

THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT


5

"'T is written: "In the Beginning was the Word."
Here am I balked: who, now, can help afford?
The Word? - impossible so high to rate it;
And otherwise must I translate it,
If by the Spirit I am truly taught.
Then thus: "In the Beginning was the Thought."
This first line let me weigh completely,
Lest my impatient pen proceed too fleetly.
Is it the Thought which works, creates, indeed?
"In the Beginning was the Power," I read
Yet, as I write, a warning is suggested,
That I the sense may not have fairly tested.
The Spirit aids me: now I see the light!
"In the Beginning was the Act," I write."

Goethe's Faust, Act I, Scene III

"But what is the word "primitive" meant to say here?
Presumably that this sort of behaviour is pre-
linguistic: that a language game is based on it,
that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not
the result of thought."

Wittgenstein's Zettel, E541



THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

By

PETER RICHARD GRAVES, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

August 1974

MASTER OF ARTS (1974)
Philosophy

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Private Language Argument

AUTHOR: Peter Graves, B.A. (University of Bristol, England)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Evan Simpson

NUMBER OF PAGES: iv, 108

SCOPE AND CONTENTS:

An exposition of Wittgenstein's arguments against the possibility of a private language is given with the hope of making the arguments clearer. It is shown that because of the impossibility of a private language and because of the impossibility of words having private references in a public language, the notion of a private experience is unintelligible. The last chapter shows that a positive account of what sensations are is given in the Philosophical Investigations, which manages to avoid the impossibility of a private act of naming and also avoids the untenability of behaviorism.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I - <u>THE NECESSARILY PRIVATE LANGUAGE</u>	10
E1 Bare Ostensive Definition	10
E2 Following a rule: argument one	18
E3 Following a rule: argument two	27
E4 The same	41
E5 Language as Functional	46
E6 Conclusion	47
CHAPTER II - <u>THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF RADICAL PRIVACY</u> <u>IN A PUBLIC LANGUAGE</u>	50
CHAPTER III - <u>WITTGENSTEIN'S VIEW OF SENSATIONS</u>	68
APPENDIX	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	106

PREFACE

I adopt the convention of referring to the Philosophical Investigations as "the Investigations," or as simply "the P.I.", when I quote from them, and I use the letter 'E' as an abbreviation for section throughout the thesis.

I am grateful to Professor Evan Simpson for his assistance.

INTRODUCTION

The private language argument has become one of the continuing controversies in philosophy. It still remains one, despite the decline in literature written on the problem since the mid-sixties, which only indicates that nobody has anything really new to say and not that the problem was ever solved. In fact the convinced Wittgensteinians interpreted Wittgenstein as clearly as they could, trying to present his arguments in a more "orthodox" way, for the unique style of presentation of the Investigations seems to be one of the main barriers to an understanding of the views presented. Some of the Wittgensteinians only seemed to be able to write in a style almost as indirect (even obscure) as that of Wittgenstein himself (see Rhees' "Could Language be Invented by a Robinson Crusoe?") Others seemed to have been so absorbed in the magnetic charm of the man that they only seemed able to uncritically repeat what he had said (see Malcolm's "Wittgenstein's Investigations"). It was due to this sort of "unphilosophical thought" that, with some, Wittgensteinians got a bad name, as if they were all 'disciples' unaware of the truth, and only interested in repeating their 'master's' words.

There also arose the rather uninspiring "ordinary language" philosophy centered at Oxford, England, with many

philosophers refusing to find the world puzzling and 'solving' philosophical problems by analysis of ordinary language. It was thought that by finding out what ordinary people say when, the problems of philosophy would disappear. Although Wittgenstein was partly responsible for this movement, it seems in retrospect that the movement owed much more to Austin, its main exponent, and in terms of its genesis to the common-sense philosophy of Moore. While Wittgenstein did believe that ordinary language was terribly important, the main value of his work is to be found in his theory of language and his metaphysics of sensations and human-beings. Indeed when he confronts the problems of sensation, he demands a new "grammar" of sensations, and rejects the "grammar" of sensation as object and name, which is incorporated in ordinary language.

Wittgenstein's views on sensations and other-minds should be separated from any talk of ordinary language philosophy, and should be evaluated for what they say in the context of the traditional problem of other-minds. Wittgenstein, no less than Descartes or Hume, wrestled with the problem on a very high level of thought indeed. His method was by considering language, but this by no means implies that he was only playing with words. He was interested in the nature of sensations and human-beings. He proposed a theory of meaning as use and then showed that because the meaning of a word is its use, certain notions become unintelligible, because words for these notions could never be used. Basically the strategy is to show what is intelligible to us. What is intelligible is what can have

meaning, and what can have meaning is only that which can be 'linked up' with words which have rule-governed uses. In this way, as we shall see, Wittgenstein concludes that the idea of a necessarily private object of sensation is unintelligible.

The Investigations were written by 1949. This was not long after the positivist movement which was strongest in the thirties. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the Investigations are, in part, a reaction against this movement and its tenets. Thus Carnap, in the Unity of Science, having given the name of 'protocol language' to any set of sentences which are used to give a direct record of one's own experience, argues that if an utterance like "thirst now", belonging to the protocol language of a subject S_1 , is construed as expressing only what is immediately given to S_1 , it cannot be understood by anyone else. He states: "In general every statement in any person's protocol language would have sense for that person alone." (The Unity of Science, p. 80) Although Carnap goes on to explain how words can have a public sense, he does accept the idea of a necessary privacy of experience.

Schlick in "Form and Content" argues that his theory of language is consistent with the possibility that he himself exists alone; for he can express facts to himself and communicate with himself alone (see section "Communication with oneself"). Schlick here is clearly accepting the possibility of a private rule. Wittgenstein denies both the possibility of private rules and the intelligibility of a private experience.

Thus what he says can be seen as a direct response to the preceding movement in philosophy.

Not only of course does Wittgenstein contradict the philosophy of people like Carnap and Schlick. He contradicts the dualism of Descartes and the philosophical psychology of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. For all these philosophers regarded sensations as being independent inner objects that one became aware of by inner-sense. The problems of dualism and scepticism only arise when one views sensations in such a way. For it is only if sensations are necessarily private objects that one can set up a dualism, or be sceptical about other people's sensations. For if sensations are private objects one is only aware of his own sensations and his and other people's behaviour. The sceptical intrusion gets a foot-hold due to such a model of sensations. "Do other people have minds?", becomes a natural question to ask, for we are only ever directly aware of our own mental states.

Wittgenstein's arguments against the possibility of a private language are designed to show that the idea of a private sensation, which is completely independent and inner, is unintelligible. He does this by showing that any language which tried to describe or refer to such objects would be necessarily private. This would obviously follow for only the person who had the private sensation could use words to refer to the sensation. Nobody else could know anything about it. He shows that a private language is impossible. He then con-

siders the possibility of private reference in a public language, that is asks if it is possible for sensation words to have public rules of use but still refer to something necessarily private. He denies this possibility. He then offers a positive theory of sensations such that sensation-words can have meaning in a public language. These three tasks are given exposition in the three chapters of this essay.

In Chapter One I will discuss the arguments that Wittgenstein uses against the possibility of a private language. The chapter is divided into sections and in each section I will present one of Wittgenstein's arguments against the possibility of a private language as clearly as I can, with the hope of making the arguments more lucid by making their mode of presentation more orthodox. The conclusion will be that Wittgenstein does have arguments which show that a private language is impossible.

By a necessarily private language I mean that sort of language which Wittgenstein refers to in Section 256 of the Investigations:

Now what about the language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand? How do I use words to stand for my sensations? As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? In that case my language is not a 'private' one. Someone else might understand it as well as I -- But suppose I didn't have any natural expression for the sensation, but only had the sensation? And now I simply associate names with sensations and use these names in descriptions--"

From this brief passage it can be seen to be a necessary

condition for a language to be private that it is incommunicable. The incommunicability in question is a logical one and not a mere empirical one. This is to say that only the speaker can understand the language, not due to any chance circumstance, but because the very nature of the language itself is such that nobody else can understand it in principle, whatever the circumstances. A man on a desert island alone could not, as it happens, communicate to anybody else but Wittgenstein does not wish to suggest that such a man could not still speak a natural language, English for example. Of course any language which only happens to be private must be such that it is possible for somebody else to understand it. The privacy in question is then not a contingent privacy but is a necessary privacy.

The private language envisaged by Wittgenstein is necessarily private because as the story is set up we have a 'speaker' who is simply aware of certain sensations that he has. He has no natural expression of the sensations, he is simply aware of them as if by means of an inner sense. As far as the story goes we have no reason to call the speaker a human-being, for he is not somebody who laughs, who cries, who gets angry, etc. He is just an "ego" entertaining these sensations as private objects of consciousness. The speaker has a pain but does not express his pain in any way; he just focuses in on this private happening. Or he sees a red colour but he does not exclaim "that is red" in such a way that we can agree with him

or ask him to go and buy us a red shirt, for example, he simply focuses in on this private happening. It begins to become clear that Wittgenstein is not setting up a state of affairs that he thinks is possible. The whole thing is something of a parody. His strategy is to allow the Cartesian and Humean notion that sensations are objects that the self is aware of as if in an act of inner perception whose objects are completely independent of anything else, and then to show that such a picture is incoherent when subjected to an examination of language. Although the dualist's position seems tenable when it is first presented, closer analysis shows its illusory nature. The private language argument then must be seen as a "reductio ad absurdum". If it is successful it will rule out the possibility of sensations being private objects of inner sense. Hence its importance.

Thus in what follows it is initially assumed that a private sensation could exist, and then by an analysis of language and how words acquire meaning, it is shown that if there were private sensations, language could never be used to describe them, and that the very idea of a private sensation is meaningless. This is because no use could ever be given to the words for private sensations.

