to carry out (see *e.g.* Baker & Hacker (1980a), (1980b); Bouveresse (2006)). According to another version (hereafter " S_2 "), C_1 is the result of applying the "method of §2", rather than a method of transposition, to the metaphysical claim about elements. On this reading, §50 carries further the procedure initiated in §48. Thus, by "bring[ing] words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (*PI* §116) – that is to say, by redeeming a certain stretch of discourse by pointing "in what special circumstances [it] is actually used", "it makes sense" (*PI* §117) – the analogy shows a *contrario* that in the metaphysical claim "language goes on holiday" (*PI* §38).

⁴³ See Ishiguro (1969); Kenny (1974) p.6; Anscombe (2011) p.182. Anscombe writes: "There is certainly a problem of interpretation here. I don't know if anyone has tackled it successfully." (Anscombe (2011) p.182) The difficulty is all the more acute as Socrates' Dream is anyway not clearly susceptible to the Russellian reading. For one thing, as Anscombe points out, "the passage in Plato does not speak of the primary elements as 'given'." (Anscombe (2011) p.182)

denials of existence to just that assumption, arguing that it signals a failure to take the proper measure of Kant's insight that existence is not a real predicate but the *absolute* position of an object (with all its predicates).⁴⁴ By discarding the assumption that singular denials are complex, they were able to argue that the rejection of the existence of *A* is nothing over and above the rejection of *A* itself, and so does not require *A* to refer.

Thirdly, the analogy raises at least two difficulties, both of which are elided by the standard reading. First, how the analogy is supposed to have the intended import is not clear. For the "case" with which the analogy is drawn seems *most unrepresentative* at first. What is more, no grounds, apart from the analogy itself, have been adduced so far for seeing it otherwise. Second, at first glance, the analogy at best limps and at worse trades upon equivocation. For, on the one hand, to attribute or to deny *being-1-meter-long* is not to attribute or to deny any *existence* whatsoever. On the other hand, to attribute or to deny *existence* is not to attribute or to deny any first-level *property* whatsoever, or at least not a first-level property *like any other*. Thus, either the analogy limps, or else it equivocates, construing "to be", now as predication, now as existence. To this it might be objected that the analogy is really between two equally unrepresentative, because equally redundant, first-level properties: those of self-identity and existence. But this objection, although it encapsulates a genuine insight, is itself vulnerable to the further objection that self-identity and existence part company in modal contexts, as there is reason to "assume that something is self-identical even with respect to counterfactual situations where it would not exist"⁴⁵.

Fourthly, there is an evident (if seldom noticed) obstacle to regarding C_1 , with the standard reading, as a consequence of the fact that "meter" is stipulated to *mean* the same thing as "the length of *S* at t_0 ". For if "meter" is introduced as synonymous with a description, and not just by means of a description, then it can hardly be said to be indefinable. But if C_1 does not reflect on the simplicity of the unit of measure designated by "meter", then the analogy carries less conviction.

Finally, there is anyway something disturbing about ascribing C_1 to Wittgenstein, given the overall drift of these sections. For Wittgenstein is emphatic that there is something mystifying in the very *form* of the claim that elements can only be named. And C_1 is cast in the same form as this claim. In general, no matter how the Tractarian claim that "what shows forth cannot be said" (TLP 4.1212) may have to be construed in the end, it is certainly the case that "the *Investigations* insist that it is an error to think that there *is* something that can't be said."⁴⁶

An appreciation of the force of this last point has prompted a diametrically opposite reading of PI §50, according to which Wittgenstein, far from endorsing C_1 , endorses its negation in §50.⁴⁷ On this alternative reading, the analogy serves the purpose of exposing a certain stretch of discourse as nonsensical, not by adducing the "special circumstances" in which it would actually have made sense, as the standard reading contends, but on the contrary by adducing a stretch of discourse which, although or rather because it is strictly analogous to it, is *patently* nonsensical⁴⁸.

However, in recoiling from the standard reading, this reading leaves unchallenged what is perhaps its single most damaging assumption: namely, the assumption that such trivial things as standards are most unlikely to give rise, just by themselves, to metaphysically inflated claims. In effect, on this alternative reading, Wittgenstein exposes the

⁴⁴ E.g. Brentano. On Brentano's account, see Prior (1967) p.143.

⁴⁵ Kripke RE p.38.

⁴⁶ Anscombe (2011) p.192.

⁴⁷ See Gert (2002), (2010).

⁴⁸ This is the method of criticism thematized in PI §524.

nonsensicality of C_1 by helping himself to “an analogous discussion carried on in terms of objects of a more familiar and undisputed type (standards).”⁴⁹

But the assumption that the nature of metrical standards is familiar to us *and therefore* undisputed is directly belied by a claim which Wittgenstein is repeatedly reported to have made, to the effect that the relation between Platonic Forms and the things which partake of them is best construed on the model of the relation between the canonical standard for a unit of measure (such as the standard meter in Paris or the standard pound) and the corresponding non-canonical standards or samples (such as meter-rules or pound-weights).⁵⁰ Surely Wittgenstein’s point is not that the idiom surrounding Platonic Forms *turns out* to be at home in ordinary talk about standards, but rather that it *was* a sublimation of that talk in the first place. Ordinary standards *lent themselves* to the elaboration of the notion of Form. And they did so in virtue of their triviality, not despite it. Platonic Forms *are* standards, in the very sense in which ordinary standards are. They supply an elucidation of this sense. As for the assumption that the *Tractatus* was mute on metrical standards,⁵¹ it cannot be maintained in the face of the fact that the *Tractatus* gives them pride of place by conceiving the normativity of propositions in terms of the normativity pertaining to ungraduated standard in use. There is reason to think that the *Tractatus*’ picture of simplicity is already shaped by a certain picture of the simplicity displayed by standards. It is no accident that the very designation (in German) of the standard meter (“*das Urmeter*”) should echo back the designations of both Tractarian primitive elements (“*Urelemente*”, “proto-elements”, as one might call them) and Tractarian proto-types (“*Urbilder*”).

III. Tractarian Simplicity

§9. On the face of things, there is no way to make sense of the closing paragraph of §46. The difficulty does not arise from any discrepancy between the use to which Wittgenstein puts Socrates’ Dream and Plato’s intentions. On the contrary, the use to which Wittgenstein puts it seems entirely congruent with Plato’s intentions, given that already in the *Theaetetus* Socrates’ Dream is deliberately worded so as to remain in itself indeterminate and to make room for a variety of distinct interpretations⁵². The difficulty, rather, is that it is far from clear that interpreting the Dream’s elements as Russellian individuals is compatible with interpreting them as Tractarian objects, let alone as Platonic forms.

In the excerpt quoted by Wittgenstein in §46, a combinatorial account of being and not-being is shown to cohere with an account of the essence of speech whose cornerstone is a contrast between the articulatedness that proves to be equally intrinsic to what is stated and to the stating of it and the inarticulatedness of the elements into which what is stated resolves. Wittgenstein construes the claim that elements (*Urelemente*) cannot be described but only named, not as the claim that they are such that nothing can be stated *of* them (*i.e.* that they cannot be spoken *about*, and in that sense described), but as the claim that they cannot be stated (*i.e.* that they cannot be spoken themselves) but only mentioned (*i.e.*

⁴⁹ Gert (2002) p.51. This view is of a piece with the view, also espoused by Gert, that C_1 is “obviously false”, its negation, $\sim C_1$, obviously true (Gert (2010) p.140). For an apt criticism of the latter view, see the last section of Jolley (2010), pp.131-139.

⁵⁰ See Geach (1956) p.74; Bluck (1957) p.115.

⁵¹ See *e.g.* Jolley (2010) p.118.

⁵² Burnyeat (1990) p.136.

spoken of, described externally)⁵³. Elements are what everything else that can be affirmed or denied, what everything else that can be thought to be or not to be, ultimately consists of. They are what everything else that can be articulated in speech or thought ultimately articulates into. Lying at the boundary where articulatedness comes to an end, they themselves cannot be articulated. As they do not admit of internal description, they do not admit of definition either. And so to say that they lie at the boundary where articulatedness comes to an end is to say that they lie at the boundary where analysis comes to an end. If for something to be (or not to be) so and so, or for something to be (or not to be) *simpliciter*, is for some combination of elements to obtain (or not to obtain), to be (or not to be) the case, then not only does it make no sense to say of an element that it is such as to be (or not to be) so and so, but it also does not make sense either to say of something that it is (is not) an element (the concept of “being an element” is not a genuine concept) or to say of an element that it is *simpliciter* (*i.e.* exists) – let alone that it is not *simpliciter* (*i.e.* does not exist).⁵⁴ (In Russell, the last point becomes the claim that there is simply no first-level existence predicate, as it is only of propositional functions that existence can be asserted or denied.)⁵⁵ Finally, as only what is articulated can be contradicted, it is one and the same thing to say of elements that they can only be named and to say of their names that they cannot be negated⁵⁶.

Socrates’ Dream can be brought in closer alignment with the *Tractatus*. Thus, on Ryle’s reading, in addition to claiming that what can be named cannot be stated but only mentioned, the Dream makes the converse and specifically Tractarian claim that what can be stated, *i.e.* articulated into elements, cannot be named but only described. According to Ryle, the categorial distinction between naming and stating was first rendered intelligible by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, in response to troubles that both Frege and Russell had come up against. But it was already made vivid by Plato in places, including the passage known as Socrates’ Dream⁵⁷. And Plato’s model of letters and syllables, *if* properly construed (namely as a *phonetic* model) supplies the most perspicuous of models to convey the insight from Frege that paved the way for the *Tractatus*’ breakthrough:

The phonetic model of letters and syllables would be an almost perfect models by means of which to express Frege’s difficult but crucial point that the unitary something that is *said* in a sentence or the unitary sense that it expresses is not an assemblage of detachable sense atoms, that is, of parts enjoying separate existence and separate thinkability, and yet that one truth or falsehood may have discernible, countable, and classifiable similarities to and dissimilarities from other truths and falsehoods. Word meanings or concepts are not proposition components but propositional differences. They are distinguishables, not detachables; abstractables, not extractables – as are the audible contributions made to the voiced monosyllable

⁵³ See PG p.208: “In a certain sense, an object cannot be described.’ (So too Plato: ‘You can’t give an account of one but only name it.’) Here ‘object’ means ‘reference to a not further definable word’, and ‘description’ or ‘explanation’ really means ‘definition’. For of course it isn’t denied that the object can be ‘described from outside’, that properties can be ascribed to it and so on.” See Burnyeat (1990) p.150-151.

⁵⁴ For a Tractarian counterpart to this point, see Sullivan (2004) p.32-33: “There is nothing, except itself, in whose being so an elementary fact consists. So to talk of the constituents of an elementary fact cannot be to allude to anything’s being so. It is inviting, then, to say that an object is not anything that is *so*, or *is the case*; it just *is*. But even to say *that it is* would seemingly be to say that something is so, and thus the invitation is best declined.”

⁵⁵ See Russell (1956) p.328: “An important consequence of the theory of descriptions is that it is meaningless to say ‘A exists’ unless ‘A’ is (or stands for) a phrase of the form ‘the so-and-so’. If the so-and-so exists, and x is so-and-so, to say ‘x exists’ is nonsense. Existence, in the sense in which it is ascribed to single entities, is thus removed altogether from the list of fundamentals.”

⁵⁶ See Ryle (1960) p.445.

⁵⁷ Ryle (1960) p.436, pp.442-443; (1990) p.446.

“box” by the consonants “b” and “x.”⁵⁸

While the spoken monosyllable “box” differs audibly in one respect from the spoken monosyllable “cox”, the audible difference is not a matter of the two monosyllables being made up out of different separately pronounceable noises, in contrast to the written difference between the written monosyllables “box” and “cox”, which is a matter of their being made up out of different separately inscribable letters. Such separately inscribable characters as “b” and “x” simply do not stand for separately pronounceable noises.⁵⁹ Just as letters do not stand for atoms of noise, Tractarian names do not stand for atoms of sense.⁶⁰ A striking implication of Ryle's genealogy of the *Tractatus*' central achievement is that Tractarian names are to be compared to Fregean functional expressions rather than to Fregean names⁶¹. Tractarian elements are patterns rather than atoms of sense. To understand that the articulatedness through which alone a proposition can articulate a thought is that of a certain fact, and not simply that of a complex, is to understand that the articulatedness of a proposition is no form of compositeness⁶². If the thought expressed by a statement is to engage with the world, it needs at once to be independent from, and internally related, to what is the case if it is true. Now, “both needs are met, in part, by the objects: even if one thinks things to be a way they are not, it is still *these* things one thinks to be that way. For the rest, those needs are met by the notion of the *form* of thought: the *way* these things are thought to be (...) is a way those things could be.”⁶³ On the present reading, the Dream's notion of an element already involves the relevant notion of form and so meets the second need as well, just as the Tractarian notion of an element does.⁶⁴

The problem is that reading Socrates' Dream along these lines makes it unintelligible that Wittgenstein should mention Russell's individuals as examples of elements in the sense of Socrates' Dream. For Russell keeps conceiving all semantic complexity as compositional and semantic units as atoms of sense. It is true that in *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, taking up the Tractarian contrast between names and propositions, he insists that facts cannot be named⁶⁵ and conversely particulars cannot be described⁶⁶. Yet he still maintains, both that “propositions are complex symbols, and the fact they stand for are complex”,⁶⁷ and that “in order to understand a name for a particular, the only thing necessary is to be acquainted with that particular”⁶⁸.

There is a converse difficulty. There are at least two ways in which PI §50 may be read as mounting a criticism against Russell's logical atomism, the second of which constitutes a criticism of Russell's claim that individuals can only be named. But the former criticism cannot count as a criticism of the Tractarian concept of an object, for the simple reason that it constitutes, on the contrary, one of its motivations. As to the latter criticism, it is precisely one to which the Tractarian concept of an object does *not* seem to be vulnerable.