In the first chapter this is done with respect to the necessarily private language. It is shown that a necessarily private language is impossible and that words for private sensations are meaningless. In the second chapter the possibi-

lity of sensation words in a public language having a necessarily private reference is considered. If this were possible then some sense could be given to the notion of a necessarily private sensation, viz. that which one refers to when one claims to have a sensation. It is shown that this is not possible either and that no sense or reference can be given to words for private experiences in either private or public languages. But if the idea of a private experience is senseless then when we talk about our sensations we must not be talking about private objects. The third chapter deals with the question of what sort of things sensations must be if we are to be able to give sensation words meaning.

The conclusion of the first chapter will not be that sensations do not exist but that sensations cannot be private objects because the idea of a private object is without any sense, there being no meaningful words for them. The first chapter is negative in this respect; it rules out a view of sensations as being private objects. By ruling out such objects it refutes a firmly entrenched, and false, view of the inner life. It must be remembered that when sensations are referred to in the private language argument it is not the sensations that we all have and naturally express, rather it is the necessarily private sensation, without any natural expression, the private object of inner sense. Thus when this notion is reduced to the absurd, it is not our ordinary use of the word "sensation" that is shown to be absurd and without meaning, for

the ordinary use is made in the context of natural expression.
It is only the use of the word "sensation" to refer to private
objects that is shown to be senseless.

CHAPTER I

THE NECESSARILY PRIVATE LANGUAGE

The first argument that I will consider has to do with ostensive definition. The relevance of such an argument is that a private language is often claimed to be possible because a private linguist could simply attach words to his sensations by bare ostension.

El. Bare Ostensive Definition

This is the candidate offered as an answer to the question Wittgenstein asks in section 256, namely how do the sensation words of the private language refer to the sensations, where the possibility of tying the words up with the natural expression of sensations is ruled out? The answer is that we simply name them. That is to say that we concentrate our attention on the sensations, point to them inwardly, and impress upon ourselves that they are to have a certain name. Wittgenstein replies to this in section 257 of the Investigations:

When one says "He gave a name to his sensation" one forgets that a great deal of stage-setting is presupposed if the mere act of naming is to make sense...what is presupposed is the existence of the grammar of the word "pain"; it shows the post where the new word is stationed.

And much earlier he states:

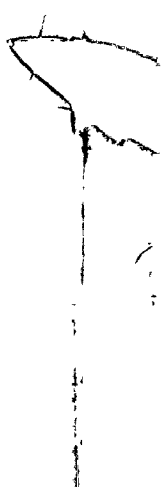
The ostensive definition explains the use -- the

meaning of the word -- when the overall role of the word in language is clear. (P.I. E30)

One interpretation of this is given by Kenny in his article "The Verification Principle and the Private Language Argument" (P. 206 The Private Language Argument) which refers back to the Blue Book:

But the ostensive definition will not suffice by itself, because it can always be variously interpreted... (If) I explain the word 'tove' by pointing to a pencil and saying "This is called 'Tove'". I may be taken to mean "This is a pencil" or "This is round" or "This is wood" etc. (Blue Book p. 2)

The point is that any object has a certain number of predicates of various sorts, for instance those of colour, hardness, shape, location and constitution, etc. To give an ostensive definition successfully can only be done after all the other possibilities of what could be the definition have been ruled out. The stage is set, on this interpretation, when the rules have been given for the use of the word in many different contexts, thus gradually ruling out the possibility of any misinterpretation. However, this interpretation does not get to the main point of Wittgenstein's demand for stage-setting in the case of the private language. It makes the problem of bare ostensive definition look like one of misinterpretation. This is to say that the problem seems to be that the learner of the word may mistake what the teacher is trying to define for something else. This point is of course quite valid as far as it goes. For one person to give another an ostensive definition successfully, the other person must have been seen to go on to use



the word properly in different contexts. It may happen that there will be no misinterpretation when an ostensive definition is given, the learner may guess what characteristic is being defined and be right. But we cannot be sure of this until we check his use of the word subsequent to the definition. But disallowing cases of self-deception, this kind of mis-understanding cannot arise when we have the case of the private language. If the private linguist were able to say "This is tove" he would presumably know that he meant tove, if the problem was just distinguishing meaning this from meaning any of the other characteristics possessed by the object in question. And similarly with the private sensation. If the private linguist was impressing it upon himself that he was to call this sensation "X", knowing what he means to name, it could hardly arise that he misunderstand himself. In Kenny's case misunderstanding could arise because the learner may have selected the wrong alternative from the possibilities created by the ambiguity of the teacher's act, but in the private linguist's case there seems to be no room for any analogous misinterpretation.

Before giving the correct interpretation of E257 a few words should be said about Wittgenstein's theory of meaning. Wittgenstein unlike most previous philosophers sought to get rid of any mentalistic account of meaning. Most of the British empiricists equated the meaning of a word with an idea. To give a word meaning one had only to be aware of the idea which was

its meaning. Locke gives us the best example of such a theory of meaning because he unlike Hume and the other empiricists was explicit about it. Thus we find him stating: "The use of words is to be sensible marks of ideas, and the ideas they stand for are their proper and immediate signification." (Bk. III, Ch. II, E1, Essay Concerning Human Understanding)

From such a theory of meaning it would follow that once one was aware of the idea -- for example the sensation of pain-- then one would know the meaning. Not only this, but it would seem to follow that every word does have a private, incommunicable meaning even in our public language, for only I can have my idea and only you can have yours. To Locke, then, ideas were private objects of inner sense. Wittgenstein rejects such a theory and proposes a new one:

For a large class of cases - though not for all - in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. (P.I. E43)

This does not mean that Wittgenstein believes that for some words meaning is different from use; he is simply pointing out that the word "meaning" itself has different uses. As well as the meaning of a word there are the following uses of the word:

"Intending": A meant to hit you or A intended to hit you.


"Sincerity": Do you really mean it? or Are you really sincere about it?

"Purpose": What is the meaning of that? or what is the purpose of that?

Thus what he wants to say is that when we are talking about the meaning of a word this is given by the use. The other uses of the word "meaning" will have different analyses.

Wittgenstein's thesis is that for one to understand a word's meaning he must be able to use the word correctly. Thus there is a huge difference between having a sensation and understanding the meaning of a word. The latter involves an active process of describing things by the word (if an adjective); fetching the object upon receiving the word in a command (if it is an object name); in other words using the word in activities in the world. The word must be used according to more or less fixed rules which determine that use. When we teach somebody the meaning of a word we do not produce a private idea in him, but we teach him the use of the word. If one can use the word properly then he has grasped its meaning. When I teach someone the use of a word by means of examples and practice - "I do not communicate less to him than I know myself" (P.I. E208).

When somebody gives an ostensive definition he must know what he is defining - the act of naming is the final act in the process of giving a word meaning, not the beginning. The stage-setting includes knowing what one is going to define. This knowledge shows the post where the new word is stationed. Wittgenstein's example is the 'King' in a game of a chess. For one to ask if "this is the King" significantly one needs to know what a game is, what a piece is in a game, and what the rules are which govern the use of the piece in the game.



When one shows someone the King in chess and says, "This is the King" this does not tell him the use of this piece-unless he already knows the rules of the game up to this last point: the shape of the King. You could imagine his having learnt the rules of the game without ever having been shown an actual piece. The shape of the chessman corresponds here to the sound or shape of a word. (P.I. E31)

For one to ostensibly define something one already needs to know the rules of the way the word is going to be used. The ostensive definition merely tells one just what shape the word is going to have. Thus if I say "This is an 'X'", for this to give any meaning to the word 'X' I must already know how to go on to use the word 'X'. If my saying "This is an 'X'" were only the beginning of the process of giving meaning then "X" would just be a sound. For it to be a word, it must be used according to rules that govern that use. To merely juxtapose a sound with an object, to merely associate one with the other, does not give that sound any use. It is an idle ceremony. If the act of naming is to make any sense then the person doing the naming must know how to go on to use the word regularly. And just to say that an object is an "X" does not settle any rules, for one could mean a variety of things (and this was Kenny's point). Thus if one said that a pencil was a "pencil" one could be using the word "pencil" to mean it is made of wood, or to mean it is round. But the point is that the rules must have already been established explicitly or implicitly before the act of naming, so that the naming process ties up a word with rules for its use. The act of naming is the very

last stage in the process of conferring meaning. Thus Wittgenstein remarks:

We may say: only someone who already knows how to do something with it can significantly ask a name.
(P.I. E31)

This all conflicts with the idea that meaning is just linking word with object or idea. The correlation between word and object does not give a word a meaning. For a word to have meaning it must be subject to the correct contexts. The speaker must know the stage-setting, must know what he is talking about when he uses the word. This is to say that he acquires the mastery of the use of the word, he knows how to go on to use it, to do the things with it that can be done according to its meaning.

The question naturally arises as to how one knows the stage-setting. Language training is an essential part of this knowledge. Thus we are trained to respond to the colour red and are told to say "That is red". We are trained to identify a red object out of a batch of coloured objects. As a result of this training we eventually know enough to be able to use the word ourselves. We can say "This is red" without prompting, and because we can use the word ourselves in an active way the word "red" now has meaning to us and is not just a response to a stimulus, as saying "red" was in the early stage of training when we were confronted by a red object.

Such training is ruled out in the private case. Only the speaker has his private sensation and nobody else can know

anything about it. This does not yet rule out the possibility of a private language, however, since it may be suggested that once having learned a language, been trained in it, one can then go on to extend it by his own efforts. Clearly if one already knows what a colour is, to say in the ostensive definition "this colour is 'blue'" does help to station the new word, to show what it is referring to. Likewise it may be that one who shares a public language and has mastered the more general words in it could go on to make private ostensive definitions. Thus when the private linguist has his private sensation he may be able to say "This object that is in my consciousness is an 'X'" if he already shares public language. But he still has to have mastered the knowledge of what an X-type private object is in order for him to give the word "X" meaning. He has to be able to know how to go on to use the word "X" regularly if his act of ostension is to have been successful. The language does not define the sensation word for him, it will only help to set the stage. To define the sensation word he still needs to know what he is defining, and know how to go on to use the word regularly. It is this knowledge which he cannot have if the arguments of Wittgenstein discussed in the next section are right. If successful, these arguments rule out another possibility: that the private linguist may possess innate knowledge of how to go on after the act of ostension.

In the next section Wittgenstein attempts to show that

the stage could never be successfully set because in the private case it would involve the speaker knowing how to go on to use his word for his private sensation and this would involve a necessarily private rule. The latter he argues is a nonsense. Exactly the same applies to the idea of an innate knowledge of how to go on to use the word. The speaker would still have to use private rules (necessarily private) and this he could never do.

E2. Following a rule: argument one

Firstly a quick reminder that Wittgenstein is still talking about the private sensation as a private object of inner sense, and that his method is still to reduce such a notion to absurdity by showing that it could never be given any meaning. He supposes that the private linguist has claimed to have named a private sensation. He asks us to imagine a private linguist keeping a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. The private linguist associates the sign "S" with the supposed sensation and writes the sign in a diary whenever he has the supposed sensation. But how does one convey meaning to the sign in this way, how does one establish the connection between the sign and the sensation? The private linguist's advocate would reply that one simply impresses the connection on oneself. But it is necessary for one to know that he has impressed upon himself the connection that he should be able to remember the connection right in future. In the private case

one has no checks or criteria to tell one if the connection is remembered correctly. Wittgenstein says:

One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that we can't talk about right. (P.I. E258)

If it were possible for a private linguist to say "this is called 'X'" and then to say later "this is called 'X' as well", when talking about his private object, then we have something which looks as if it might be a language. Wittgenstein clamps down on this because he claims there would be no distinction between seeming to follow a rule and actually following one. The private linguist is allegedly following the rule that whenever a sensation of type X occurs he calls it by the name "X". But he may only be under the impression that he is using the word consistently for the same sensation and because of this claim that he is following a rule. There can be, in the private set-up, no checks on his subsequent use of the word. It would be possible that he was mistaken every time he used the word and, due to his calling the different sensations by the same name, be under the impression that he was following a rule.

Because all there is to go on is the speakers impression, which only supports what seems to be the case, there is no reason to say that a rule is being followed. All that can be claimed with justification is that the speaker is under the impression that he is following a rule. One tends to think that the speaker would be able to establish the connection


between his supposed private sensation of pain and his name "pain". But this is because the word "pain" has a public meaning. But to the person trying to devise a private language the word does not yet have a private meaning, he is allegedly trying to give it one. We assumed that stage-setting may be possible in the private case if the private linguist shares a public language, with the words of which he can partly set the stage, in the same way that people can invent new words in the natural languages that we have. But now the use of the word as made by the private linguist after the act of naming is being considered. If the act of naming was successful then the word must be used regularly according to more or less fixed rules. But neither we nor the speaker can check that a rule is being followed, for we have no access to the private world, and the speaker can only be under the impression of following a rule. The private linguist then has no reason for saying that he has ever identified a private sensation for he cannot claim to be following a rule in the use of the word.

The sound that the private linguist utters has no meaning at all. For a word to have been given meaning it is necessary that it is used regularly. But because the private linguist cannot distinguish between seeming to follow the rules for the use of the sound, and actually following the rules, he has no right to claim that the sound is a word of language with meaning. It never gets any meaning at all but is just an

inarticulate sound. He is only under the impression of following a rule.

The ostensive definition can only be said to have been successful if the word, so defined, is used afterwards in a regular way. Only if this is done can it make sense to say that the word has been given any meaning. Thus although it seemed to be the case that the stage-setting might possibly be arranged in the private case it is now seen to be the case that it could not be. One of the features of the stage-setting was that the speaker be aware of what he is about to name, to know how to recognise it etc. But it is this requirement that cannot be satisfied for the private linguist can never know that he can recognise a sensation in the world; for, this to be so he must be able to use his name to refer to the sensation and to get his use right. But this is just what he cannot do, for he cannot distinguish between what seems to be the use and what is the use. Thus what he needed to know in order to be able to name his sensation, (i.e. to be able to identify his sensation as of a certain kind) the speaker cannot do. The stage-setting argument and the diary argument are thus complementary. The diary argument shows exactly why the stage can never be set in the private case.

It cannot ever be conceded that the private linguist did actually call the sensation X by the sound "X" consistently. That is that he managed to utter the sound "X" only when he was experiencing the sensation X quite by chance, by fluke as



it were. To concede this much may be thought to concede that his impression of a rule may as it happens coincide with what the rule should be. This much cannot be granted because until he manages to give meaning to the sound he utters when he is under the impression that he has a private sensation, nothing can be said about the private sensation, it is quite unintelligible. To say that the sound "X" may be uttered only when he experiences the sensation X, presupposes that the sensation X is an intelligible notion. But it would only be intelligible once something could be said about it, and this is exactly what cannot be done; for, it is the case that it cannot be named. Because of this the private sensation X is quite unintelligible, and is best forgotten.

One must, if one is following a rule, have checks which will be satisfactory in deciding if one is following the rule correctly or ~~un~~correctly. A rule must point in a direction, it must classify some actions as right, as subsumed under the rule, and others as wrong as being excluded by the rule. It is the exception, or the possibility of one, which proves the rule. Thus it is a necessary condition of following a rule that there are checks which will determine if the rule is being followed correctly or incorrectly. Otherwise one could not talk about following the rule. Of course the possibility of checking that the rule is being followed correctly is a logical one. It must be possible in principle to check that the rule is correctly followed. For example one could follow the rule that


whenever one sees an instantaneous flash of light one cries out "light". Now, one can make an application of the rule when one is alone, and nobody after is able to check that the rule was applied correctly. Yet it was possible for the application of the rule to be checked in principle for an observer could have observed the flash when one observed it. Thus it can be said that a rule was followed.

Because there is no possibility even in principle of checking on the private linguist's use of his sensation word, we cannot call his use of the word rule-governed. It is because of this that he cannot carry out the stage-setting, for it is necessary for him to be able to go on to use the word he is about to give ostensive definition to, if he is to give it a meaning at all in the ostensive definition. This means that he must know what he is about to name and to be able to identify it in different contexts. He must know everything about the meaning except just what word it is going to be named with. Thus once I know what a lawn-mower is, what it does and so on I can give it a name by ostensive definition. I can say "this is a 'lawn-mower'." But this only has sense if I know what it is, if I know what else is to count as a lawn-mower, and what a lawn-mower does. These things that I know are all I need to know in order that, once I decide on a word for the lawn-mower, I can go on to use the word regularly. In this sense the rules have to be known before the act of ostension will convey meaning. The naming is the very last

part of the procedure. And because there cannot be rules in the private case one cannot have this knowledge or this stage-setting.

The private linguist cannot have his rule independently checked when he claims that he is using his word in a rule-governed way. One obvious objection is that he will have a subjective justification for the use of his word and that this will be his memory. It will be objected that the private linguist will be able to remember that he called sensation-X by the word "X" on a previous occasion and that this memory claim will be a subjective justification for him to call what seems to be the sensation X by the word "X" once more.

But it should be clear that the memory is only a seeming memory. It can never be checked itself. In this way the private linguist may call an X-type sensation by the word "X", and then when faced by a Y-type sensation have a seeming-memory that he called a Y-type sensation "X" on the previous occasion and thus call this Y-type sensation an "X", thinking that he is using the word regularly. In other words the memory-claim cannot justify the application of the rule at all. What was necessary in order to check that the rule was being followed now becomes necessary in order to check that the memory is not just a seeming memory. Both of these checks in the private case cannot be carried out. To appeal to memory as a justification for following a rule simply switches the problem from a "seeming-rule" being all we have to a "seeming-memory" being



all we have to go on. Exactly the same check would be needed to check them both. To check that the linguist really was following a rule in the first case we would need to observe what he was using the word to refer to and to see that he used it consistently. To check that he really did remember what sensation he called "X" before, we would need to see exactly the same, that is what objects he used his words to refer to. In the private case this cannot be done. Thus there is no possible check that the private linguist could use in order to be certain that he uses his word regularly. He cannot check that he does so and neither can we. Thus there is no reason to hold that a private linguist who claims that he can refer to private sensations actually does so -- it should be concluded that such a person is under an impression of having given meaning to a word. His word can never be used in a rule-governed way because it never gets any meaning attached to it and is never used constantly to refer to one particular thing. The so called 'word' remains at the primitive level of a mere sound that he utters to himself. Whatever seems to be right will be right and this means that we cannot talk about right.

Once we have got this far we are now at the stage of denying any talk about private experiences. For necessarily private experiences cannot be named and if the words for private experiences have no meaning then it follows that the expression "private experience" has no meaning. Thus when we talked about

X-type sensations this was purely strategic. In fact no sense can be given to such words. They cannot be said to refer because to do this there would have to be a meaning that they had which would give the rules showing to what sort of thing they were supposed to refer. Thus in the above argument it was assumed that one could talk about private experiences and then shown that even if this were possible there would be no checks possible on the private linguist's use of his words. Of course it is not possible to talk about private experiences as we have now shown.