⁵⁸ Ryle (1960) pp.435-436.

⁵⁹ Ryle (1960) p.435. See also Ryle (1990) p.42.

⁶⁰ Ryle (1960) p.438.

⁶¹ On this point, see also Gandon (2002).

⁶² See Ryle (1990) p.42.

⁶³ Sullivan (2004) p.33.

⁶⁴ Ryle seems to hold the simplicity of Platonic Forms to be all too crude in comparison (see *e.g.* Ryle (1990) pp.44-45). In reading “self-predications” as expressions of an attempt to convey the unadulterated exemplariness displayed by both Platonic Forms and Tractarian objects (see Wittgenstein PO p.199), Wittgenstein seems to suggest otherwise, especially as such a reading coheres with his proposal to construe Platonic Forms as canonical metrical standards, a proposal partly warranted by the fact that the latter equally invite “self-predications”. On the last point, see Geach (1956) p.74, pp.81-82.

⁶⁵ Russell (1918) pp.187-188.

⁶⁶ Russell (1918) p.200.

⁶⁷ Russell (1918) p.195.

⁶⁸ Russell (1918) p.202.

Or so shall I contend, successively, in the next two sections.

§10. A main bone of contention between Russell and the early Wittgenstein concerns the nature of the relation between logic and analysis. The first criticism is directed against Russell's project of ensuring that logic be a priori amenable to the findings of analysis. For Russell, logic consists in some completely general propositions in which only logical forms are mentioned. The main task of philosophy is accordingly to set up an inventory of logical forms and to establish their applicability. For Wittgenstein, by contrast, as the possibility of making sense need not and cannot await analysis, the task of philosophy need not and cannot be so conceived.⁶⁹ It cannot be incumbent upon philosophy to answer questions that it is at once superfluous and impossible that it should answer.⁷⁰ In particular, it cannot be incumbent upon it that it should arrange for the application of logic.

If we needed to *know* the forms of elementary propositions and those of the names comprising them, then the requirement that every proposition be resolvable into a truth-function of elementary propositions – which is none other than the requirement that analysis be possible – could fail to be met. What we cannot know *a priori*, prior to analysis, namely the forms of elementary propositions and those of the names comprising them, we *need* not know either. Conversely, what we need know prior to analysis, namely the syntactical treatment of the signs comprising our ordinary propositions, including the syntactical treatment of some as (if they were) primitive signs, we *can* know anyway, since for a sign employed in ordinary propositions to call for being treated as (if it were) a primitive sign just is for it *so* to behave (or, more accurately, for it *not* to behave *otherwise*).

While it clearly foreshadows PI §50, the following passage from Wittgenstein's 1935 Cambridge Lectures elaborates upon this early dissent over the relation between logic and analysis:

We say of the word "yellow" that if it is to have meaning there must be something yellow somewhere. But why this "must"? Could not everything yellow have been destroyed? Suppose you learned the names of colors from a chart which correlated colored patches with certain words like "yellow", "green", etc. It is not necessary that if one is to understand the word "orange" something orange must exist.

And if we have a game in which the sample is orange, then it is nonsense to cite the sample in substantiation of the claim that something orange must exist. This would be like saying that there must be something a foot long because the Greenwich foot, the paradigm, is a foot long. Or like saying that in order to speak about five things there must be five things, where the latter, five letters, say, are the paradigm. (AWL p.120)⁷¹

⁶⁹ See TB 19/06/1915, p.66; TLP 5.634.

⁷⁰ See TB 04/09/1914, p.3: "If logic can be completed without answering certain questions, then it *must* be completed *without* answering them."

⁷¹ The train of thought alluded to at the beginning of this passage is prominent in Russell's writings. Thus, in the *Lectures on Logical Atomism*, Russell argues that one cannot understand the meaning of the word "red" unless one has come across instances of red, nor convey its meaning except by pointing to such instances, so that the symbol "red" is, strictly speaking, indefinable, hence, for the purposes of analysis, a "simple" one (see Russell (1918) pp.194-195). For Russell, our ability to make sense of a symbol we have never come across before is the mark of its not being simple (see Russell (1918) p.195). Wittgenstein diagnoses a conflation between the concept of an example in the sense of an *exemplar* and the concept of an example in the sense of an *instance*. Russell will have mistaken the need for a symbol for the need for an object. In the context of showing how formally to reduce predicates to relations, Russell mentions the possibility of equating "being red" with "being of the same color as this", where "this" refers to a "standard red thing" (see Russell (1918) p.206). But far from obviating the need to be acquainted with an *instance* of

The bearing of these considerations upon the issue of the relation between logic and its application is brought to the fore here:

Russell and Ramsey thought that one could in some sense prepare logic for the possible existence of certain entities, that one could construct a system for welcoming the results of analysis. Beginning with 2- and 3-termed relations, of which one has instances, one could claim to have prepared the calculus for 37-termed relations, of which there are no instances. We tend to think that when we have found an example of aRb we have found a phenomenon to which aRb is applicable. We have only found a word in our language which behaves like aRb . Before an instance of aRb is found there could be the word in the language. Constructing a relation does not depend on finding a phenomenon. Discovering a word game is different from discovering a fact. (AWL p.143)

The attempt to build up a logic to cover all eventualities (...) is an important absurdity. We must remember that if we feel the need of an instance of an n -termed relation we still have the symbolism for n things not standing in relation. The need is for a *sample*, a paradigm, which is again *part of the language*, not part of the application. Samples play the role played by the Greenwich foot, the existence of which does not prove that anything is a foot long. The Greenwich foot itself is not a foot long. To say 'Here is an instance of people being in love' is to take a sample into our language. And to do this is to make a decision, not to discover anything. (AWL p.143)

In his *Theory of Knowledge* of 1913, Russell takes the existence of a logical form to be a non complex fact with which it is required that we be acquainted, prior to analysis, if we are to understand any particular proposition of that form.⁷² Our being acquainted with such a fact at once makes it possible for us to understand any such proposition and paves the way for its analysis by ensuring that it be amenable to its strictures. Thus, were it not for our being acquainted with the purely logical fact that "something has some relation to something" (i.e. " $\exists(x,y,R).xRb$ "), we would not so much as *make sense of* the proposition "Socrates loves Plato" (i.e. " aRb "). Wittgenstein agrees that *if* the mere existence of a proposition does not testify to its being logically in order, then nothing could except the existence of a logical fact, or rather our knowledge thereof.⁷³ Conversely, if logic cannot be held hostage to such knowledge, then a classification of logical forms according to their types (a theory of categories) is at once out of place and superfluous,⁷⁴ since "that

red, such a reduction traces all acquaintance with red things to the acquaintance with one *single instance* of red. As we shall see, such a relational account of the meaning of "red" trades upon the very conflation denounced by Kripke between defining in the sense of fixing the reference and defining in the sense of giving a synonym. See Dolev (2007a).

⁷² See Russell (1913) p.114: "The form for all subject-predicate complexes will be the fact 'something has some predicate'; the form of all dual complexes will be 'something has some relation to something'. The logical nature of this fact is very peculiar. If we take some particular dual complex xRy , this has three constituents x , R , and y . For similar reasons, 'something has the relation R to something' contains no constituent at all. It is, therefore, suitable to serve as the 'form' of dual complexes. In a sense, it is simple, since it cannot be analyzed. At first sight, it seems to have a structure, and therefore to be not simple; but it is more correct to say that it *is* a structure." Wittgenstein himself was for a time troubled by the appearance that completely general propositions are simple. Witness the following entry from the *Notebooks*, which echoes the passage from Russell just quoted: "We might also say that our difficulty starts from the completely generalized proposition's not appearing to be complex. (...) It appears not to *have* a form but itself to be a form complete in itself." (TB 25/10/1914, p.18). But such appearance was soon to be dissolved by the author of the *Tractatus* (see TB 31/10/14, p.31). By contrast, as late as in 1918, Russell still holds onto the view that logical propositions at least present such an appearance (see Russell (1918) p.239).

⁷³ See Wittgenstein TB 03/09/1914 - 04/09/1914, p.2-3.

⁷⁴ See Wittgenstein TB 22/08/1914, p.2;

precedent (*Präzedenzfall*) to which we should always like to appeal must be involved in the sign itself.”⁷⁵

If Russell's conception were correct, first of all, there would be analytic propositions. For there would be propositions that depict the world yet are necessarily true, in the guise of members of such pairs of completely general propositions as the pair made of “ $(\exists x, \varphi). \varphi x$ ” and its negation “ $\sim(\exists x, \varphi). \varphi x$ ”. In effect, a proposition depicting a purely logical fact would be self-verifying, since the mere fact that it has the logical form that it has would make such a proposition – whose sole means of depiction would lie in that form – true.⁷⁶ Such a proposition would be self-verifying in virtue of its being *about* itself. Second, its truth would be presupposed by the sense of any particular proposition whose logical form it depicts. Thus, the sense of a proposition would depend on the truth of another.

On the first score, Wittgenstein objects that the claim that logical propositions *mention* logical forms is a self-defeating attempt at giving only *half* its due to the all-pervasive character of logic.⁷⁷ What is more, it assumes an asymmetry for which it is unable to account. For it assumes that, of a completely general proposition and its negation, one and only one is self-verifying (inasmuch as it has no thinkable negation), yet has no means to discriminate between them.⁷⁸

On the second score, Wittgenstein objects as follows:

I thought that the possibility of the truth of the proposition φa was tied up with the fact $(\exists x, \varphi). \varphi x$. But it is impossible to see why φa should only be possible if there is another proposition of the same form. φa surely does not need any precedent (*Präzedenzfall*). (For suppose that there were only the two propositions “ φa ” and “ ψa ” and that “ φa ” were false: why should this proposition only make sense if “ ψa ” is true?)⁷⁹

If at first Wittgenstein himself could not find a way around the unpalatable conclusion that the sense of φa depends on the truth of $(\exists x, \varphi). \varphi x$, this was because he could not see at first how *else* the *existence* of a location for φa within logical space could be guaranteed. But if it were a logical fact that $(\exists x, \varphi). \varphi x$, then the holding of φa could no longer be regarded as the holding of a state of affairs. It seemed as though, at the elementary level, logical space was bound to *shift* under the circumstance that (say) the negation of no elementary proposition is true.⁸⁰

The way out of this nest of difficulties lies in the realization that the fact that $(\exists \varphi, x). \varphi x$ is not the logical form of “ φa ” after all, for the simple reason that it is not a logical fact in the first place: it is a fact like any other.⁸¹ For φa to have the form that it has just is for the form exhibited in (the proto-picture) φx already to show forth in φa . Thus it does not stand in need of any precedent. How so? The answer is that the names comprising φa already supply φa with its form, that there is no need for a form over and above the forms of its

⁷⁵ Wittgenstein TB 01/11/1914, p.22.

⁷⁶ See Wittgenstein TB 14/10/1914 - 15/10/1914, p.12.

⁷⁷ Wittgenstein TB 18/10/1914, p.14: “A statement cannot be concerned with the logical structure of the world, for in order for a statement to be possible at all, in order for a proposition to be *capable* of making *sense*, the world must already have just the logical structure that it has.”

⁷⁸ Wittgenstein TB 16/10/1914, p.13: “Now, however, it looks as if exactly the same grounds as those I produced to show that “ $(\exists x, \varphi). \varphi x$ ” *could* not be false would be an argument showing that “ $\sim(\exists x, \varphi). \varphi x$ ” could not be false; and here a fundamental mistake makes its appearance. For it is quite impossible to see why just the first proposition and not the second is supposed to be a tautology.”

⁷⁹ Wittgenstein TB 21/10/1914, p.17. On the crucial importance of this strand of the *Notebooks* for an understanding of the Tractarian argument for proto-elements, see Gandon (2002) p.82-83; Zalabardo (2012).

⁸⁰ See Wittgenstein TB 15/10/1914, p.13.

⁸¹ See Wittgenstein TB 01/11/1914, p.22.

names.⁸² This is because a proposition is not a complex of names whose form is the cement but rather the *holding* of a certain relation between names.⁸³ And the holding of a certain relation between names is neither a relation between names nor a complex of names, but a *certain fact*.

Thus, on the one hand, so-called “logical propositions” are *not* genuine propositions (*i.e.* propositions with sense) at all; they are not arrived at through a process of generalization, as Russell thought. There is literally *nothing* for logical propositions to depict. There need not and cannot be propositions asserting the existence of proto-pictures such as φx , and $(\exists \varphi, x). \varphi x$ is certainly not one.⁸⁴ On the other hand, there *are* indeed completely general propositions; only they are *material* propositions, standing on a par with all other propositions,⁸⁵ and possessing the same logical multiplicity as their instances.⁸⁶ These two points are the two sides of the same coin:⁸⁷ the “kind” of generality that is the hallmark of logic is not to be confused with the merely *accidental* generality of completely general propositions.

At bottom, negation and quantifiers pose exactly the same problem and are to be handled in the same way. Just as the sense of $\sim p$ (*i.e.* the possibility of being the case that $\sim p$) should not depend upon p being the case, so the sense of (*i.e.* the possibility of its being the case that) φa , where “ φx ” reads “ x is red”, should not depend upon there being some object, say a' , such that $\varphi a'$ is the case, nor should the sense of (*i.e.* the possibility of its being the case that) aRb , where “ xRy ” reads “ x loves y ”, depend upon there being some pair of objects, say (a', b') , such that $a'Rb'$ is the case. Its making sense to say that “this is not red” (while pointing to a thing) no more presupposes that there is at least one thing in the universe that is red than it presupposes that this is red. The form of p shows forth in p even if there is no situation of this form; the form of aRb shows forth in aRb even if there is no situation of this form (*i.e.* of the form exhibited by the proto-picture $x\mathcal{R}y$, where x , y , and \mathcal{R} are variables). To put the same point differently, the operations of negation and quantification (whether existential or universal) do not operate upon unfinished propositions, upon propositional “radicals” as it were. The operation of negation does not take a proto-proposition as its basis. Operations of quantification do not take proto-types (*Urbilder*, proto-pictures) as their bases. It is not the proto-type (*Urbild*, proto-picture) exemplified by aRb (namely, the form exhibited by $x\mathcal{R}y$) which, on its own, functions as a meter-stick against which the situation depicted by aRb is to be measured, but rather the propositional picture aRb itself. Conversely a meter-stick used to measure a certain situation *is literally* a proposition.

The passage from 1935 quoted before clearly rehearses the twofold objection to Russell just recapitulated. There is a temptation to think that while the intelligibility of “ a is red” must be compatible with a not being red and the intelligibility of “ a is not red” must be compatible with there being no other sense for a to “be red”, and although they are perhaps both compatible with there being nothing known to exist and to make an instance of “ x is red” true, yet they are *not* compatible with there being no logical form that be *known* to exist *no matter what* and to be exemplified by “ a is red”. The temptation is here recast as the temptation to think that if “red” is to make sense, *i.e.* if it must be possible to state of anything either that it is or that it is not red, there must be a standard of red that be

⁸² See Wittgenstein TB 01/11/1914, p.23-24. See Gandon (2002) p.88.

⁸³ See Wittgenstein TB 04/11/1914, p.26; Wittgenstein TLP 3.1432.

⁸⁴ See Wittgenstein TB 16/05/1915, p.48.

⁸⁵ See Wittgenstein TB 22/10/1914 - 23/10/1914, p.17.

⁸⁶ See Wittgenstein TB 31/10/1914, p.22.

⁸⁷ See in this connection McGinn (2005) p.123.

known to exist and to be presupposed by ascriptions of red – where such a standard is conceived as something like the instance of red *par excellence*, as it were *The Red* or the Form of red.

Wittgenstein's response is that the need for a standard, if need there is, is precisely not the need for an example in the sense of an instance but only the need for an example in the sense of an exemplar. First, a genuine standard by means of which a name is defined is not something that gives sense to that name when before it was empty. The standard meter is not *measured* to be one meter long. The point is not so much that it is nonsense to say that the standard meter (resp. the standard for red) is one meter long (resp. red) as that it is nonsense to hold the statement of such a fact (assuming, for the sake of argument, that it is one) to make true the existential generalization that there is something that is one meter long (resp. red). Thus, the need for a paradigm of red, if need there is, is not the need for an instance *par excellence*. Second, were an instance of red to ensure that “*a* is not red” makes sense even if it is true, then a negative instance could do as well. Conversely, there is no such thing as a negative standard. It would be nonsense to define “meter” by stipulating that “meter” is *not* to refer to the length of *this* stick. One would not thereby (so much as begin to) single out any length. There is no such thing as negative identification. One may be “acquainted with” the standard meter only in the sense that one may be *familiar* with the game of measuring.⁸⁸

§11. The criticism of Russell's claim that logical elements are only nameable that can be ascribed to PI §50 is closely related to an objection mounted by Moore against Russell's unqualified contention that “existence is not a predicate”.⁸⁹ The criticism turns on the idea that the *mere epistemic* necessity of the existence of the designatum of a logically genuine name does not entail its necessity *simpliciter*.

In “Is Existence a Predicate?” Moore concedes to Russell that “This exists” is nonsensical *if* “exists” is used in the same manner as in “Some tame tigers exist” (*i.e.* “There are tame tigers”).⁹⁰ He insists that the contrast between “Some tame tigers growl” and “Some tame tigers exist”, which shows up in the fact that the former asserts that some values of “*x* is a tame tiger and growls” are true while the latter asserts only that some values of “*x* is a tame tiger” is true, is not to be traced to “This is a tame tiger and exists” being redundant but to its being nonsensical.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Moore argues, from the fact that “This exists” is nonsensical *as long as* “exists” is used in the same manner as in “Some tame tigers exist”, it by no means follows that “This exists” (where “this” is used as in “This is a book”) cannot make sense when used in some other ways. Moore argues, in effect, that “This exists” *must* make some sense or other, in particular, when it is used by a person to say of a certain present sense-datum of hers that it exists, since otherwise the truth of “This *might* not have existed” would become unintelligible. Moore's point, in other words, “is that ‘This might not have existed’ is analyzable as ‘It might be the case that (it is not the case that (this exists))’”, and this could have no meaning if its innermost component did not.”⁹² As Moore puts it, that the statement “This exists”, so used, is *always true* does not entail that it is *necessarily true*:

⁸⁸ On this drastic reconception of Russellian acquaintance, see especially Floyd (forthcoming).

⁸⁹ Moore (1936)

⁹⁰ See Moore (1936) p.184.

⁹¹ See Moore (1936) p.185. Moore famously argues that, from the premise that “Some tame tigers exist” means the same as “Some values of ‘*x* is a tame tiger’ are true”, it does *not* follow that “exist” means the same as “*x* is a tame tiger” and “some tame tigers” the same as “*x* is a tame tiger”. Rather, what does follow is that “This exists” (where “exists” is used in the same ways as in “Some tame tigers exist”) is nonsensical. See also Prior (1967) p.145.

⁹² Prior (1967) p.145.

That “this exists” has any meaning in such cases, where, as Mr Russell would say, we are using “this” as a “proper name” for something with which we are “acquainted”, is, I know, disputed; my view that it has, involves, I am bound to admit, the curious consequence that “this exists”, when used in this way, is always true, and “this does not exist” always false; and I have little to say in its favour except that it seems to me so plainly true that, in the case of every sense-datum I have, it is logically possible that the sense-datum in question should not have existed – that there should simply have been no such thing.⁹³

Russell disposes of the notion of necessary truth on the ground that talk of a proposition being *necessarily* true and talk of a proposition being *always* true are equally out of place. Such notions apply to *propositional functions*, not to *propositions*. For a propositional function to be necessary just is for it always to be true, *i.e.* for it to be *true in all cases*.⁹⁴ Couched in Kripke’s terminology, Moore’s point is that, from the *epistemic* premise that *this could not turn out* not to exist, the *non-epistemic* conclusion that *it could not have been the case* that this should not have existed” cannot be derived.⁹⁵ Even granting that acquaintance with the designatum of a logically genuine name is necessary, it by no means follow that the designatum with which one is thus acquainted cannot be held to exist contingently.⁹⁶

In *Reference and Existence*, Kripke considers and rejects Russell’s grounds for maintaining the view that there must be logically genuine names, understood as names whose designata are such that the issue of their existence or non-existence cannot be raised. Such designata must be logically simple. Thus, only individuals can count as such logically simple designata. The claim that existence is not a first-level predicate (*i.e.* that individuals cannot be meaningfully ascribed or denied existence) ensues as a corollary. According to Kripke, Russell’s grounds have to do with the analysis of negative existential statements, whether in the indicative or in the subjunctive,⁹⁷ and with that of statements in which fictional names occur in subject position. As for Russell’s main argument for the corollary claim, it runs as follows: “if existence applied to individuals, it would be absolutely impossible for the property not to apply, and that this is characteristic of a mistake”⁹⁸.

Kripke traces the latter argument to two possible sources of confusion⁹⁹, both of which could account for the faulty inference that Moore denounced. A first source of confusion resides in the ambiguity concealed in the sentence “it is absolutely impossible for it not to apply”. It might be taken to mean either that $\Box(x)\exists(x)$ (*i.e.* that “it is necessary that everything exists”) or that $(x)\Box\exists(x)$ (*i.e.* that “everything has necessary existence”).¹⁰⁰ A second source of confusion might lie in a failure to keep sight of the distinction between “what people *would* have been able to say in hypothetical circumstances, if they had obtained” and “what *we* can say, *of* these circumstances, perhaps knowing that they don’t obtain”.¹⁰¹ The latter confusion might tempt us into taking this line of reasoning:

⁹³ See Moore (1936) p.188. See also Prior (1967) p.145.

⁹⁴ See Russell (1918) chap. 5; (1919) chap. 15.

⁹⁵ See Kripke RE p.36-37.

⁹⁶ As Geach puts it: “Russell’s transition from ‘A genuine proper name must name something’ to ‘Only a name that must name something is a proper name’ is of course just a howler in modal logic; here he paid for his lifelong neglect of the subject. (There is just the same howler here as in passing from ‘What you know must be so’ to ‘Only what *must* be so is really known’.” (Geach (1972) p.155)

⁹⁷ Kripke RE p.19.

⁹⁸ Kripke RE p.37.

⁹⁹ Kripke RE pp.38-40.

¹⁰⁰ Kripke RE pp.37-38.

¹⁰¹ Kripke RE p.39.

Suppose that (...) to express a proposition about Moses, and to use the name ‘Moses’ as a name, there has to be an object referred to, namely, Moses. Then how could ‘Moses does not exist’ ever have been true? For if there hadn’t been a Moses, we wouldn’t have been able to use this name; we wouldn’t have been able to say so; and perhaps even the proposition that Moses doesn’t exist itself wouldn’t have existed.¹⁰²

To dispose of this apparent predicament, it is enough to appeal to the above distinction:

We do have the name ‘Moses’, and it is part of our language, whether it would have been part of our language in other circumstances or not. And we can, of certain hypothetical circumstances, that in those circumstances Moses wouldn’t have existed; and that our statement “Moses exists” is false of those circumstances, even though we might go on to say that under some such circumstances, had they obtained, one would not have been able to say what we can say of those circumstances.¹⁰³

It is important to realize that the second fallacy is not nearly as straightforwardly noticeable as the first. That is to say, the fallacy is not always as obvious as in the argument to the effect that, since New York might have been called “Vienna”, Vienna might have been in the United States. In this respect, the temptation to “identify what people would have said *in* certain circumstances, *had* those circumstances obtained, with what we would say *of* certain circumstances, knowing or believing that these circumstances *don’t* obtain”¹⁰⁴ stands on a par with the temptation to assimilate questions about counterfactual situations to epistemic questions. From the correct premise that Sherlock Holmes *could turn out* to exist, we are apt to draw the incorrect conclusion that it *could have been the case* that Sherlock Holmes should have existed.¹⁰⁵

As Kripke observes in the first Lecture of *Reference and Existence*, Moore’s point suffices to establish that Tractarian elements *cannot* be individuals in Russell’s sense. For what holds of the designata of Russellian names, that they exist indubitably yet not necessarily, precisely does not hold of the designata of Tractarian names, notwithstanding the fact that empty names are excluded from the ranges of Russellian and Tractarian names alike. Kripke writes:

It is interesting to note that the two requirements that they place on the existence of those objects – one, indubitability, and the other, the Wittgensteinian requirement that they have necessary existence – are incompatible. For it would seem, at least to me, that nothing more plainly has contingent existence than one’s own immediate sense-data, one’s own immediate visual impressions.¹⁰⁶

It has been a bit of a question, in the exegesis of the *Tractatus*, whether Wittgenstein’s objects are in fact Russellian objects, whether they are in fact one’s own immediate perceptions, or at least include them. I don’t want to go into an exegetical question, and perhaps couldn’t conclusively argue this, but it would seem that if Wittgenstein had his wits about him on this matter, the objects couldn’t be one’s own immediate sense-data, because such objects would fail to satisfy the most elementary requirements of the theory. Therefore, unless he simply failed to notice this, he didn’t believe that these were the objects.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Kripke RE p.38.

¹⁰³ Kripke RE p.39.

¹⁰⁴ Kripke RE p.40.

¹⁰⁵ Kripke RE pp.41-42. Kripke takes himself to have succumbed to the latter temptation in subscribing, in some earlier piece of work (Kripke (1963)), to the standard default view that it could have been the case that Sherlock Holmes should *have* existed, just as it could have been the case that Napoleon should *not* have existed. See Kripke RE pp.40-42.

¹⁰⁶ Kripke RE p.17.

¹⁰⁷ Kripke RE p.18.

Of course, that the objects of Russell and those of Wittgenstein are meant to meet distinct and even incompatible requirements does not by itself preclude the possibility that the argument for the latter should be vulnerable to a parallel (if distinct) charge. Indeed, construed in a certain way, the *Tractatus*' argument for the existence of proto-elements lies open to the charge of resting upon a misunderstanding of the workings of modal evaluation, just as Russell's does. In *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein retrospectively sums up the Tractarian conception of proto-elements as follows:

What I once called "objects", simples, were simply what I could refer to without running the risk of their possible non-existence; *i.e.* that for which there is neither existence nor non-existence, and that means: what we can speak about *no matter what may be the case*.¹⁰⁸

Admittedly, this passage might seem to invite a reading of the *Tractatus*' argument for the existence of proto-elements along the following lines: if there were no substance, everything would exist contingently; but then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another is true; and so we could not so much as make pictures of the world, *i.e.* make any sense; therefore, of necessity, there is substance.¹⁰⁹

The *Tractatus*' argument, if it is construed along these lines, can be shown to comprise the following five tenets.¹¹⁰ First, Wittgenstein's argument is first and foremost an argument for the necessary existence of proto-elements and only derivatively one for their simplicity.¹¹¹ Second, it coheres with the assimilation of the reference of a name to its bearer (which assimilation is denounced in PI §40 and its vicinity). Third, the Tractarian notion of *name* is regarded as a reformation of the ordinary notion (from which it follows that it makes sense to ask what kind of familiar entities Tractarian objects are). Fourth, the argument for the possibility of names collapses into an argument for the indispensability of singular terms. Fifth, and finally, the argument for the possibility of names collapses into an argument for the existence of such names. Certainly, the *Tractatus*' argument for proto-elements, *so read*, is part and parcel of the target of PI §55¹¹² – a fact which may in turn seem either to support this reading¹¹³ or (if one does not go along with this reading) to disqualify the assumption that the *Tractatus*' argument lies within the purview of PI §55¹¹⁴.