I take the argument from this section as being the most convincing one against the private language. It is this argument which shows just why ostensive definition could never confer meaning in the private case. Even if a speaker shared a public language he would not be able to give a name to a supposed private sensation, for his necessary knowledge of how to use the word to be given in the ostensive definition would only be based on impressions of rules. The speaker would only be under the impression that he gave the sound meaning and there would be no way of checking this impression. The other possibility that may enable the act of ostensive definition to be successful was the idea that the private linguist may have an innate power of using a sensation word. However exactly the same argument holds against this possibility: the rules for the use of the word will only be impressions of rules. The so-called meaning will be an impression of meaning. One could

argue that the private linguist could be born with the concept of his private experience. However, how would he know this and how would anybody else know it to be the case? He would not be able to distinguish between what seems to be so and what is so. However one imagines the situation the point is simply that for it to make sense for one to claim that a word has meaning one has to know that the word is governed by rules, and it is the latter which could never be done in the private case. This is not an argument from verificationism, but rather is one stemming from the theory of meaning as use. The basis is not that a statement's meaning is its mode of being verified but that for one to be able to claim that a word has a meaning one must know that it is used according to rules, and it is this which demands the possibility of a check being carried out.

E3. Following a rule: argument two


Wittgenstein also has another way of showing the impossibility of thinking that one follows a rule, or of, in other words, following a rule privately. This is formulated when he considers 'rules' in the Investigations, fifty paragraphs before he introduces the idea of a private language. His conclusion is:

And hence also "obeying a rule" is a practice. And to think one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately', otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it. (P.I. E202)

This section is not yet concerned with private sensations. But it does make claims about the nature of language. If he comes to a conclusion about what rules must be then this will have bearing on the question whether one could have private sensations and refer to them with words, because to refer to private sensations with words, the words will have to be used in a rule governed way. Thus if Wittgenstein's conclusion was that rules must be public, the possibility of talking about private sensations would be instantly denied because to do so, one would need private rules.

Wittgenstein has two arguments which are supposed to show the impossibility of following a rule privately. The first I will consider is the idea that one can justify one's following a rule by private consultation with oneself. The second has to do with knowing how to go on after considering a formula. I will consider the two in turn.

When one learns the use of a sensation-word how does he know how to go on and use it successfully? Is there any possible justification for the uses of the words that one makes? Consider the use of a sensation word "S". When the speaker uses the word how could he justify his use? -- Well, he could claim to remember that the sensation was called "S", and claim to have a remembered image of the sensation labelled "S" already. Then he simply compares the sensation and the image of the sensation. This could be a candidate for justification. However it does not give a justification which cannot



be asked to be justified. For one has still got an image which is named and one could be asked what justifies calling the image by this name. In fact if remembering brings up an image which one remembers the name of, why couldn't one have named the sensation straight away? The idea of the intermediary image just pushes the association mechanism back one stage. This is seen quite clearly if one is asked to remember an image of a sensation; one would not bring to mind an image of an image as an intermediary part of the remembering process, one would simply call the image by a name. (see E239 P.I.) Thus if by memory one means being able to bring to mind a paradigmatic image of the sensation being referred to by the word, this does not justify anything but pushes the problem of how one has associated two things from the case of the sensation and name to that of the image of the sensation and name.

The whole idea of justifying the use of words is mistaken. When one uses the word "red" one does not carry about an image of red to tell him how to use the word. This will not help him know what colour his image is, and thus does not really get one any further. One just uses the word to refer to the colour or image of the colour. When one is asked how he knows a colour is red:

"...it would be an answer to say "I have learnt English." (P.I. E381)

This is to say that one could not justify his describing a

colour as red, except by saying it is red. Justification for following a rule comes to an end. As Wittgenstein puts it:


If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."
(P.I. E217)

and again in section 219:

"When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule blindly."

The argument is that when one follows a rule there is no way in which he can justify his following the rule in the way he does. One just follows the rule. It should be noted that this point is different from being able to check that a rule is followed. The latter is done according to the way that people naturally follow the rule. This basic human agreement in the way a rule is to be followed is what counts as the right way to follow a rule. The way one individual follows a rule can thus be checked against the agreed way of following the rule. This will become clearer later.

The second argument is linked with this. It is designed to show that there is no formula of a rule that one could mentally entertain which could guide one to follow a rule in a particular way. The point is that any formula could always be variously interpreted. Thus, for example, the rule that one should add two to the preceding number and continue the series would naturally be interpreted by one starting with "0" and then continuing "2, 4, 6, 8..." But somebody else when he reached the number "1000" may carry "1,004, 1,008, 1012..."



In this case:

It comes natural to this person to understand our order with our explanations as we should understand the order: "Add 2 up to 1,000, 4 up to 2,000... and so on." (P.I. E185)

This is to say that the person finds it natural to follow a rule in a certain way when most people find it natural to follow it in another way. The point is that any formula could always have various interpretations. The following of a rule cannot be learnt by consulting a mental formula or by carrying out "mental calculations" which will tell one which way to follow the rule. When one follows a rule there cannot be private mental processes which tell one how to follow it. For the formula cannot explain the way the rule is followed, but rather the way the rule is followed explains the formula. For the connection between formula and the way it is followed is only established by the way human-beings naturally react to the formula. Wittgenstein sums it up:

"the rule is no use, it is what is explained, not what does the explaining." (Zettel E302)

This is to say that one can have a formula for a rule for instance " $S = n, n + 1, n + 2, \dots$ ", but this does not explain that we follow it by writing " $S = 1, 2, 3, 4, \dots$ ", but rather the way we follow it explains what the formula dictates. This is what Wittgenstein means by saying that the rule is explained, that the formulation of the rule is explained by the way the rule is followed and does not explain the way the rule is followed.

All of this steers one away from the possibility of "consulting your mind" in order for one to be able to follow or obey a rule. One cannot look at a formulation of the rule which then justifies each step of the rule to be taken. Rather there is a natural way of following rules. For the most part people are trained to follow rules but sometimes a rule can be devised. This happens whenever a new word is devised; for, the person who devises the word will also devise rules for its use. And the way that the rules are devised will depend upon his natural way of following the rule. Thus if an inventor creates a new device he will call it an "X" and will form the rule "All X's are to be called 'X'". The way that this rule of language is followed will depend upon the natural way that the inventor and the people in the language follow it. One does not interpret a rule. For any course of action could be interpreted as in accordance with the rule, because of the inexplicitness of the rule as formulated, and of course any course of action could be interpreted as in conflict with the rule.

Wittgenstein notes:

What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and going against it in actual cases. (P.I. E201)

A rule then must be a custom. There must be an accepted way of following a rule, something which counts as the norm. Without this then there would be no way of seeing what should count as following the rule. The private rule would have to rest on interpretation. It could not point in any direction

as there would be no custom or practice which would give a direction. To have a direction for the private rule there would have to be a way of following the rule which was accepted as the natural way to follow it, and with which people could naturally agree or disagree. Following the rule would be doing that which satisfied the custom of what counts as following the rule. Without such custom the rule would need to be interpreted which would mean that anything could count as following it. Wittgenstein says:

The word 'agreement' and the word 'rule' are related to one another, they are cousins. (P.I. E224)

A rule must be something that can be practiced, something that can be acted out in public. An individual can follow a rule only if there is a custom established by the natural way that people do obey the rule. One cannot think that one is following a rule privately because unless there is a custom or the possibility of one, the rule will not point in any direction, for whatever is done as a result of following it could be subsumed under it, under one of the interpretations that the formula will have. It is not the case that there must be a pre-existing custom if one is to follow a rule for one can in some cases invent a rule. But when one does this, there must be a natural way that other people will follow this rule, that is there must be the possibility of a custom, some norm which will give a way that the rule is to be followed. Thus there must at least be the possibility that other people will agree in the way that one decides a new rule is to be followed. And this

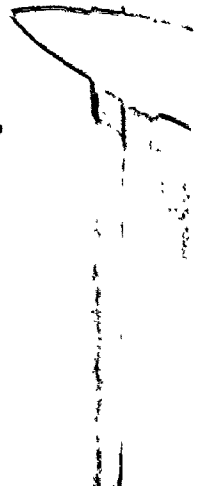
cannot be the case with the private rule. There cannot be a pre-existing custom which establishes the correct way of following the rule and there cannot be the possibility of such a custom.

Thus what ultimately counts is that other human-beings in the culture will agree in the way a rule is followed. If the rule is established then people can be trained to follow it in a certain way, though the success of the training will depend on the people being trained having the same natural reaction to the rule. If the rule is new then people must agree in the way that they will follow it, they must share the same natural reaction to the rule. There must be at least the possibility of agreement or a custom, which will count as the way the rule is to be obeyed. Otherwise one would have to fall back on interpretation.

This is not to maintain an extreme form of relativism as if people will decide on what they will count as following a rule. The responses that we make to the world, to the rules we encounter, are not chosen by us freely, they are not opinions that we decide to adopt. As Wittgenstein says:

So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and false?... That is not agreements in opinion but in forms of life. (P.I. E 242)


The individual does not choose the way he responds to the world, does not choose his use of language. The relativism -- if there -- is not of an extreme nature. The shared forms of life, the shared reactions and responses to the world are a



necessary condition of one's being able to follow a rule.

Such an agreement, or the possibility of such agreement is a necessary condition for a word to have meaning. And this rules out the possibility of a private language, for there is by definition no possibility of agreement in the private case.

Thus Wittgenstein does not make it a necessary condition of a word's having meaning that there already exists a practice which establishes the way the word is to be used, and that one is trained to use the word in that way. This undoubtedly is the case with most of our uses of words. But he does allow that new words can be formed in the language, and thereby rules for the use of these words established, providing that it is done in the social setting, that is, where there is the possibility of other people agreeing in the use of the new word and hence there is the possibility of there being a custom according to which the word is correctly used. The inventor of the word will use it according to the way he finds natural to use it, and when other people acquire the use of the word they will follow the rules of its use in a natural way. This natural way of following a rule is the way that the custom is established -- the custom is the way that we naturally respond to the rule. And such a custom could only arise in the social setting of a community. The shared responses to the rule are what Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Thus one could follow a rule privately in the sense that as it happens nobody else can follow the rule, because for example they are not present



and the rule has just been invented. But one could not follow a rule which was necessarily private in the sense that nobody else could follow it in principle. For in such a case there is no possibility of a custom establishing the right way to follow the rule -- whatever the person trying to follow the rule does will be under some possible interpretation of the rule. The rule will not point in any direction.

It may be objected that the person who tries to follow the private rule may set up a custom or convention and then follow the rule in this way. But nothing could count as setting up a convention in this way for whatever the person did, he would think that it would be in agreement with the convention. A convention only exists where people agree in the way things are to be done, or where there is the possibility of such agreement. The person in question may devise a formula of his rule and then do something which he calls following the rule. But this is not following the rule for whatever he does could be under a certain interpretation of the formula said to be following the rule. He will be free to do anything he wants to. There will only be a correct way of following the rule if there is a way of following it that is not based on interpretation. But for this to be so there must be a natural way of following the rule, and this means that there is a way of following it that people agree with, that is a custom or convention must be possible. The private linguist cannot set up a private custom for whatever seemed to him to be the custom

would be. For in his private world there would be nothing for him to check that the custom was being followed. whatever seemed to him to be the custom would be. The rule would only be a "seeming-rule" acted out in accordance with a "seeming convention". For one to have a convention this can only be done if people agree on what is to count as the convention. A convention is not just what strikes one as being the way to do something. Rather it is necessarily public, formed by the agreement of human-beings.

If there could be no custom or convention in the private linguist's private world, and we have argued that there could not be, then there could be no private rule. If then, naming a private object involves the application of private rules, one could never do such an activity of naming. And of course it would involve private rules.

The criticism naturally arises as to the possibility of a systematic error in the use of public words. We argued against the private language by claiming that in the language there would be no distinction between seeming to follow rules of the language and actually following them. It has now been argued that the correct way of following a rule is established by the way that human-being agree the rule should be followed. But is this agreement sufficient to establish that a rule is being followed? For instance although everybody agrees in the way a rule is to be followed over a period of time it may occur that everybody makes the same mistakes at the same time and

so no rule is really followed at all. Thus on Monday everybody may agree that red things are to be called "red" but on Tuesday everybody may make a mistake and call green things "red". This would go unnoticed. Thus people may systematically make mistakes in their application of the "rule", such that although upon each application of the "rule" there is agreement that such a way is the way the "rule" should be followed, nobody is really following rules at all. Everybody is only under the impression of following a rule because everybody makes the same mistakes at the same time.

This criticism makes use of the word 'mistake'. To use the word 'mistake' one must have a use for the word 'right' and for the word 'rule'. A mistake can only occur when there is a right way of doing something and if there is a right way of doing something then there must be a rule saying that one should do whatever it is in that way (i.e. the right way). Thus if driving on the right hand side of the road is the right way to drive then there is the rule "people should drive on the right hand side of the road."

Now the criterion upon which we do decide the right way to follow a rule is the agreement of human-beings. This is the only possible criterion that one could use to decide if a rule is being followed correctly. Thus if the criticism is correct then there is no way of finding out if a rule is being followed correctly. There is, in this case, no use for the words "rule", "right" or "wrong". But this means that these

words are meaningless. However the criticism is couched in the very terms that it implies are meaningless. The criticism was of course that there may be no rules ever in a public language because everybody could be systematically mistaken in their application of the rules. The conclusion is reached that if the criticism were true, it would be meaningless. It cannot therefore be a valid criticism.

For one to use the words "rule", "right" and "wrong" there must be criteria upon which we decide the right way to follow a rule. Without such criteria and hence without the possibility of use, the words lose all meaning.


It is possible for one person to make a mistake when he tries to follow a rule, because we know what the right way to follow the rule is. This is given by the way human-beings agree the rule is to be followed. It is possible for everybody to make a mistake at one time. For we will still have a way of following the rule that is right. This will be the way that people generally agree the rule is to be followed. But it is impossible for everybody to be mistaken all the time, for if so, one would not be able to talk of mistakes at all for nothing could establish what the right way was.

The criticism is thus met by pointing out its incoherence. For it to be a criticism there must be uses for the words it uses. The word 'mistake' must have a meaning. But if what the criticism claimed were true there could be no use for this word. But this would mean that the criticism could

not be true, for one of the words it used would be meaningless, and the criticism would have no meaning. In fact if the criticism were true then none of its words would have any meaning for there would be no rules at all for the use of any words!

In the case of the private language we could entertain the possibility that it had no rules for the alleged use of its words, for even if this were so, we could still give sense to the word "rule". But in the public language we cannot entertain the possibility that there may be no rules for if we did the word "rules" would be meaningless for it would have no use. To entertain the possibility of there being no rules in the public language would be to commit oneself to a gross incoherence; one would be using the word "rule" with one hand and taking it away with the other.

The criticism thus fails simply because it presupposes that the words "rule", "right" and "mistake" do have sense, and this can only be so if human agreement is sufficient to establish that a rule is being followed correctly. If it were not, then nothing could establish the right way to follow a rule and one could then not talk about rules. But this is just what the critic tried to do!



E4. The "same"

This argument against a private language is related to the argument in section three. When we imagine the private linguist naming his sensation, we imagine him having an X-type sensation and naming it as an 'X' and then having the same sensation again and naming it "X" also. But the objection is raised here as to whether the private linguist can have the concept "the same". The Wittgensteinian move is to argue that "the same" is not a natural relation which exists 'per se', but that what we call the same depends on our customs of what we regard as the same, in the way that to follow a rule depends on the possibility of a custom existing. But it is natural to object here that surely the same is the same, it is independent of institutions or customs. Wittgenstein asks this:

But isn't the same at least the same?
 We seem to have an infallible paradigm of identity in the identity of a thing with itself. I feel like saying "Here at any rate there can't be a variety of interpretations. If you are seeing a thing you are seeing identity too." Then are two things the same when they are what one thing is? (P.I. E215)


The link with the argument in section three becomes clear. There it was argued that any rule as formulated could have an endless variety of interpretations and that it is a necessary condition of somebody's following a rule that there is a natural way of following the rule, which results in a custom for the way that the rule is to be followed based on the agreement of the people who follow the rule. The case with "the same" seems to be the test-case for such a claim for it seems at

least plausible that if the rule is to call all sensations the same as the one you mark by a single name, then there would be only one interpretation of this rule, and that the rule dictates how it is to be followed. Thus if this were so then it would seem that one could have a private rule, for the rule would dictate how to go on and there would be no need for customs or for the possibility of a custom establishing the correct way to follow a rule.

The Wittgensteinian reply is that our use of the word "same" is based on convention established by a community. Thus he states:

The use of the word "rule" and the use of the word "same" are interwoven. (P.I. E225)

This can easily be shown. When one follows a rule one will already know how to use the rule on more than one occasion. Consider the rule: "All X-type objects are to be called 'X's'". When one follows this rule one will need to identify an X-type object and call it "X", and be able to identify another X-type object, one which is the same kind as before, and call it "X", and do this 'ad infinitum'. But this involves an understanding of what is to count as the same kind of object. And so if Wittgenstein thinks that following rules presupposes a custom to establish how the rule is to be followed, then by making this claim he will be holding that what we count as the same is established by convention. For it is what we count as the same that determines subsequent uses of the rule.



It follows that just because it is natural for us to call two things the same, and thus to have established a custom for what we call the same (a custom is formed by the way we naturally react to the world) it is not necessary for another community to call the same things the "same" as we do. People from a different culture may regard two things as different that we regard as the same. If we look at the use of our word "red" we see that we call different shades of red the same colour. The various shades have resemblances to one another, but nothing absolutely is common to them all. In fact, if the first shade resembles the second, and the second resembles the third and so on until the ninth resembles the tenth, we may call all ten shades "red" and yet the first and tenth shades may not have any resemblance at all. A different culture may easily call all the shades that we call "red" different colours. This exemplifies the conventionality of the use of the word the "same".

But we begin to feel uncertain because this seems to play on what one is going to call a colour, that is how general a term one is going to make it (i.e. the word "colour"). Surely if one restricts the discussion to a specific shade of a colour for example, then it seems hard to conceive that two cultures may use the words "same shade of a colour" differently.

Let us consider a shade of red called "ruby-red". Is there more than one way in which the word "ruby-red" could be applied? That is, is there more than one possibility of what

counts as the same shade of ruby-red? Initially it seems as if there could only be one way of using the words--when one sees ruby-red one will call it "ruby-red" and that seems to be all there is to it. But the picture becomes more complicated when we change the setting. What if a tribe only believed that colours could exist on one side of the river that runs through their land, because God only coloured one side of the land. They never use the concept of colour when they are on the uncoloured side. Now a Westerner would clearly describe an object as ruby-red if he saw it as being that colour, whichever side of the river he was on. Yet a man from the tribe would not describe any object on the "uncoloured" side of the river as being ruby-red in colour, for he could not conceive of the land in terms of any colour at all. Another similar example is that a tribe see a telephone fall to the ground. We would describe its colour as ruby-red. But because they see it fall from the sky they think it is a God. To them gods are not coloured. Thus they do not describe it as being of the colour "ruby-red". Whereas a Westerner, crawling out of the jungle and seeing the telephone would say "this is coloured ruby-red." Now the people in the tribe do use the word "ruby-red" to describe the colours of objects. Thus they may describe the colour of a flower as ruby-red. But whereas we would say that the flower and the telephone had the same colour, people from the tribe would not. Thus there is indeed more than one way in which one can go on to use the words, "this is the same

shade."¹

It is convention in England to call the octave jumps of a note the same note. The Americans do not, but rather use the term pitch-class to express the concept of all pitches with the same letter name. Thus people in England call notes the same which Americans call different because they have different conventions.