So construed, the *Tractatus*' argument for proto-elements evidently lies open to the charge of resting on equivocation.¹¹⁵ So read, the *Tractatus* conflates two distinct notions

¹⁰⁸ Wittgenstein PB §36 p.72.

¹⁰⁹ See Proops (2004) p.114, p.120; Proops (2007) section 3.

¹¹⁰ All five tenets are criticized by Ishiguro in her landmark essay. See Ishiguro (1969) (i) p.; (ii) p.26, p.40; (iii) p.37; (iv) p.42-45; (v) p.43, p.46.

¹¹¹ See *e.g.* Proops (2004) p.110.

¹¹² Wittgenstein (1953) §55:

"What the names in language signify must be indestructible; for it must be possible to describe the state of affairs in which everything destructible is destroyed. And this description will contain words; and what corresponds to these cannot then be destroyed, for otherwise the words would have no meaning." I must not saw off the branch on which I am sitting. One might, of course, object at once that this description would have to except itself from the destruction.—But what corresponds to the separate words of the description and so cannot be destroyed if it is true, is what gives the words their meaning—is that without which they would have no meaning.—In a sense, however, this man is surely what corresponds to his name. But he is destructible, and his name does not lose its meaning when the bearer is destroyed.—An example of something corresponding to the name, and without which it would have no meaning, is a paradigm that is used in connexion with the name in the language-game.

¹¹³ See Ahmed (2010) p.28.

¹¹⁴ See Zalabardo (2012) p.147-149.

¹¹⁵ See Proops (2004) p.121, (2007) section 3.2. See also Ahmed (2010) p.28. In the end, Ahmed rejects this reading.

of “possible circumstance” due to its misunderstanding or (to use one commentator’s rather euphemistic formulation) due its “rudimentary understanding of the workings of modal evaluation that Wittgenstein had at his disposal”.¹¹⁶ The suggestion is that the *Tractatus*’ argument for the necessary existence of proto-elements, like Russell’s argument for the view that “This exists” cannot be regarded as contingently true, conflates the truth or falsity of a propositional sign *as uttered in* a possible situation and its truth or falsity *as assessed with respect to* a possible situation.

In light of the above, the *Tractatus*’ argument can easily be exposed. For the counterfactual statement “*N* might not have existed” to make sense, that is to say, for the statement “*N* does not exist” to be assessable as true or false in non-actual worlds, and hence for the name “*N*” to contribute a referent to this statement, *N* need not exist in any of those non-actual worlds; it need only exist in the actual world, that is to say, in the world in which the counterfactual statement “*N* might not have existed” is being uttered. In other words, *N* need only exist in the “context of utterance” that contributes to the statement “*N* might not have existed” being *evaluable*, as distinct from those “circumstances of evaluation” in the light of which this statement is *evaluated*.¹¹⁷

It is noteworthy that, although this objection and the reading that falls prey to it both descend from Kripke’s thought, Kripke himself refrains from putting forward either of them in the course of his sustained critique, in *Reference and Existence*, of the common core of Russell’s and Wittgenstein’s respective arguments in favor of the view that the designatum of a logically genuine name must be an object such that the question of its existence and non-existence cannot so much as arise. Kripke’s caution is in order: the second fallacy *cannot* be imputed to the *Tractatus*. The *Tractatus* can have no room for the notion of circumstances in which a proposition – *i.e.* “a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world” (TLP 3.12) – would lack the sense that it actually has.¹¹⁸ Nor can it be held to lean towards this view.¹¹⁹

Kripke’s qualms about Wittgenstein’s argument for simple names in the *Tractatus* differ significantly from his qualms about Russell’s. Kripke takes Russell to have mistaken the non-epistemic necessity that goes with rigidity for an epistemic necessity of sort. He takes Wittgenstein to have inflated non-epistemic necessity into necessary existence.

§12. The above, “ontological” reading of the *Tractatus*’ argument for the existence of proto-elements is informed by a view of analysis that is Russellian in its essentials. Such a view stands at odds with Wittgenstein’s. Russellian analysis is “bottom-up” insofar as “Russellian acquaintance provides a self-standing conception of the terminus ad quem of analysis to guide the activity of analysis”, whereas Wittgensteinian analysis is “resolutely top-bottom”¹²⁰.

If we are to understand the Tractarian view of analysis, we must begin at the beginning, namely at 3.23:

The requirement of the possibility of simple signs is the requirement of the determinacy of sense.

In effect, the so-called “argument for substance” (TLP 2.0211-2.0212) must be read in the light of 3.23. The deflationary implication of section 3.23 is that the requirement that simple signs be possible is *nothing over and above* the requirement that sense be

¹¹⁶ Proops (2004) p.122.

¹¹⁷ See Kaplan (1989a), (1989b).

¹¹⁸ See Zalabardo (2012) p.124.

¹¹⁹ Pace Proops (2004).

¹²⁰ Ricketts (forthcoming)

determinate. Now, the requirement that sense be determinate is constitutive of sense as such. That is to say, its very nature imposes such a requirement upon sense. It is not one that sense might conceivably fail to meet. But the determinacy of what *we mean* by our ordinary, unanalyzed propositions cannot fall short of the full determinacy of their sense, such as their full analysis would put on display. Their *prima facie* sense (as we might call it) *is* their sense. The conjunction of these two claims entails that the determinacy that is required of sense cannot be contingent upon *our* meeting epistemic requirements that we might conceivably fail to meet.

Thus the logical articulatedness characterizing our ordinary propositions *as they stand* must be such that we are not exposed to *finding out* subsequently, through *further* analysis, *what it was exactly* that *we had meant* – or, to put things the other way around, *that* what we had meant was *not exactly* what we had presumed). Complete analysis, if, *per impossible*, we could achieve it, would merely put on display *how* it is exactly that we *did* mean exactly what we did. If the sense of our ordinary, unanalyzed propositions is not to be vulnerable to being exposed as indeterminate by further analysis, then we must be *deferring to* its findings from the start. What we may not or cannot know, we need not know either. For us to take care of the determinacy of our meaning just is for us to let it take care of itself. Thus, the only epistemic requirement laid upon our ability to mean what we say is that we should *defer to* the non-epistemic dimension of meaning. The Tractarian vision of language is, in that sense, a resolutely “instrumentalist” one: our ‘acquaintance’ with ordinary language, *in the sense of* our familiarity with the ordinary language that we master, dispenses us from the necessity of any ‘acquaintance’, *in Russell’s sense*, with objects and their forms.

What this means is that the measure in which we trust our meaning to take care of itself must already show forth – must as it were already be palpable – in our ordinary propositions as they stand. To understand this, in turn, it is necessary and sufficient to realize that the *indeterminacy* evinced by ordinary propositions, far from being a threat to the *determinacy of their sense*, is their very way of securing the latter. This comes out clearly from section 3.24, which ties together the argument for proto-elements (*Urelemente*) and the argument for proto-types (*Urbilder*):

When a propositional element signifies a complex, this can be seen from an indeterminacy in the propositions in which it occurs. In such cases we know that the proposition leaves something undetermined. (In fact the notation for generality contains a prototype.)

With this in mind, we may attain a better understanding of the character of the inconsonance between Russell and Wittgenstein’s respective arguments for the possibility of simple names. As Ryle points out in “Ontological and Logical Talk in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”¹²¹, Wittgenstein’s view that “the understanding of general propositions depends *palpably* on that of elementary propositions” (TLP 4.411) directly gainsays Russell’s view that the existence of elements is *presupposed* by logic, in the sense that the existence of simples can and must be *deduced* “from the fact that ordinary expressions must be dissectable up to the point where we would reach indissectable bones, if only we could be thorough”, *even though* “we have no logically proper names for the subjects of our ultimate propositions, and we are acquainted with no such subjects”¹²². As Ryle emphasizes, “the obvious objection to this is that it follows that we never knowingly talk sense”, since “you can’t talk sense by constructing general and compound propositions out

¹²¹ I am grateful to Kelly Jolley for drawing my attention to Ryle’s piece.

¹²² Ryle (1999) p.102.

of ingredients which are mysteries.”¹²³

The theory of acquaintance subtending Russell’s account of simples jars with his analysis of definite descriptions. On Wittgenstein’s view, the latter has the merit of dispelling the appearance that our capacity to mean what we say is hostage to matters of fact.¹²⁴ For it shows that the capacity of sentences to say something true or false “is not dependent on whether any definite description they may contain is satisfied”¹²⁵. This is *the one respect* in which the *Tractatus* can be said to regard the Russell’s view of analysis as superior to Frege’s and to take its cue from it.¹²⁶

Russell’s original sort of analysis goes *some way* to letting us see what sign a sentence is, of the general sort to which sentences as such belong, by showing it maintains truth-valuedness throughout variations in truth value of a particular range of sentences, whose falsity we might have thought deprived it of any truth value.¹²⁷

What Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions goes some steps toward showing is that “the capacity to say something determinately true or false” is internal to the particular sign that a sentence is just to the extent that this particular sign is “capable of comparison with reality, yielding true or false, regardless of the truth or falsity of any sentence”¹²⁸. The chief virtue of Russell’s analysis, on this reading, is not so much that it resolves the puzzle of singular negative existentials, as that it resolves *at once* and *uniformly* both this puzzle and the puzzle arising from the meaningfulness of statements featuring empty names. Russell’s treatment of existence as a second-order property is, in Kripke’s terms, “more unified” than Frege’s.¹²⁹

As Kripke points out, in Russell’s thought, the *introduction* of logically proper names, *inasmuch as* it is specifically tailored for the requirements of his theory of knowledge by acquaintance (*i.e. inasmuch as* their bearers are defined as being such that one cannot doubt their existence), and the *elimination* of garden-variety proper names secured by their analysis as definite descriptions in disguise, concur to dispose of one and the same difficulty: namely, the paradox raised by negative singular existentials. In their conjunction, in effect, the two moves have the result of blocking the paradox from *ever* arising in the first place. For either the apparently paradoxical negative singular existential statement is analyzed away into a general statement that no longer looks to ascribe non-existence to its subject, or no sense could be made of an existential statement (whether negative or positive), as the issue of existence simply does not arise in the nature of the case. That the two moves should thus conspire to a single achievement is hardly trivial, given that the former infringes the very principle that the latter vindicates: the context principle. What links them up, in the framework of Russell’s philosophy, is Russell’s view

¹²³ Ryle (1999) p.102.

¹²⁴ See also Quine (1951) §27: “It is awkward, in general, to let questions of meaningfulness or meaninglessness rest upon casual matters of fact which are not open to any systematic and conclusive method of decision.” Note that for Quine “The artificial dodge of dispensing with primitive names in favor of descriptions or other abstracts is a way of maintaining control of vocabulary independently of questions of fact.”

¹²⁵ Diamond (1991) p.189.

¹²⁶ See Diamond (1991) Section II.

¹²⁷ Diamond (1991) p.190.

¹²⁸ Diamond (1991) p.191.

¹²⁹ Kripke (2013) p.11. See also Quine (1948). Although in that essay Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions gets introduced as a way out of the “old Platonic riddle of nonbeing” arising in connection with negative singular existentials, Quine makes it clear that Russell’s analysis bears on this riddle *insofar as* it refutes the assumption on which it turns: “Russell, in his theory of so-called singular descriptions, showed clearly how we might meaningfully use seeming names without supposing that there be the entities allegedly named.” (Quine (1948) p.5)

that knowledge by description at once outstrips knowledge by acquaintance (since it provides *indirect* knowledge of things (*i.e.* knowledge of things with which we are *not* acquainted), in particular knowledge of their existence) and rests upon it (since, according to the so-called “principle of acquaintance”, “Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted.”).¹³⁰

Not only does the *Tractatus* disentangle what Wittgenstein regards as the true merit of the theory of definite descriptions (namely, that of securing the determinacy of sense) from Russell’s principle of acquaintance (after the manner of, say, Quine)¹³¹, but, more radically, it also disentangles its merit from the function that it shares *in Russell’s framework* with the introduction of logically proper names: namely, that of blocking the paradox of negative singular existentials. Reversing the onus of match between the two theories as conceived by Russell, Wittgenstein identifies the rationale for the introduction of simple symbols (whose category he equates with that of simple names)¹³² with what he regards as the true rationale for the elimination of definite descriptions.

§13. The gap between Tractarian names and Russellian names is even wider than so far suggested. To bring out the gulf separating them, it suffices to note that, from the claim that maximally general propositions are still genuine material propositions, it ensues that the requirement that simple signs be possible is *not* identical to the requirement that irreducibly singular terms be indispensable.¹³³

The *Tractatus* resists the line of thought, prominent in Russell, that supports the identification between these two requirements. The Tractarian argument for substance (*i.e.* proto-elements) rests neither upon the identification of the references (*Bedeutungen*) of names with the objects for which they deputize (*vertreten*), nor on the idea that, unless it were tied up to the world by means of signs that cannot fail to refer without losing all significance, our language would lose its grip on the world. To see this, we need only advert to Wittgenstein’s claim that names can be completely dispensed with in our description of the world, as the world could be completely described by means of completely general propositions (5.526):

We can describe the world completely by means of fully generalized propositions, *i.e.* without first correlating any name with a particular object. / Then, in order to arrive at the customary mode of expression, we simply need to add, after an expression “There is one and only one *x* such that ...”, the words: “and this *x* is *a*”.¹³⁴

The *Tractatus* holds that there are irreducibly singular terms (*i.e.* names), but not that such terms are indispensable. What is required is only that names be *possible*. The world may be completely described, indifferently, either by means of the collection of all the

¹³⁰ See Russell (1912) Chapter 5.