In his article "About the Same" (L. Wittgenstein, Philosophy and Language, Ed. Ambrose and Lazerowitz). Pitcher gives an example of the "Chinese Mile." One Chinese mile is the same as another even if they are of different lengths. The longer mile is measured downhill and the shorter one uphill. Yet in the west we would call the two miles which the Chinese call the same, different.

The point is that what one calls the same will depend on features of the culture which uses the language. Different cultures will have different customs and hence use the word (the same) in possibly different ways. Even when one is talking about the same and going on to call the same things by one name, more than one way of going on could result. The way that one does go on will depend on the custom of what is to be regarded as the same.

In the necessarily private case we have already argued that there could be no custom established. Thus one could not have a use for the word "same" in the private case, for nothing

¹I am indebted to William Burns for this point.

could establish when two things were to count as being the same. The private linguist could utter the sounds "these are the same" whenever he pleased. The word "same" would never enter his language for the rules governing the use of the word could only be impressions of rules. As Wittgenstein might have put it: whatever seemed to him to be the "same" would be and that means that we can't talk about same here. The word "same" could only be a meaningless sound to the speaker; there could be no rules for its use.

E5. Language as Functional

This is a fairly minor argument used by Wittgenstein. His view is that language has a "raison d'etre" and that this is because it is used to do things, it is basically functional. He says: "Language is an instrument." (P.I. E569)

Language exists because language is used to do things in the world. Thus in language one gives orders, warnings, reports events, describes scenes etc. (see E23). These activities all have uses in helping human-beings live in the world. It was the functional aspect of language that Wittgenstein wanted to illustrate by use of his term "language game". And yet the private language does not serve any obvious purpose, and it is hard to see how it could do. For we do not even have a human being but a sort of disembodied soul or ego that entertains these mysterious ethereal private objects.

What purpose could the ego's naming his sensations have? It is hard to think of one.

But perhaps the private linguist's language does not have any function. He just describes his sensations because he is bored. He just describes his sensations when they occur because he finds it interesting to do so. Although Wittgenstein's remarks do seem right, that our language is connected with our practical activities, the argument is inconclusive because the private linguist may use language for his own aesthetic pleasure. In this case the arguments against the private language must rest on the arguments I discuss in sections one to four.

E6. Conclusion

It has been concluded that Wittgenstein's arguments to show the impossibility of a private language are valid. Because of the public nature of following a rule, and the insufficiency of bare ostensive definition, with a private-language we will have no more than a "seeming-language" with "seeming-rules". The private linguist will be simply under the impression that he is using words in a rule-governed way. There is never any reason to suppose that the sign privately associated with the supposed sensation has any meaning at all. For the sign to have meaning it would have to have rules of use and in the private case there is no possibility of such rules at all. The tendency to think that there could be a

private language arises because we tend to think that by being associated with the sensation in the first instance, the signs become meaningful. This is not so; at the stage of the first association of word and sensation the word has no meaning--it is only after the speaker can use the word according to the rules of its use that the word has meaning. Thus all the private linguist does is to utter a sound when he thinks he has a sensation. The second time he makes the sound it may well refer to something completely different and the linguist may not know. He could only know this if the sound had a meaning, but this is just what it does not have. Thus he can only be under the impression of having given the sound a meaning and his use of the word is only governed by impression of rules. For it is possible that he would use one sound to refer to different sensations on every occasion that he uses the word, and that he should only think that he uses it regularly. For the sound never acquires any meaning, and it would only be if it did that the speaker could know that he used it wrongly. An inarticulate sound can't be used rightly or wrongly. In the private case the word never could acquire any meaning for there could never be rules for its use.

Thus so far, in the necessarily private language, one could never give any meaning to necessarily private sensation words. In this 'language' no word has any meaning at all. If sensations are necessarily private objects which we can describe with words then they must be described by words in a

public language. It is this possibility I will consider in the next chapter. If it turns out that nothing could be said about the supposed sensation as a necessarily private object of inner sense in the public language, then the "reductio ad absurdum" will have been successful. For if we want to be able to use language to "hook" onto sensations, we will have to devise another theory of what a sensation is. For if it was a private object of inner sense, independent of all behaviour and expression, then no word could be used to refer to it in any way. Any terms allegedly connected with it would be without sense. However to complete the "reductio ad absurdum" it will be necessary to ask if words can refer to such private objects in a public language.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF RADICAL PRIVACY IN A PUBLIC LANGUAGE

Wittgenstein has, so we have concluded, quite rightly denied the possibility of a private language. The argument of course took the form of a "reductio ad absurdum", namely: postulate the idea of a private language and then show that it would not be a language at all. What the argument does show is that if sensations were private objects that each of us could inwardly sense, then we could never say anything about them and that they could never become objects of knowledge to us. This is because it is taken as being a necessary condition of knowing something to be the case that one can use language to describe whatever it is that is the case. What one knows has to be describable in words. The attack on the private language is one that I take to be primarily concerned with the metaphysics of sensations, that is to say with what a sensation is. Now Wittgenstein's aim is to try to show that if we construe a sensation as an object then it no longer remains something that can be intelligible to us because language could never "hook on to it." But he has so far only shown that objects of a necessarily private nature could not be given meaning in a private language. It still needs to be argued

that words of a public language cannot have a private reference. For it is possible, though not necessarily the case, that there are conditions pertaining in the public case which may ensure that the private object can be given meaning, these conditions not having been able to be met in the private language. To this extent there arises the possibility of a distinction between a strongly private language and a weakly private language. The strongly private language is a necessarily private language of the sort that we have just considered and denied the possibility of. This is a language which is necessarily incommunicable, it being necessarily the case that the words of the language are only spoken by one person. A weakly private language is a language which is public in the sense that the words of the language are shared by other language users, people can be taught the use of the words of the language, but, it is claimed, it is possible that with certain of the words there is a private reference. Thus the word "pain" has a public use, people are taught how to use the word "pain" publically, and yet, it is claimed, the state that I refer to when I say "I am in pain" may be different from the state that you refer to when you say "I am in pain." The claim is that in a public language (for example our own language) words may refer to different things in different people, despite the fact that the same word is used by the different people to do so.

The idea is that we all have our own unique private

object of sensation, which is only contingently connected with the way that we behave. The weakly private linguist claims that because the language is public we must be able to teach each other to use the words of the language. This means that the word must be taught with the aid of public criteria.

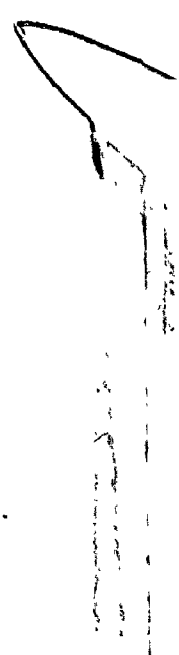
For if I can teach you to use the word "pain", I must tell you to use the word by reference to public phenomena. Thus, for instance, I will teach you to call somebody else in pain when he is screaming, holding his bloody arm, etc. But nevertheless, it is claimed, once each of us has been taught to use the word in the light of the public contexts, we can then extend the use of the word to refer to our private sensory objects. And it is claimed each of us may have a different sensory object. The possibility manifests itself that your sensation of pain is different from mine.

It is necessary for people to have the same kind of sensation-behaviour, if they are to use a sensation word in a common language. But because the sensation is treated by the supporter of the weakly private language as an inner private object which is only contingently related with its expression, it becomes a possibility that when I scream and bleed after a stone hits me what I experience is different from what you experience when you scream and bleed after being hit by a stone. Because we both have the same behavioral expression we can each describe the other as being in pain, but as regards the experience itself it may be possible that each of us has a

different sensation of pain.

Providing that each of our necessarily private sensations is expressed or has a behavioural accompaniment which is shared by other members of the community then we can use the same words. But the possibility remains that each one of us has unique private experiences. The relevant difference between this case and the case of a strongly private language is that here speakers are taught the use of words according to public criteria which means there are public rules. They then go on to use the words to refer to private states, extrapolating the use as it were, whereas in the private language the whole use of the words had to be invented. I hope to show that the distinction is illusory and that to incorporate such necessarily private reference into the use of a word, even when it has a preexisting public use, is to fall back to the problems that we found insurmountable in the case of a strongly private language.

The supporter of such a weakly private language then claims that despite the fact that we share words in a public language and that we can both say "I am in pain", for example, our sensations as experiences may be quite different. My experience of pain may be different from your experience of pain. The question "could my sensation of pain be different from yours?" is answered in the affirmative by the weakly private language theorist. When we answer such a question we have to know what sort of question it is. It is not an empiri-



cal question for it is part of the 'picture' of the weakly private linguist's universe that the sensations everybody feels are necessarily only contingently related to public behaviour or expression. No amount of behavioural psychology is going to help us answer the question for no amount of observation of behaviour can tell us anything about the sensation qua private object of experience. Thus if we ask "could my experience of red be different from yours" to try to answer this by observing behaviour will be fruitless. For the weakly private linguist accepts that we both respond verbally to an object's colour by saying "that's red" and that we both make the same discriminations in the world with red things (for example we both identify a red object out of a group of coloured objects). Nevertheless, despite this tallying of behavioural reactions, the question is do we have the same experience? Is the sensation I experience the same as the one that you experience? And our behaviour cannot help us to answer this question, for even if we behave in the same ways, the experiences could be different, for they are only contingently connected with the behaviour, and the experience that I have when I manifest pain-behaviour may be different from the experience you have when you manifest pain-behaviour. It is also taken as necessarily true that sensations are unsharable, which is to say that it is impossible for me to experience your sensation of pain. Thus no amount of behavioural observation will enable the question to be answered and no amount of introspection

either, for it is impossible for one to experience another's sensation alongside his own and to compare them.

Wittgenstein's method of answering the question is to show its senselessness. He does this by showing that one could not refer to a private sensation in the way that the weakly private language theorist thinks one could. Thus the word "private sensation" can be given no use in the language and has no meaning. The question "is my private experience the same as yours" becomes a senseless question because the words "private experience" have no meaning. Secondly it can be shown that on the analysis of meaning as use, the word "same" is without meaning in the above question because there could be no use for it, even if one could talk about private experiences. Thus the question is attacked twice, once by showing that the words "private experience" have no meaning and once by showing that the use of the word "same" has no meaning. The latter would still show the question as senseless even if one could give sense to the words "private experience."

However before I give Wittgenstein's arguments which show the question to be senseless and which shows the distinction between the strongly private language and the weakly private language to be illusory, I want to give examples of philosophers who think the distinction may exist. I do this to prevent any accusation that I have simply set up a straw-man and then knocked him down.

Helen Hervey in "Private Language and Private Sensations"

asks:

...does it follow that the public language has no such private reference if we are convinced that it is logically impossible for an individual in isolation to develop a private language? I would suggest that it does not follow.

(The Private Language Argument, ed. Jones, p. 93)

Strawson in his article "Exposition and Criticism of Wittgenstein's Investigations" argues that each of us has a private language of sensations when we use our public language. He admits that for communication to be possible the words used to refer to sensations, "must involve allusions to what can be seen and touched; for we speak a common language" (Ibid, p. 30), but nevertheless he insists that the sensation is itself identified privately, separately from any public criteria. In fact Strawson believes that as well as our public language having sensation words with private reference, there could be a strongly private language (for confirmation of this view see Malcolm p. 38, ibid).

Dilman devotes much of his appendix to the question could my sensation of red be different from yours. He claims as an alleged possibility:

And if we were each to get different colour impressions when we look at the same things, and came to attach the same colour word to them, we could each attach a different meaning to the same word.

(Ilham Dilman: Induction and Deduction, p. 210)

The question is then basically that if sensations were private objects of the inner sense could we refer to them in a public language? This of course would make it possible that we all had different sensations of pain or of red. I will firstly

give Wittgenstein's arguments that show that no words could ever be used to name necessarily private sensations even in a public language, and thus that because no use could ever be given to the words for private sensations such terms are without meaning.

Wittgenstein's first argument is that the claim that there are private experiences is counter-intuitive. Wittgenstein presents this line of attack from sections 273-277 of the Investigations. He asks us to look at the blue of the sky and claims:

When you do it spontaneously without philosophical intentions -- the idea never crosses your mind that this impression of colour belongs only to you.

(P.I. E275)

We all use the word "blue" and assume that when we do so we all refer to the same colour -- that is the colour of the sky in this example. It never occurs to one, except in philosophical moments, that the word might have some private reference.

This argument based on the counter-intuitive nature of the claim that sensations may be necessarily private objects such that we all may experience different sensations, that for example my sensation of pain may be different from yours, is strengthened when one begins to realise the absurd possible consequences of the view that sensation words may have private reference. If this were so not only might two people just experience different sensations of pain but what one person experiences when he sees red another person may experience

when he claims he has toothache. Thus it might be possible with two people, 'A' and 'B', that the following could occur.

Person	Verbal description	private experience
A	"I see red"	X
A	"I have toothache"	Y
B	"I see red"	Y
B	"I have toothache"	X

All that is needed for us to share the same words for our different experiences is that when we both say we see red we both have the same expression or behavioural accompaniment of sensations, which may themselves be different. Thus as long as we both act in the same way, we can use the same word to refer to totally different experiences.


However arguments based on the counter-intuitive nature of certain views are not in themselves convincing to the opponent, who could simply accept that his views are surprising, but nevertheless claim them to be true. Intuition can help to direct the way we will argue, but we must still present arguments.

Wittgenstein has a substantial argument against the idea of private reference in a public language. The argument's aim is to show that to refer to such a private object would demand an act of private ostensive definition. For the public use of the sensation word presents rules for the use of the word which link the word up with the behavioural expression of

the sensation. But when the use of the word is extended to refer to the private experience there are not, and cannot be, any public rules to regulate the use of the sensation-word when it refers to the private sensation. The only possible rules that could link up the public word to the private experience would have to be private rules. Thus the supporter of the weakly private language holds that each speaker uses the words of the public language based on public criteria, and then eventually extends the use of the word to refer to his private experience in an act of naming which is private. It, of course, has to be private because only one person can know what his experience is -- he is completely alone. Now the weakly private language supporter would want to hold that such a private act of naming could be successful because the speaker carrying out the act of naming shares a public language. He is trained to say that he is in pain based on his public expression of pain and then one day notices this private sensation that always accompanies his expression and decides to name it. On Wittgenstein's terms, the advocate of the weakly private language argues that the stage can be set for the necessary act of naming. But as has been pointed out the stage is not completely set by the public use of the sensation word, for the use of the word to refer to the private sensation has to be accomplished according to private rules which the speaker devises. Thus for him to be able to use the word to refer to his private sensation he must know just what that sensation is and be able

to identify it on different occasions in such a way that once he links up the sensation word with the sensation he knows how to go on to use it to refer to the private sensation in a regular way.

But how can the speaker have this private knowledge of how to go on to use the sensation word to refer to the private sensation? For there will be only grounds for saying that he had successfully named his private sensation if he or other people could know that he went on to use the word regularly. Yet in the same way that the private linguist of the strongly private language would never be said to have this knowledge of how to go on to use the word according to private rules, neither can the speaker of the weakly private language be said to have the knowledge. It is a necessary condition of his having named his private sensation successfully that he will be able to go on to use the word regularly to refer to the private sensation. Yet there will be no checks possible to make sure that he does know how to go on to use the word regularly and thus no grounds for saying that he has ever named the private sensation in the first place. He will only be under the impression that he has named his sensation; whatever seems to be the private sensation will be. There would be no way to establish if the speaker was actually following a rule or only seeming to follow a rule. Thus whatever seemed to him to be the private sensation would be. And this means that no reference has been made at all. The private sensation



as a referent would never have been named at all by the speaker. This would only have been done once the speaker could go on to use the sensation word to refer to the sensation regularly. But this could never be the case because there would be no checks on the speakers subsequent use of the sensation word, and whatever seemed to him to be the sensation would be, which would mean that there would be no private rule at all, only a seeming rule. And because the private sensation would mean nothing to the speaker, even after the naming process, it would be possible that he would go on to use the sensation word to refer to entirely different things, and be only under the impression that he was using the word regularly. So the private sensation could never get a foothold even in the public language as a private referent.

Wittgenstein sums up the argument:

Always get rid of the idea of the private object in this way: assume that it constantly changes, but that you do not notice the change because your memory constantly deceives you. (P.I. p. 207)

In another section of the Investigations Wittgenstein asks us to imagine that a person constantly failed to remember just what his private sensation was so that he called different things by the name, but still used the word in a way that fitted in with the usual presuppositions and symptoms of the sensation. That is he uses the word still as we all do, in the same public contexts:

Here I should like to say: a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is

not part of the mechanism. (P.I. E271)

The wheel that can be turned without effecting anything else is the private sensation. In the use of the sensation word, it becomes irrelevant. Thus if a person was under the illusion that he had a private sensation of pain and tried to name it he might go on to be under the impression that he called all sorts of supposed private things by the name, but as long as he used the word according to the public criteria for its use, then it would still have meaning. Hence the private sensation just doesn't come into the use of the word "pain" at all.

The argument seems quite valid. To argue that alongside the public use of a word there may be a private reference still makes it necessary for a private act of naming to be carried out. But such a private act could only be said to have been successfully completed once the speaker could go on to use the word according to the private rule. But because there are no possible checks on the way the speaker goes on to use his word to refer to the private sensation, whatever seems to him to be the private sensation will be. Thus it would be possible that he will go on to use the word according to no regular use at all, but be under the impression that he used it to refer to a supposed private sensation. He cannot be said to go on to use the word according to its private rules because he will only be under the impression of following a rule. Thus the object as private sensation is never a

referent at all, for if it was successfully named the person naming it must know how to go on to use the word regularly, and this can never be achieved when one is trying to name a necessarily private object.

The conclusion is then that the idea of a private sensation turns out to be without meaning. One could not name such an object which was necessarily only contingently related to public behaviour even in a public language. And one cannot do this because to do so would be to insist on being able to successfully carry out a private act of ostensive definition. This was just why the necessarily private language proved to be illusory. This is why a public language does not help one to try to argue for the existence of private objects. For the words of the public language could never be used to refer to private sensations. The arguments which ruled out the impossibility of the strongly private language rule out the possibility of a weakly private language in exactly the same way. This is why the distinction between the two types of private language is illusory, for they are both on exactly the same level in terms of trying to use words to refer to necessarily private objects. An argument against one of the kinds of language would count in exactly the same way against the other. There is no relevant difference as far as the possibility of privacy is concerned between the necessarily and the weakly private languages. What counts against one counts against the other.

There is another way of looking at the problem which is not argued explicitly by Wittgenstein, but which is clearly Wittgensteinian. The supporter of the weakly private language wants to hold that because sensation words have a necessarily private reference it is possible that what two people experience when they both claim that they see red is different and that it is possible that what I experience when I say that I see red is the same as what you experience when you say that you have a head-ache.