¹³¹ See Quine (1948). For Quine the fundamental lesson of Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions –that variables of quantification, *not names*, carry the weight of reference (see Quine (1948) p.6, p.12) – runs counter to Russell’s own account of the role of names. Russell holds, in effect, that “you cannot name anything you are not acquainted with” (Russell (1918) p.201) and that you cannot be acquainted with anything unless it is a simple.

¹³² In *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, by contrast, Russell regards the category of “simple symbols” as wider than that of genuine “names”, and correlatively the category of “simples” (a “simple” being what cannot be symbolized except by means of a simple symbol (see Russell (1918) p.194)) as wider than that of “particulars”. Acquaintance is necessary both for understanding simple symbols in general and for understanding names in particular. But to understand a simple symbol that is not a name (such as, say, the predicate “red” (see Russell (1918) pp.194-195), mere acquaintance with what it designates (*being red*) is not enough: “you have to know what is the meaning of saying that anything is red.” (Russell (1918) p.205)

¹³³ See Ishiguro (1969) p.42-46; Ricketts (2014) section 3.

¹³⁴ Wittgenstein TLP 5.526. See also Wittgenstein TB 16/10/1914.

true elementary propositions (4.26), or exclusively by means of true completely general propositions (5.526a), as the latter settle the truth-values of the elementary propositions containing the names introduced on their basis (5.526b).¹³⁵ Names do not anchor language into the world by pinning it to objects.¹³⁶

It follows from 5.526 that the argument for proto-elements cannot be that while a general proposition like “ $(\exists x)\varphi x$ ” has sense even if its false (*i.e.* if there is no object), a singular proposition like “ φa ” cannot so much as make sense unless a could not fail to exist. What can be said is only that “ φa ” could not so much as make sense unless the name “ a ” existed, be part of the language – if only as a dummy name introduced through the stipulation that it is to refer to whatever the actual true instance of “ φx ” talks about,¹³⁷ like the free variable introduced in a deduction by applying the rule for existential instantiation in a natural deduction system¹³⁸. Thus, in the *Tractatus*, not only is Wittgenstein not moved by the pattern of reasoning, familiar from the work of Strawson and his epigones, according to which the existence (not merely the possibility) of singular thoughts is a precondition of thinking as such, but he contests it.¹³⁹

If Tractarian names are dummy names, then they display referential rigidity. For it is in the nature of a free variable under an assignment that it should refer no matter what. It is in fact the very paradigm of a rigid designator.¹⁴⁰ Thus, if Tractarian names are dummy names, then Wittgenstein's decision to exclude ordinary names like “Nothung” from counting as names in the logical sense, on the ground that the statement “Nothung has a sharp blade” retains its sense even if the bearer “Nothung” no longer exists (because, say, the sword is broken), should not be blamed on a conflation of the notions of bearer and reference. For it may “show not that Wittgenstein wrongly identified the notions of bearer and reference in the *Tractatus* but rather that although he was not articulate about this, he had already realized that talk about reference of names is not like talk about the bearers of ordinary names.”¹⁴¹ In other words, inspired by the behavior of ordinary proper names, whose reference outlives the bearer, he had discerned that what characterizes a name, in contrast to a description, is not that its referent cannot fail to exist, but that it refers to it *no matter what*. In effect “just as names are permanent in our language, so according to Wittgenstein objects are unalterable and persistent (*bestehend*) (2.0271)”¹⁴².

§14. In the light of this understanding of Tractarian names, we can revert to the Tractarian notion of a proto-type or proto-picture (*Urbild*). Prototypes (*Urbilder*) are what will have become of the logical forms that Russell sought to draw up the inventory of, insofar as they were supposed to be indefinable objects of an acquaintance of some kind (a “logical experience”). The forms of elementary propositions and those of the names comprising them are what will have become of Russellian logical forms insofar as they were supposed to be necessary. For a sign in an ordinary proposition to function as (if it

¹³⁵ See Ricketts (2014) section 3.

¹³⁶ See Sullivan (1996) p.205.

¹³⁷ The introduction of the dummy name “ a ” is parasitic upon the introduction of the dummy singular proposition ‘ φa ’. See Wittgenstein TB 09/07/1916 p.75: “Do not forget that ‘ $(\exists x)\varphi x$ ’ does not mean: there is an x such that φx , but: there is a true proposition ‘ φx ’.”

¹³⁸ See Ishiguro (1969) p.45-46; Ricketts (2014) section 3.

¹³⁹ The point holds *a fortiori*, I take it, for the *Philosophical Investigations*.

¹⁴⁰ See Kaplan (1989a) p.484; (1989b) p.571-573. Ishiguro would seem to err in maintaining that “in this example since we *introduce* the name ‘ a ’ by saying ‘ $(\exists x)\varphi x$ and this x is a ’, it would be quite impossible to envisage the a as not having the property f .” (Ishiguro (1969) p.45) Given the stipulation, the truth of φa is a priori. This does not entail that it is necessary.

¹⁴¹ Ishiguro (1969) p.40.

¹⁴² Ishiguro (1969) p.41.

were) a simple sign just is for it *not* to function as a complex one; and for it not to function as a complex one just is for the composition (*i.e.* inner structure) of what it is apparently a name of to be immaterial to the truth-conditions of the proposition.

At the surface level, “simplicity and complexity are internal features of elements of representation, not external, metaphysical characterizations of what they represent”¹⁴³ so that for signs to be handled “‘as if’ they were simple *is* for them to *be* simple.”¹⁴⁴ By contrast, for a sign to be a sign concatenated in an elementary proposition, that is to say, for it to *be* a simple sign (*i.e.* a name), is *not* just for it *not* to refer to something complex or to refer to a non-defined thing, but for it to refer to a simple (*i.e.* an indefinable thing, a proto-element) as combined in a state of things with other simples (*i.e.* indefinable things, proto-elements). This is the deep level at which the paradigm constituted by Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions operates. At this level, its presupposing some contingencies signals that a sign is not genuinely simple, *i.e.* not a genuine name.

The Tractarian concept of a name is not meant to supplant our ordinary concept of a name on account of the latter’s failure to measure up to the exacting standards of logic; nor is the idea of a completely articulated language meant to capture the ordinary functioning of language.¹⁴⁵ Ordinary proper names remain our best model for conceiving the genuine names among which we know they cannot figure.¹⁴⁶ The two levels simply coexist. The theory of prototypes bridges the gap between the two by making the acknowledgment of this gap internal to the first. Prototypes obviate the epistemic need for complete analysis, thereby testifying to the possibility of the latter.

While the signs that function as (if they were) simple signs in our ordinary propositions function as the fixed points of our meaning, as so far articulated, so that the possibilities whose non obtaining their use presupposes are consigned to the background and the assessability of those ordinary propositions is left unrestricted, their forms are nevertheless contingent upon the non obtaining of these possibilities. Conversely, while necessary, objects and their various forms are not knowable a priori, that is to say prior to the application of logic in analysis.¹⁴⁷ What is more, they cannot be known individually.¹⁴⁸

Thus, far from obliterating the distinction between epistemic necessity and non epistemic necessity, the Tractarian view of analysis turns on a structurally similar distinction, that between surface-level semantic necessity and deep-level semantic necessity. The *Tractatus* does not collapse them. If anything, it is torn between them. As we shall see in the last part of this chapter, PI §50 encapsulates a diagnosis of just that form.

In ascribing to the early Wittgenstein the claim that objects are necessary existents, Kripke fails to realize that such a claim stands at odds with Wittgenstein’s understanding of the requirement of the determinacy of sense. This is not to say, however, that Kripke *himself* conflates the rigidity that the determinacy of sense requires with a necessary existence of some kind. On the contrary, his conceptual apparatus allows us to see how the rigidity of the dimensions of logical space can be a matter of the *actuality* of the actual world, rather than a matter of the *necessary existence* of “elements” whose combinations are supposed to “actualize” antecedently given possibilities.

¹⁴³ Sullivan (2003) p.85.

¹⁴⁴ Sullivan (2003) p.85.

¹⁴⁵ See Ishiguro (1969) p.37; Sullivan (2003) p.80; Ricketts (2014) section 3.

¹⁴⁶ See Ishiguro (1969) p.37; Sullivan (2003) p.86.

¹⁴⁷ This paragraph draws on Sullivan (2003) p.83.

¹⁴⁸ See Ricketts (2014) section 3.

IV. Towards an Alternative Reading of PI §50

§15. We are now in a position to return to PI §50 at last. The zigzag paths taken by *Philosophical Investigations* reflect its conviction that there is no such thing as *being finished with* a philosophical topic – let alone a philosophical problem.¹⁴⁹ Although it is regularly silenced by the “voice of correctness”, the “voice of temptation” can never be stifled. What grammatical investigations achieve is inherently *disappointing*, because neither able nor meant to relieve us *definitively* from metaphysical restlessness.¹⁵⁰ However, that a section or run of sections is, due to the very nature of these investigations, but a *sketch* (or a *snapshot*) of a wide field of thought travelled over crisscross in every direction (PI Preface) does not mean that it may not have a *definite* point, nor even that it may not take a single *definite* path. Nor does it mean that it may not be “sketched knowing that it must be, and gets in time, transformed in order to take its place”¹⁵¹ in the run of sections to which it belongs. Section §50 is a case in point.¹⁵²

The ultimate deflationary point of §50, I submit, is *not* that saying that we could not so much as think that something is red if red were not a unit of sense amounts to saying that our language-game *must* counts a paradigm for red among its means of representation. That is, the true point of §50 is *not* that what is required is that red should be a means of representation in our language-game, not that there should be something red among the things to be represented. On the contrary, the true point of §50 is that saying that we could not so much as think that something is red if red were not a unit of sense merely amounts to saying that our language-game *does* contain a paradigm of red – *not* to saying that our language-game *must* counts such a paradigm among its means of representation. The closing insight of §50 is that the requirement that there be units of sense is not so much

¹⁴⁹ Anscombe (2011) p.189.

¹⁵⁰ Cavell (2005) p.195, p.209.

¹⁵¹ Cavell (1979) p.5.

¹⁵² The internal structure of §50 *mimics* that of an improvised but guided exchange (like one between pupils under the lead of their teacher). Hence our sense that it is crafted, conspicuously *not* improvised. You might say that “what must be sketched must be written.” (Cavell (1979) p.5) The exchange in question is not happily construed as a head-on clash between the two voices of “temptation” and “correctness”. The writing of §50 can be said to bespeak a third pressure, namely, that of “the attainment of silence, say unassertiveness” (Cavell (1995) p.178), both insofar as §50 is punctuated by neutral interventions (those of the teacher, as he tries to help the conversation move forward, while consciously abstaining from making assertions of his own) and insofar as all its opinionated interventions prove to be question-begging, or biased, except for the one that brings it to a close (*i.e.* the one which secures silence, if only momentarily). Attempts at dislodging a metaphysical temptation that do not scratch below its surface can only succeed in fuelling it. The first response elicited by the opening question of §50 encapsulates just such an attempt. It lacks critical acumen. It is worthy of a disciple – *i.e.* an uncritical adept – of the (non-existent) doctrine of Wittgensteinianism. Its insufficiency prompts the reinstatement, by a second voice (think of it as that of a second pupil), of the very metaphysical urge that it was meant to dislodge (“being cannot be attributed to an element, because...”). To move past this standoff, the teacher offers to consider an object of comparison (“But let us consider an analogous case!”) (= C₁). Whereupon the disciple seizes upon what the teacher has just said as if, properly construed, it decisively pleaded for the doctrine which he favors (“But this is, of course, not (...”) (= C₂). (The standard reading of PI §50, which unqualifiedly ascribes C₂ to Wittgenstein, can hardly account for the dash before C₂.) Which in turn moves the teacher to introduce a second object of comparison (“Let us imagine samples of color...”) that, while contrived, is not as question-begging as the first. Its relevant features are brought out. (“This sample is an instrument of the language, (...”). The first pupil is able to draw the implications for the elements of language-game (48) (“And just this holds for (...”). His way of cashing them out, however, betrays a failure to get to the bottom of the comparison, a failure fully to grasp its point. Or so it appears in the light of the caveat (“still, (...”) on which the teacher's reformulation (“What, on the face of it, there has to be...”) ends. Although commentators have paid scant attention to it, the caveat is what brings the section to a close, what enables its voices to attain silence. It encapsulates that section's *point*.

one that is laid down *upon* our language as one that is laid down *by* it – that is, by *us*. Which is to say that it is really no genuine requirement at all. Or so shall I argue, drawing on Kripke's work, in the last paragraph of this section. As we shall see, *this* point does constitute a genuine criticism of the *Tractatus* – one that no longer turns on mistaking one of the *Tractatus*' targets for one of its views.

Thus, PI §50 can be read as a new formulation of a crucial criticism *made by* the *Tractatus* *only up to a point*. That it *can* be so read is nonetheless all the more important as the criticism in question is standardly mistaken for a criticism *of* the *Tractatus* by the *Investigations*. That PI §50 can be read both as elaborating upon the *Tractatus*' criticism of the specifically Russellian view of simplicity and as mounting a criticism against the generic view of simplicity vindicated by the *Tractatus*, is due to the ambiguity concealed in the counterfactual argument rehearsed at the beginning of §50b. This counterfactual argument admits of both a Russellian reading and a Tractarian reading, the latter of which is premised on the rejection of the former. It should be clear by now that read in the former way, it lies open to the charge of conflating epistemic possibility and non-epistemic possibility. Russell will have wrongly inferred from the epistemic necessity of prototypes to their non-epistemic necessity (*i.e.* to their necessary existence) (this is the *non-sequitur* denounced by Moore and Kripke), thereby mistaking prototypes for elements. Conversely, he will have wrongly inferred from the non-epistemic necessity of elements to their epistemic necessity (*i.e.* to the requirement that we be acquainted with them), thereby mistaking elements for prototypes. Read in the latter way, the argument trades on no such equivocation. The *Tractatus* drives a wedge between the surface-level semantic necessity of prototypes and the deep-level semantic necessity of elements. Depending on how the counterfactual argument of §50b is read, it incurs different charges. As against the argument construed in the former (*i.e.* Russellian) way, the charge mounted by §50c is that of a failure, on the part of Russell, to realize that the requirement that there be prototypes (surface-level forms) reduces to the surface-level semantic requirement that there be standards (in the ordinary sense in which the standard-meter or the standard-sepia *are* standards) and is not to be conflated with the deep-level semantic requirement that there be elementary conditions of sense. As against the argument construed in the latter (*i.e.* Tractarian) way, the charge mounted by §50c, we shall see, is that of a failure, on the part of the author of the *Tractatus*, to realize that the requirement that there be units of sense, if sense is to be determinate, reduces to the surface-level semantic requirement that there be prototypes or standards (in the ordinary sense) and is not to be inflated into the deep-level semantic requirement that there be elements existing in their own right – be they construed as the intangible dimensions of sense. For sense to be determinate is indeed for there to be units of sense; but for there to be units of sense just is for certain words to be in circulation, for them to be common currency among us.

§16. The pair of points on which Kripke fastens (C_1 and C_2) are quite evidently meant to contribute to disarming the opening argument of §50b.¹⁵³ However, to regard such contribution as straightforward and self-contained, as the standard reading and the anti-standard reading equally do, is to assume that the “analogous case” introduced by C_1 is too familiar to give rise to puzzles of its own.¹⁵⁴ But that seems almost exactly wrong. It is worth dwelling for a moment on the wording of C_1 . C_1 clearly stands *on a level* with the claim criticized in the passages from the 1935 lecture foreshadowing PI §50, namely:

C_0 There necessarily is *one* thing that is one meter long, and that is the standard

¹⁵³ See above section 1.2.

¹⁵⁴ See above section 1.3.

meter in Paris.

The overall logical *form* of C_1 (“There is one thing that (...), and that is the standard meter in Paris”) is reminiscent of that of C_0 . At the same time, with respect to its *content*, C_1 is reminiscent of the point made *against* C_0 (to the effect that “The Greenwich foot is not a foot long” (AWL p.120)). Insofar as C_1 implies the falsity of C_0 , C_1 might thus seem unambiguously to correct the temptation that expresses itself in both C_0 and the contention that “being cannot be ascribed to an element”.

But that C_1 has, except for its modalization, the same logical form as C_0 , namely that of an existential generalization followed by mention of its basis, should make us suspicious of its innocuity. Certainly, C_1 is so worded as to allow for being read as C_1' or C_1'' :

C_1' There necessarily is *one* thing whose essence is to be one meter long, hence such that it can be stated of it neither that it is nor that it is not one meter long, and that is the standard meter in Paris.

C_1'' There necessarily is *one* thing whose essence is to be one meter long, hence such that it can be stated of it neither that it is nor that it is not one meter long, and that is the unit of length called “the meter”.

So read, C_1 ensues from an argument analogous to the one under criticism in §50. Depending on whether it is read as C_1' or C_1'' , C_1 ensues from argument A_1 or argument A_2 below:

A_1' If there were not one thing whose essence is to be one meter, that is to say, such that it can be stated of it neither that it is nor that it is not one meter long, to wit, the standard meter in Paris, then nothing could be stated either to be or not to be one meter long.

A_1'' If there were not one thing whose essence is to be one meter long, that is to say, such that it can be stated of it neither that it is nor that it is not one meter long, to wit, the unit of length called “the meter”, then nothing could be stated either to be or not to be one meter long.

Both arguments are analogous to the one adduced at the beginning of §50b in support of the contention that “being cannot be ascribed to an element”, namely:

If there were not a thing whose essence is to be (*i.e.* exist) for “A” to designate, then there would be nothing that A could be stated to be or not to be, so that there would be indefinitely many things that could not be said to be (*i.e.* exist) or not to be (*i.e.* exist).

The pointed parallel between the joint denial contained in C_1 and the joint denial about elements adds to the overall congruence in form between C_1 and C_0 to cast doubt on the metaphysical innocuity of C_1 , even as qualified by C_2 .¹⁵⁵ C_1 cries out for *contextual* qualifications that C_2 fails to adduce.

Note that if C_1 is read as C_1'' , then the “analogous case” is no longer the standard meter in Paris but the unit of length called “the meter”. Certainly, in the passages from the 1935 lecture foreshadowing §50, the second term of the analogy involving a canonical metrical standard is not that canonical standard itself but rather the metrical unit or the name of that metrical unit: the “analogous” case, that is, is not the canonical standard but the meaning of the name of the metrical unit defined through it. Furthermore, the center of gravity of the passages from the 1935 lecture is clearly not so much the issue of whether a canonical standard of length can be said to have the length which it serves to define,¹⁵⁶ as the issue

¹⁵⁵ This much should be conceded to Gert's unorthodox reading of *PI* §50. See Gert (2002), (2010).

¹⁵⁶ Wittgenstein even talks of “a game in which the sample is orange” (AWL p.120)

of whether saying so can *count as a ground* for the existential generalization to the effect that there is something with that length. What Wittgenstein is there concerned to establish is that the standard meter cannot be said to be one meter long *in the same sense as the sense* in which for something to be one meter long is for it to make true the existential generalization that there is something that is one meter long.

As we have seen, not only does the *Tractatus* not subscribe to argument A_1' , but it is concerned to denounce it. Far from adhering to C_1' on the basis of A_1' , it rejects A_1' as fallacious.¹⁵⁷ By Tractarian lights, A_1' confuses the requirement of the existence of a unit of sense with that of an instance by excellence and therefore with that of an atom of sense. Whether the *Tractatus* may be held to adhere to C_1'' on the basis of A_1'' is a more delicate matter. What is clear, is that it does not subscribe to a version of argument A_1'' that turns on conflating surface-level modality and deep-level modality.¹⁵⁸ But the *Tractatus* does seem to construe units of sense as unadulterated exemplars, as if under the fantasy that a metrical unit, while not independent from other units (*i.e.* an atom), could subsist apart from any material metrical standard, because it *is* itself the self-subsisting canonical standard, albeit one of a special sort, as it were an intangible metrical standard. There is nothing wrong with holding a metrical unit to be as such intangible. It *is* as such intangible. It is tangible only via the tangible standard to which, as Kripke rightly insists, it is *not* identical, just as the office of a magistrate, or the honors due to its rank, are tangible only via such things as his robe, to which they are not identical.¹⁵⁹ But this does not mean that we can make sense of the notion of an intangible standard or of a standard that serves its role *despite* its tangibility.

Be that as it may, it can hardly be reckoned incidental that C_1 is cast in the form of an existential generalization followed by mention of its basis. Whatever the “analogous case” may be exactly, C_1 is not directly *about* it, for the quite simple reason that, lacking a grammatical subject, it is not “about” anything. Although little attended to, the fact that the logical form of C_1 is, like that of C_0 , that of an existential generalization followed by mention of its basis, and *not* that of a subject-predicate statement, is all-important, as it directly casts doubt on the assumption that the issue over which Kripke and (most of) his Wittgenstein opponents disagree – whether the standard meter is *necessarily* one meter long *or not* – is of primary concern to Wittgenstein in §50. By way of consequence, it equally undercuts the assumption that the argument to which Kripke and (some of) his Wittgensteinian opponents alike trace Wittgenstein's alleged defense of C_1 does underwrite C_1 . Thus, while Kripke mislocates the rationale for C_1 , in denying that the argument in question lends support to C_1 , he is not denying anything that Wittgenstein is asserting. The necessity at stake in the analogous case is not the necessity for something of being so and so, but the necessity of there being something that is so and so. Otherwise, the analogy would indeed be a lame one, since it would involve existence on one side only, and since the necessity operator would have different scopes on each side. This allows §50b to engage both with the Russellian view of simplicity already faulted by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (and in the 1935 lectures), and with the view of simplicity at play in the *Tractatus*. For, as we have seen, the simplicity of Tractarian elements does not turn on their necessarily existing (*i.e.* on their existing in every possible world).

§17. According to PI §58, saying that *all* that “Red exists” comes to is to its being the

¹⁵⁷ See above sections 2.2 and 2.3.

¹⁵⁸ See above sections 2.3 and 2.5.

¹⁵⁹ Thus, the objection often made to Wittgenstein's comparison of Platonic Forms with standards, to the effect that the latter are tangible while the former are not (see *e.g.* Bluck (1957)), although it contains a grain of truth, is short-sighted.

case that “ ‘Red’ has reference”, so that “Red exists” is really an attempt at talking about linguistic use (namely about the use of the word “red”), is no safeguard against the inclination to think that the failure of “Red exists” to make sense bespeaks the essence of red (namely, that red exists in its own right). It may be a form of this inclination. After all, by the early Wittgenstein's own lights, the idea that “red” is a Name – *i.e.* that “red” designates a simple object – is nothing over and above the idea that “ ‘red’ has meaning”. The claim that all that “Red exists” comes to is to its being the case that “ ‘Red’ has reference” may be meant as the claim that this is all that “Red exists” could possibly mean – *if, per impossibile*, it could mean anything; that is to say, as the claim that this is what “Red exists” would *have* to mean – *if, per impossibile*, it could mean anything – so that this must be what “Red exists” is trying (and failing) to say. Thus, the idea behind the admission that “Red exists” amounts to “ ‘Red’ has reference” is that through its very failure to make sense the sentence “Red exists” somehow manages to get across the fact that “ ‘Red’ has reference”, together with the reason why it is impossible for it to convey that fact directly, which is that red exists in its own right (see PI §58c).

A first step toward the realization that the fact that “Red exists” does not make sense (assuming that it is one) does not bespeak the essence of red, lies in the realization that all this fact comes to, is to red being a means of representation rather than something represented, an object of comparison rather than an object. Red is but an instrument for the making of existence-ascriptions. We are brought to this realization by being led to recognize that the fact (assuming that it is one) that it makes no sense to say of red that it exists could be imputed to the role which it plays in existence-ascriptions, just as the fact that it makes no sense to say of the standard sepia (*Ur-sepia*) either that it is of the color sepia or that it is not, is to be imputed to the role which it plays in color-ascriptions. This does not show that the statement that neither being nor not-being can be attributed to an element *cannot* be construed as a “metaphysical statement” about that element (*i.e.* as a statement about its *nature* (see PI §58b)) – how on earth could one show such a thing anyway? It is not as if we could picture to ourselves what it is that cannot be done – but it does show that this statement *need not* be so construed.

Echoing back §49, Wittgenstein notes that for a verbal unit of language-game (48) to function as a name rather than as a description of an element when uttered in a situation of apprenticeship and instruction in the language-game, just is for that element to acquire the status of a means of representation instead of being something represented, for that element to behave like a name rather than like something named. From the perspective of the learner, the elements pointed to assume the same status as the standard sepia. Conversely, for that same verbal unit of language-game (48) to function as a description rather than as a name of an element when uttered while engaging in the practice of the language-game, just is for that element to have the status of something represented rather than that of a means of representation.

A converse implication of the parallel between the elements of language-game (48) and the standard sepia is this: just as it would be queer to regard the fact that a verbal unit of language-game (48) functions as a name rather than as a description of an element at the stage of apprenticeship and instruction in the language-game as a ground for saying that “an element can *only* be named”, so it would be queer to take the fact that “sepia”, when it is defined as the color of the standard sepia, functions as a name of that color, as a ground for saying that the standard sepia can in no context be described as having the color sepia; or, for that matter, to regard the fact that “meter”, when it is defined as the length of the standard meter, functions as a name of that length, as a ground for saying that the standard meter can in no context be described as being one meter long. Thus, in denying that the statement “the standard meter is one meter long” cannot make sense Kripke is not

contradicting Wittgenstein. It is not that claim C_1 should be read as implicitly restricted to those contexts in which “S” can be said to *name* the standard meter *S*. For the form of C_1 is emphatically unqualified and it is not by way of any such restriction that C_2 qualifies C_1 . What needs to be acknowledged, rather, is that Wittgenstein does *not* endorse C_1 .

That such objects as the standard sepioid or the standard meter and, by way of implication, the elements of language-game (48), are literally instruments of language, means of representation rather than things represented, can be argued on the basis of the claim that their names are rigid designators in Kripke's sense, that it to say, designate the same thing in every possible world in which they designate something. In effect, the rigidity of a designator – or at least that of a *de jure* designator, *i.e.* a designator whose “reference is stipulated to be a single object, whether we are speaking of the actual world or of a counterfactual situation”¹⁶⁰ – is best conceived of in terms of the contrast between a means of representation and something represented: a rigid designator owes its rigidity to the fact that, for the purpose of assessing the truth-value, with respect to a possible situation, of a statement in which it occurs, its designatum does not function as something represented but as a means of representation. That is to say, its designatum falls on the side, not of the situation to be measured, but on the side of the statement set against that situation to measure it. Pursuing Wittgenstein's comparison between evaluating the truth-value of a statement with respect to a possible situation and measuring the length of an object against a standard of length, one might say that a rigid designator is one whose designatum functions as a standard to be set against the world. There is thus a sense in which the rigidity that pertains to names of units of measures is exemplary in Kripke's framework.

This feature of (*de jure*) rigidity is brought to the fore by Kripke when he lays stress on the fact that even in “describing a counterfactual situation in which people, including ourselves, did speak in a certain way different from the way we speak”, “we use *English* with *our* meanings and *our* references.”¹⁶¹ That is why it can and must be said of a rigid *de jure* designator that it “rigidly designates its referent even when we speak of counterfactual situations where that referent would not have existed.”¹⁶² This characterization reflects the manner in which counterfactual situations are ordinarily evoked. We can envision a counterfactual situation in which Nixon did not win the election without having to rely upon some qualitative specification of what it is to count as being Nixon in a possible world, because we can simply “stipulate that, in talking about what would have happened to Nixon in a certain counterfactual situation, we are talking about what would have happened to *him*.”¹⁶³ The counterfactual possibility that Nixon did not win the elections “need not be identified with the possibility of a man looking like such and such, or holding such and such political views, or otherwise qualitatively described, having lost. We can [for example] point to the *man*, and ask what might have happened to *him*, had events been different.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, the problem of the identification of individuals across possible worlds simply need not arise.

As Kaplan has argued, the above feature of rigidity is best brought out by marking the distinction, only implicit in Kripke, between the *context* in which a sentence is uttered and the *circumstances* with respect to which its truth-value is assessed, and by supplementing Kripke's “picture of possible worlds” with the “picture of structured propositions”, according to which the designata of (what Kaplan calls) “directly referential terms” *literally figure* in the propositions expressed by sentences in which those terms occur.

¹⁶⁰ Kripke NN p.21 note 21.

¹⁶¹ Kripke NN p.77.

¹⁶² Kripke NN p.21 note 21.

¹⁶³ Kripke NN p.44.

¹⁶⁴ Kripke NN p.46.

(Kaplan has a vivid way of putting the point: “That’s right, Nixon himself, trapped in a proposition.”¹⁶⁵) Like a singular *de jure* rigid designator in Kripke’s sense, a directly referential term “designate[s] the same individual in all possible worlds whether the individual ‘exists’ or not.”¹⁶⁶ But it does so *in virtue of* the fact that “its referent, once determined, is taken as fixed for all possible circumstances, *i.e.*, is taken as *being* the propositional component.”¹⁶⁷ What the picture of structured propositions makes perspicuous, is how a directly referential term can refer without first passing through the proposition, that is to say, without the mediation of a component of the content of what is being said.¹⁶⁸

For me, the intuitive idea is not that of an expression which *turns out* to designate the same object in all possible circumstances, but an expression whose semantical *rules* provide *directly* that the referent in all possible circumstances is fixed to be the actual referent.¹⁶⁹

If the individual is loaded into the proposition (to serve as the propositional component) before the proposition begins its round-the-worlds journey, it is hardly surprising that the proposition manages to find that same individual at all of its stops, even those in which the individual had no prior, native presence. The proposition conducted no search for a native who meets propositional specifications: it simply “discovered” what it had carried in. In this way we achieve rigid designation. Indeed, we achieve the characteristic, direct reference, form of rigid designation, in which it is irrelevant whether the individual exists in the world at which the proposition is evaluated.¹⁷⁰

In the light of this picture of rigidity, the free variable under an assignment, or dummy name, “which designates the same individual in *all* possible worlds, whether the individual ‘exists’ or not”¹⁷¹, proves to be the paradigm of rigid designation:

In evaluating “*Fx*” at a world *w*, we do not ask whether its value exists in *w*, we only ask what value was *assigned* to the variable before the process of evaluation at *w* began. Until a value is *assigned* we have nothing to evaluate. Furthermore, and this is important, it is irrelevant *how* “*x*” gets its value, *how* the assignment is made, how the value of “*x*” is *described* when it is assigned to “*x*”. All that matters to the evaluation is that “*x*” has a particular value.¹⁷²

The counterfactual claim adduced in support of the claim that “existence cannot be attributed to an element”, namely the claim that “If it did not *exist*, one could not even name it and so one could say nothing at all of it”, turns out either to evince a confusion or to reduce to a truism. It evinces confusion if it turns on the idea that, in the counterfactual circumstance that an element did not exist, there would be nothing for its name to designate. And it reduces to a truism if it is merely meant to register the fact that only what actually exists is actually available for being used as a means of representation. The truism is best expressed by saying that if this thing did not exist, we *would* not use it. As to the confusion, it comes from identifying “what people would have said *in* certain circumstances, had those circumstances obtained, with what we would say *of* certain

¹⁶⁵ Kaplan (1978) p.13.

¹⁶⁶ Kaplan (1989a) p.493.

¹⁶⁷ Kaplan (1989a) p.493.

¹⁶⁸ See Kaplan (1989b) p.568-569.

¹⁶⁹ Kaplan (1989a) p.493.

¹⁷⁰ Kaplan (1989b) p.569.

¹⁷¹ Kaplan (1989a) p.493.

¹⁷² Kaplan (1989b) p.571-572.

circumstances, knowing or believing that these circumstances don't obtain."¹⁷³ From the premise that "to use 'Moses' as a name, there has got to be an object referred to, namely Moses", we are tempted to infer that the sentence "Moses does not exist" could not have been true by the following pattern of reasoning: "if there hadn't been a Moses, we wouldn't have been able to use this name; we wouldn't have been able to say so; and perhaps even the proposition that Moses doesn't exist itself wouldn't have existed."¹⁷⁴ But the point is that we *do* have the name 'Moses' at hand, and that it is part of our language whether it would have been part of our language in counterfactual circumstances or not. In fact, "If you say: 'Suppose Hitler had never been born', then 'Hitler' refers here, still rigidly, to something that would not exist in the counterfactual situation described."¹⁷⁵ In other words, "under certain circumstances what is expressed by 'Hitler does not exist' would have been true, not because 'Hitler' would have designated nothing (in *that* case we might have given the sentence *no* truth-value) but because what 'Hitler' would have designated – namely Hitler – would not have existed."¹⁷⁶ Together with this pattern of reasoning, one reason for denying that existence is a first-level predicate falls to the ground.¹⁷⁷ And to dispose of the latter is to dispose of one reason for holding the analogy of PI §50 to be impaired by the fact that it treats existence on a par with first-level predicates.

Through the distinction between the context in which a proposition is uttered and the circumstances at which it is evaluated, the apparatus of direct reference makes wholly perspicuous the difference of level between naming and describing – which is brought out in PI §49 in connection with language-game (48) – by displaying the sense in which "naming is a preparation for describing", "so far not a move in the language-game" (PI §49).¹⁷⁸

When the individual is determined (when "the reference is fixed", in the language of Saul Kripke), it is loaded in the proposition. It is this that makes the referent prior to the propositional component, and it is this that reverses the arrow from propositional component to individual in the Direct Reference picture.¹⁷⁹

A benefit of thinking of the means of representation into which an element is turned as it is introduced through its name, on the model of a metrical standard, is that it may help us to bring out the sense in which an element can be compared to itself. For there *is* a sense in which a standard can be compared to itself, that is to say, a sense in which one can talk of a standard being set against itself. Or at any rate there is one if Kripke is right in his claim that the definition of the name of a unit of measure does not supply a synonym for it but only fixes its reference. Stick *S* was not turned into the standard meter by being assessed with respect to its length; nor was it assessed with respect to its length in being turned into the standard meter. But not only does this not preclude *S*, as the standard meter, from being assessed with respect to its length as long as it is not used as means of representation, but this does preclude *S* from being usable, *as* the standard meter, to assess itself, *as* something that is not a means of representation, with respect to its length. It

¹⁷³ Kripke RE chap.2.

¹⁷⁴ Kripke RE chap.2.

¹⁷⁵ Kripke NN p.78.

¹⁷⁶ Kaplan (1989a) p.492-493.

¹⁷⁷ See Kripke RE chap.2.

¹⁷⁸ There is however something that stands in the way of a full endorsement by Kripke of Kaplan's reconception of rigidity as direct reference, at least as it stands: namely, that the apparatus of direct reference masks the fact that there is no such thing as counterfactual existence, for the simple reason that the actual world is the only one there is. For Kripke, as for the early Wittgenstein, only *of the world* – *i.e.* of the actual world – can it be said that it "is all that is the case".

¹⁷⁹ Kaplan (1989b) p.569.

makes sense to say, if only because it is true, that *S* could have failed to be one meter long, *i.e.* that one meter could have failed to be the length of *S*. What makes this counterfactual circumstance describable is that *S* in its actual condition (including its actual length), once it has been “loaded into” language (once its length has been fixed as the reference of “meter) and to that extent “withdrawn from” the realm of the represented (*i.e.* the realm of circumstances), can be used to represent itself, *S*, as not being a certain way in a certain circumstance. Likewise, an element is not turned into a means of representation by being represented; nor is it represented in being turned into a means of representation. But not only does this not preclude an element from being represented (described) as long as it is not used as a means of representation (named), but this does not preclude it from being usable, *as* a means of representation, to represent *itself*, *as* something that is *not* a means of representation, as not being a certain way (or even as not being at all) in a certain circumstance. Thus, to grant that something cannot be used *at the same time* as a means of representation and as something represented is not enough. At most, it could be said that something cannot be used at the same time *and in the same respect* as a means of representation and as something represented. But this, of course, is no more than a way of rephrasing the distinction between a means of representation and something represented.

§18. The last tract of §50c preempts a natural misunderstanding of the deflationary point so far pressed in that paragraph, one that the formulations so far adduced court. As is emphatically clear from this last stretch, the ultimate point of §50 is *not* that what, on the face of it, there has to be, is really an object of comparison rather than an object, a means of representation rather than something represented. The truly deflationary lesson of §50 is that to say that what, apparently, there has to be, is really a means of representation, is merely to say that it is really a means of representation *of ours*, something *we* have *turned into* such a means, an object of comparison *set by us*. It counts as a means of representation only insofar as *we* count it as so. It is *our* method of representation that dictates – that is to say, *us* who dictate – which means of representation we employ, not the other way around. Registering that what, apparently, there has to be, is really part of the language, is compatible with regarding it as indispensable to language, as necessary to the fulfillment of one of its internal ends. The concession may be only apparent and really subserve such a picture. The claim that all that “Red exists” comes to is to its being the case that “'Red' has reference” is then supposed to reflect the fact that red exists in its own right *in language* – that it is an indispensable element of *any* language in which one *can* talk about red. It is as if red, being what it is, were necessarily part of our language, at least insofar as it is a language in which it is possible to talk about red. The illusion is a teleological one. It is as if red were *designed to endow* “red” with a meaning by becoming part of our language, and as if, conversely, “red” thereby got the very meaning that it was *designed to acquire*. That we could not think anything to be red if red did not exist does not establish that red *must* be a sample in our language if “red” is to have a meaning within it; for if red did not exist, then *another* language would be our language.¹⁸⁰

Here we touch upon a second benefit of conceiving on the model of a metrical standard the means of representation into which an element is turned as it is introduced through its name. The definition of a unit of measure is notoriously stipulative. It is, in that sense, notoriously *arbitrary*. “Meter” could have been stipulated to refer to *another* length. Convenience aside, a rigid stick of any length would have done the job. Whether or not it

¹⁸⁰ Wittgenstein PG §95 p.143: “ 'I could not think that something is red if red did not exist.' What that sentence really means is the representation of something red, or the existence of a red sample *as part of our language*. But of course one cannot say that our language *has to* contain such a sample; if it did not contain it, it would be, precisely, another language. But one can say and emphasize that it does contain it.”

is an accident that “meter” refers to *this* length, which it was stipulated to refer to (it is *not* an accident if “meter” is a rigid designator), it *is* certainly an accident that “meter” was stipulated to refer to it. (Note that the point is not simply the trivial one (which has nothing particularly to do with stipulation) that “meter” could have been stipulated to refer to another thing, in the sense in which we could have *called* “red” what we actually *call* “green”. In the relevant sense, “meter” could *not* have been stipulated to refer to just any other thing, but it could have been stipulated to refer to another *length*.) The definition of that unit of length is, to that extent, not answerable to anything. And so we not too tempted to regard the object through which it was defined (or even, for that matter, the class of the objects with the same length) as uniquely amenable to this definition and therefore indispensable to our language. The choice never was one between resorting to this stick (or, for that matter, to a stick of this length, *i.e.* of the same length as this stick) and *not* resorting to it, but between resorting to *this* stick (or to a stick of this length) and resorting to one of *another* length. Only through some kind of retrospective illusion might it come to look otherwise.¹⁸¹

Yet the benefit of adverting to the coordinative definition of the name of unit of measure will be lost if, flouting Kripke’s cautions, we take it to supply a synonym for it. For suppose that “meter” is synonymous with “the length of *S* at t_0 ”. Then that there is a stick with the length called “meter”, namely the standard meter *S* (at t_0), is part of the meaning of “meter”. But then it is not an accidental property of the length called “meter” that there be a stick with that length, namely the standard meter *S* (at t_0). So if *S* did not exist, so that there were no stick with that length, then that length itself would not exist: there would be no such thing as the unit of length called “meter”. And it now begins to look as if the standard meter *had* to be part of our language if “meter” is to mean anything at all. Conversely, since the length of a stick is not an essential property of it, if “meter” is not stipulated to mean “the length of *S* at t_0 ” but only stipulated to refer to the length of *S* at t_0 ,

¹⁸¹ Presumably, the point of resorting to a color-word like “sepia”, rather than to a color-word like, say, “red” (or even “fuchsia”), for the purpose of canvassing a language-game in which a color-word is stipulatively defined as the color of a certain object erected into a standard, is that ascriptions of the particular shade of brown ordinarily called “sepia” seem inherently subject to uncertainty and disagreement, in a way ascriptions of most colors and color-shades do not. This makes it intelligible why we might arbitrarily select some brownish object for being *the* standard for that color: such a convention would allow us to dispel some uncertainties and to settle some disputes. Were we asked instead to envision a language-game in which “red” is defined as the color of a certain object erected into a standard, we would be hard put to forego the feeling that something about *its nature* – namely *its color* – somehow *made* the object selected as standard *fit for* being selected as *the* standard. Precisely because ascriptions of “red” do not seem inherently subject to uncertainty and disagreement in the way ascriptions of “sepia” seem to be, *even though* the reference of “red” is not, in fact, stipulated via a description, it would keep looking as if the standard for red had been selected on account of the color which it exemplified and hence possessed – as if it were, as it were, already somehow a sample of red before it was erected into *the* sample for red. (After all, this is indeed how samples are selected in the course of ostensive teaching. Ostensive teaching relies on some objects already counting as samples from the perspective of the teacher. It does not erect such objects into samples except from the perspective of the pupil.) On the other hand, the illusion that the standard for a certain color is indispensable to (our) language, if ascriptions of that color are to be possible, is perhaps nowhere stronger than in the case of a color-word which, like “sepia” (or “fuchsia”, for that matter) designates a very particular color-shade, one that seems so determinate to us that it cannot be explained except by means of an equally determinate sample. *This* particular shade, we are inclined to think, *could not* have been defined except by *pointing to this* standard. So, alternatively, the point of resorting to a color-word like “sepia” might be that it invites, even more than a color-word like “red”, the very teleological illusion which a word like “meter”, whose ostensive definition is notoriously arbitrary, may help us to dismantle. Either way, it is crucial that we should conceive of the fixation of the reference of “sepia” strictly on the model of that of “meter”. As long as we shall do so, we shall not be tempted to regard the object to which the name “sepia” is coordinated (*i.e.* the standard sepia) as *giving* a meaning to that name. By parity, we shall not be tempted to regard an element of language-game (48) as *providing* its name with a meaning.

then it is only an accidental property of the length called “meter” that there happens to be a stick with that length, namely the standard meter S (at t_0). The unit of length that we call “meter” could have been defined via another accidental property (say, that there is another stick, S' , with that length). So, even if there is only one standard, in the counterfactual circumstance that S did not exist, “meter” *could* still have been defined as that length, which it *was* defined as. Given the way “meter” is defined (*i.e.* its reference is fixed), it is not conceivable that S should turn out not to be one meter long at t_0 : that is to say, it makes no sense to talk of S turning out not to be one meter long at t_0 after all. But this does not mean that “ S is one meter long” is necessary, *i.e.* that S could not have failed to be one meter long.

Note that saying that it is *not* essential to the length as which “meter” is defined that it should be the length of stick S does not mean that, *strictly speaking*, only the actual length of S – not S itself – becomes an instrument of language upon S being erected into the standard meter: what it does mean, is that only the standard meter *as it actually is*, *i.e.* S in its actual condition, becomes such an instrument.

Although stick S serves to stipulate the length to which “meter” is to refer and S exemplifies that length, S is but a dispensable means of fixing the reference of “meter”, just like any part of any device for fixing the reference of a term. In that sense, not only does S contribute to no provision of meaning, but also it is unessential to even that to which it *does* contribute, namely the fixation of the reference. But this by no means betrays some inclination, on Kripke's part, to regard examples as mere expedients that can facilitate, but not replace, the direct grasp of what they are meant to exemplify, indirect ways of attaining something which lies beyond them and which, on their own, they necessarily fall short of conveying.¹⁸² S is indeed a mere crutch. But, first, S is not in fact an *instance* of the property designated by “meter”, for the simple reason that “meter” does not designate a *property*, but an (abstract) object. Second, the procedure for fixing the reference to which S is instrumental is precisely unrepresentative, because exceptional: generally, the reference of a name is *not* fixed via a description or even via a cluster of descriptions.

Kripke only considers names whose reference is stipulated by description in order to show that *even if* the reference of a name was typically stipulated by means of a description or a cluster of descriptions, that description or cluster of descriptions would still be unessential to the meaning of the name. No description is ever an indispensable way of fixing the reference of a name because no description is ever an indispensable part of its meaning – *even when* that description is actually used to stipulate what the name is to refer to and in that sense holds *a priori* of its referent.

Far from decrying the instances of a property as being mere crutches, Kripke famously traces the rigidity of various common names to the fact that their actual paradigmatic instances constitute the depository and the standard of their use. It is because the standard for *being-a-cat* is none other than *our* cats, that is to say the things *we actually* call “cats”, that, given that we have not found *our* cats not to be animals, we cannot so much as make sense of the possibility that something had been an automaton, yet a *cat*. (To acknowledge that cats could have turned out not to be animals but sophisticated automata is not to admit that there could have been things that were automata, yet were cats, but to admit that there could have been things that looked like cats (*i.e.* were “evidential counterparts” of cats) – that is to say, that looked like *our* cats – yet were automata.) And it is for the same reason that, were we to find out that *our* cats are not in fact animals but sophisticated automata, we would not conclude that there are no cats after all, but rather that *cats* have proved not

¹⁸² For this charge, see Diamond (2001).

to be animals and that, to the extent that we can be said to have taken for granted that they were, we can be said to have been mistaken about *them*.

It is at best misleading to hold the deflationary point of PI §50 to be that C_1 amounts to the claim that the standard meter S is a condition of possibility of the game of measuring in virtue of its being “what gives 'meter' a sense”, so that to imagine that S did not exist is to imagine that the world “be such that it *would* be *impossible* to formulate metrical propositions.”¹⁸³ Wittgenstein is not trying to reconcile us with the alleged truism that “if it were not for the standard meter, 'meter' would have no meaning”,¹⁸⁴ but rather to alert us to the metaphysical urge which lurks in such a counterfactual claim. For this counterfactual makes it seem as if the standard meter S , upon being brought in, “gave content to “meter” where before it was empty.”¹⁸⁵ Whereas S can only be said “to give 'meter' a sense” “in the sense of *enlarging* the game”: in introducing S as the standard, “we have altered the game.”¹⁸⁶

The iteration of modalities that typically attends such counterfactuals as the one just mentioned – as in the idea that “the determination of sense and also the distinction between necessity and contingency rest on a foundation of contingent fact” – is of the sort traced by Kripke to a misconception of the conjunction of an epistemic modality and the negation of the corresponding non-epistemic modality.

This is not to deny that PI has room for the idea that our standards of sense could prove hostage to worldly contingencies. But this idea is not a concern of PI §50. And it should precisely not be conflated with the idea that our standards of sense always already presuppose the not obtaining of certain worldly contingencies.¹⁸⁷

It bears emphasizing that if “meter” meant “the length of S at t_0 ” in the sense of being synonymous with “the length of S at t_0 ”, then “meter” would have other referents than its actual referent in counterfactual worlds where the length of S at t_0 differs from its actual length, and no referent at all in counterfactual worlds where S fails to exist. “Meter” would hardly behave like a name, let alone like the name for an element, since what it would designate would fail to be inalterable, let alone indestructible. One blind spot of the *Tractatus* was its twofold assumption that an object is not nameable unless it is simple and that an object is not simple if it is analyzable (*i.e.* definable) via a description.¹⁸⁸ To ascribe to PI §50 the view that “meter” is defined as synonymous with “the length of S at t_0 ” is to take PI to hold this pair of assumptions in place. It is, by the same token, to ignore the fact that a commitment to this pair of assumptions seriously impairs the analogy on which PI §50 turns. Conversely, if this analogy is not in fact defective in such manner, then it undermines this pair of assumptions.

A third benefit of conceiving the means of representation into which an element is turned, as it is introduced through its name, as a metrical standard, is that it may guard us against the temptation to conflate the correct idea that there is no single way for sense and existence to articulate into units with the incorrect idea that sense and existence themselves are matters of convention. Again, this benefit is spoiled *in ovo* if, ignoring Kripke's animadversions, we take the coordinative definition of the name of a unit of measure to supply a synonym for it. For suppose that “meter” meant “the length of S at t_0 ” in the sense of being synonymous with “the length of S at t_0 ”. Then there is no such thing as the length in meters of an object *simpliciter*. The length in meters of an object is

¹⁸³ Jolley (2010) p.127. My emphasis.

¹⁸⁴ Gert (2002) p.65. Jolley subscribes to Gert's remark on p.121 of Jolley (2010).

¹⁸⁵ Wittgenstein AWL p.142.

¹⁸⁶ Wittgenstein AWL p.143.

¹⁸⁷ As suggested in White (1972).

¹⁸⁸ See Ishiguro (1969).

relative to the length of *S*. A fortiori, there is no such thing as the length of an object *simpliciter*. The length of an object is relative to a unit of measure, which is relative to a standard.

The two illusions which the comparison of elements with standards of measure is meant to forestall fuel each other. They are but the two poles of a single oscillation. Like Wittgenstein, Kripke is concerned with dislodging the temptation to think of the rigidity (*i.e.* determinacy) of sense as some sort of super-rigidity, as the sublimation of the empirical rigidity possessed by a measuring stick. The rigidity of sense is not a matter of indestructibility or timelessness (compare PI §58b).

§19. Its dialectical method notwithstanding, the *Tractatus* is unreservedly committed to the conception of simplicity invited by Socrates' dream at least to this extent, that it sanctions a dichotomy between *saying* and *naming* – between the inherent *articulateness* of the former and the equally inherent *inarticulateness* of the latter. This dichotomy finds expression in the denial that it makes sense to *negate* a *name*. No doubt we are meant to realize that such a denial in turn fails to make sense, just as we are meant to realize that the categorial distinction between objects and facts – the single categorial distinction in favor of which *all* categorial distinctions are relinquished in the *Tractatus* – is one that *gets expressed* in language, rather than one that *we* can ourselves undertake to express. But this leaves the dichotomy intact. The dichotomy is reflected *by* the grammar of language. Our capacity to make any sense at all is unintelligible apart from the possibility of names – symbols that it makes no sense to negate.

Such a picture of what it takes for sense to be determinate that is the target of PI §50. It is not the dichotomy by itself so much as its point and status that PI §50 questions. PI §50 does not argue for a conventionalist account of existence. It follows through the consequences of the *Tractatus*' insight into the difference between names and sentences up to the point where that insight undoes itself. What the *Tractatus* half-realized, but half-realized only, is that the difference between names and sentences, like all grammatical differences, is a *difference of level*. In the *Tractatus*, already, for facts *not to be simple* is *not* for them to be complex, hence *not* for them to be complexes, hence *not* for them *not to be simples*. If facts and objects, however, do not display contrary features (be they formal), then not only are pseudo-observations like “names cannot be negated”, or “elements cannot be said to be or not to be”, or “facts cannot be named”, and so on, ultimately unintelligible, but they are as *gratuitous* as “Roses have no teeth”. Not only can the point of uttering such remarks only be transitional, but also it can only be relative to some definite elucidatory purpose.

There is, in the absolute, absolutely *nothing* that cannot be done with names or, for that matter, with elements. Saying that “elements can only be named” – that “they cannot be described”, that “they cannot be said to be or not to be” – makes it look as if the range of what can be done with elements were *restricted*, as if nameables were *deprived of* the features characterizing sayables and vice versa. But elements are no more *deprived of* the aforementioned possibilities than roses are deprived from having teeth. Likewise, the denial that names could be negated is, in the absolute, wholly gratuitous, like the denial that an elephant could pass through the eye of a needle. It registers no *privation* on the part of names and their bearers.

Since “naming and describing do not stand at the same level” (PI §49) – naming being, in a way, but a preparation, at the stage of the *instruction* into the language-game, for the descriptive moves subsequently taken within the *practice* of that language-game¹⁸⁹ – that

¹⁸⁹ That this point is of crucial importance is well brought out by Jolley. See Jolley (2010) pp.110-111, p.117.

names do not count as descriptions at the stage of instruction offers *no* ground for holding that “elements can *only* be named”, and is wholly compatible with names counting as descriptions (if only as degenerate ones) at the stage of practice¹⁹⁰. Is this to say that elements can be described *after all*, and that the *Tractatus* went astray insofar as it intimated the opposite? Did the *Tractatus* simply overlook the possibility of devising a language-game disproving the alleged impossibility?¹⁹¹ Or shall we hold the fact that “naming and describing do not stand at the same level” to offer on the contrary *renewed* ground for the claim that “elements can *only* be named”, insofar as it supports a revised (because restricted) version of it, according to which “*at the stage of instruction* elements can only be named”?¹⁹² Shall we insist that it is not the same symbol, but only the same sign, that may count, now as a name of an element (at the stage of instruction), now as a description of it (at the stage of practice)? But the difference of level between naming and saying is *flattened out* in the same proportion by the claim that “elements can be described *after all*”, as by the claim that it means to dislodge, to the effect that “elements can *only* be named”. And the insistence that in making use of one and the same sign, now to name an element at the stage of instruction, now to describe it at the stage of practice, one essentially makes *two distinct uses* of it, ignores that we can have no grasp of what it is for two uses of the same sign to count as identical or not apart from an understanding of *what it takes* to be using a sign *in the same way* in two contexts.

The point of §§46-50 is *not* that it is *not* impossible (let alone nonsensical) *after all* to attribute being or non-being to elements (or that one can devise a language-game *falsifying* the claim that it is), as the anti-standard reading would have it. But neither is it simply that the impossibility (or nonsense) in question is not substantial, as standard readings maintain. If it were, then PI §50 would have to be read as offering either a good defense of the *Tractatus*’ view of simplicity or a bad attack (because off-target) on it. For, as we have seen, there is little doubt that the view of simplicity standardly ascribed to PI §50 is, in its essentials, already to be found in the *Tractatus*.

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¹⁹⁰ This is the point whose bearing on PI §50 is well brought out by Gert. See Gert (2002) p.63; (2010) pp.146-147.

¹⁹¹ As Gert contends: see Gert (2002) p.64; (2010) pp.146-147.

¹⁹² As Jolley is sometimes led to imply in recoiling from Gert’s anti-standard reading: see Jolley (2010) pp.122-123, p.127.

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