• However do such comparisons make sense? Are the uses of the words "same" and "different" intelligible when applied to private sensations? For it is impossible to carry out such comparisons when one is talking about private sensations. Nobody can ever become aware of somebody else's sensations and compare it to his own; the sensations are necessarily private. In fact in order to ask the question "is your sensation of pain the same as mine" one would need to know what he was comparing. But it is the other person's experience that one can never know anything about. Thus one could never carry out the comparison of two people's experiences, and more than this, one could never know what he was supposed to be comparing. Thus how could the idea of a comparison of private experiences ever have any sense? If such comparison is impossible, and nobody could ever know what he was comparing, and nobody could ever have any idea of what such a comparison would amount to, then what uses of the words the "same" and "different" could there

ever be? It seems there could never be any uses of the words in this context and thus they could have no meaning in this context.

For to be able to ask if two things are the same one needs to be able to compare them, and to know what he is comparing. There will have to be criteria of identity which will establish if the two things are the same. None of these conditions is satisfied in the comparison of private experiences. The point can best be made in this way: when one asks if one's private experience is the same as somebody else's one needs to have an idea of what somebody else's private experience could be. Yet one can make no sense of the words "another person's private experience" for this is something that he can never be aware of. The person's private experience is a private thing that only he can talk about. Nobody else can talk about it and thus nobody else can make any comparisons with it. To ask if my private experience of pain is the same as your private experience of pain is the same as asking if my private experience of pain is the same as "XIZIX", that is a sound without any meaning to me at all.

This argument thus shows that any so-called comparison between people's private experiences would be meaningless because each person's private experience would only have significance to him alone. He could say nothing about anybody else's. This leaves open the possibility that people can carry out private acts of reference to their private sensations in

a public language. It only points out that each person could only talk about his own private experience. But this possibility is ruled out in the previous argument where it was shown that no reference to private sensations could be made in the public language. Thus a person could not even talk to himself about his private experiences. In fact the term "private experience" is meaningless. This has been shown by arguing that if there were private experiences one could never get language to hook onto such objects; one could never use language to refer to them. There would be absolutely nothing one could say about them. This has now shown to be the case in the strongly private language and in the weakly private language. In both cases the procedure was to assume for the sake of argument that there could be such private experiences and then to show that one could never give such objects any meaning. The idea of a private experience of pain is senseless, such an experience could never be given meaning and be spoken about. The idea of a private experience in general is senseless, there is no meaning whatsoever to talk about private experiences. There could be no use for the supposed word "private experience", for it would depend on "private rules" which are not rules at all.

Thus if the notion of a private experience is unintelligible and one can thus say nothing meaningful about it, a sensation cannot be a private experience for one can use

language to talk about sensations. Sensations are not then necessarily private objects of inner-sense. This has been the result of the first two chapters. The method has been to assume that sensations are such private objects and then to show that if they are, one can say nothing about them and that the words for them are senseless, without meaning. But of course sensations can be spoken about, language can be used to refer to them, and so sensations, whatever they are, cannot be necessarily private objects. With the success of the "reductio ad absurdum" we can pass onto Wittgenstein's positive view of sensations.

CHAPTER III

WITTGENSTEIN'S VIEW OF SENSATIONS

The conclusion we have reached from chapters one and two is that sensations cannot be private objects, for the very idea of a private object is unintelligible. The question to be answered in this chapter is that if sensations are not private objects then what are they? The answer is given by Wittgenstein in the Investigations. However the Wittgensteinian view is fairly subtle, and due to this, is often confused with behaviourism. I take it, from what has been said already that it is evident that Wittgenstein is not a dualist if by dualism one means the philosophical view that entails that states of mind have no necessary connection with bodily states. In fact I have never heard of anybody ever accusing Wittgenstein of being a dualist.

More often he is accused of being a behaviourist. Thus we find Mundle accusing Wittgenstein of being a subtle behaviourist, not denying that sensations exist but of holding the thesis that:

"Nothing can be said about private experiences."

(C. W. K. Mundle: "Behaviourism and the Private Language Argument", The Private Language Argument, p.104.)

Mundle commits Wittgenstein to the thesis of linguistic beha-

viourism which states that sensations do exist but that we can say nothing about them. They would then become unintelligible objects to us. It is obvious that Wittgenstein would never make a claim with such a distinction between what there is and what we can say, for we can only make a claim about something's existing if we can say something about it! However the transparency of Mundle's error is frightening for he has taken what Wittgenstein says about the sensation as a private object to be Wittgenstein's view of sensations. Part of Mundle's evidence for what he says comes from Wittgenstein's saying:

A sensation is not a something but not a nothing either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. (P.I. E304)

This means that if you take a sensation to be a private object then because of the private language argument you can say nothing about it. But if this is so then Wittgenstein claims you would be just as well off by denying there was anything there in the first place. Wittgenstein states the hypothetical nature of the case quite clearly:

...if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of "object and designation" the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. (P.I. E293)

In other words it is only if we regard a sensation as a private object that we can say nothing about it and may, in fact, just as well deny its existence. The lesson is not to accept the grammar that tries to force its way upon us. Wittgenstein expresses the situation admirably:

The 'private experience' is a degenerate construction of our grammar...And this grammatical monster now fools us; when we wish to do away with it, it seems as though we denied the existence of an experience. ("Private Experience and Sense-Data," The Private Language Argument, p. 270)

Wittgenstein is not averse to talking about sensations, dreams, images etc. Malcolm gives good textual evidence for this claim:

Wittgenstein discusses reports of dreams (Inv. II. p. 222) and descriptions of mental pictures (e.g. Inv. E367)...description of a sensation of touch, of a mood (Inv. E24)
(Malcolm, "Exposition and Criticism of Wittgenstein's Investigations" The Private Language Argument, pp. 33-34)

In the Investigations Wittgenstein does not deny that we can talk about sensations and feelings etc. All he does deny is a certain model of what a sensation is, that is he denies that a sensation is a private object detected by inner-sense. Wittgenstein states perfectly clearly:

"We do not want to deny mental processes."
(P.I. E308)

The problem becomes this: if Wittgenstein was neither a cartesian nor a behaviourist then what theory of sensations did he propose. For it is difficult to think of an alternative - cartesianism and behaviourism seeming to exhaust the field of theories of the mind.

One way to understand the philosophical grammar of words that puzzle us is to see how one learns how to use

them. Wittgenstein suggests a possible way of learning sensation vocabulary:

Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, the natural expressions of the sensation and used in their place.

(P.I. 2244)

Thus a child is hurt and cries. The cry is the natural expression of pain. The child is taught to substitute sensation language for the natural expression. Thus the child cries, then exclaims, and then utters sentences as its mastery of the use of the words of the language becomes gradually more sophisticated. The use of the sensation words does not mean the natural expression, it merely replaces it. Thus when one says that one is in pain, this does not mean that one is crying, grimacing or whatever. It means that one is suffering from an agonising state called "pain". One can say that one is in pain even if one shows no outward signs at all. The words uttered when one says that one is in pain may just be a sophisticated cry, but they may also be a description of one's state. Wittgenstein hints at this when he says:

"I say 'I am afraid', someone else asks me: 'What was that? A cry of fear; or do you want to tell me how you feel; or is it a reflection on your present state?' - Could I always give him a clear answer? Could I never give him one?"

(P.I. p. 187)

The answer, admittedly only hinted at, is that one can only say what one is doing when one utters the words "I am afraid" depending on the context in which the use is made. Sometimes

one's utterance will merely be a sophisticated cry, sometimes a description of a state, sometimes both. Wittgenstein finishes the section more clearly:

We surely do not always say someone is complaining because he says he is in pain. So the words "I am in pain" may be a cry of complaint and may be something else. But if "I am afraid" is not always something like a cry of complaint and yet sometimes is, then why should it always be a description of a state of mind?

(L.I., p. 189)

This is to say that first-person utterances of mental states may sometimes be a cry and may sometimes be a description. The difference will arise because of the different ways in which the expression is used. Wittgenstein then is not committed to what might be called an expressive thesis of sensations, such that all self-ascriptions of mental states would be analysed as sophisticated replacements for the natural expression.

Thus when one learns to use the word "pain" his criteria for the use of the word are based on the public expressions of pain. One is taught to say that a child is in pain when certain conditions are satisfied, such that the child cries, is holding his arm (say), and his arm is bleeding. This is to say that the way people act in public becomes involved in the use of the word, for it is in the light of these public actions (crying for example) that the use of the word is guided. It seems to be elementary that in a public language when we make use of words which can refer to mental

states, the use of the words when applied to other people must be based on their public actions.

This is where the sceptic intrudes, claiming that it is right that we apply mental predicates to other people based upon public criteria, and that it is because of this that one only knows that he himself experiences sensations. For because he regards the relations between the sensation and its expression as merely contingent it becomes possible that only he has sensations and expresses them, and that everybody else may be automata which behave as if they did have sensations but really only make movements in space and have no mental life at all.

What is Wittgenstein's reply to this? I will briefly refer to a mistaken view of his position, which is quite instructive in its inaccuracy. This is the position of Chihara and Fodor who claim that Wittgenstein holds a weak form of logical behaviourism where: "by 'logical behaviourism' we mean the doctrine that there are logical or conceptual relations of the sort denied by the sceptical premise." ("Operationalism and Ordinary Language", p. 387. Wittgenstein Ed. Pitcher) The sceptical premise is that there are no logical or conceptual relations between propositions about mental states and propositions about behaviour. Now the theory of logical behaviourism which they attribute to Wittgenstein is that one can establish that someone else is in pain judging from their behaviour:

Hence for Wittgenstein, reference to the characteristic features of pain behaviour on the basis of which we determine that someone is in pain is essential to the philosophical analysis of the word "pain". (Ibid., p. 390)

Their interpretation of Wittgenstein is that one can infer somebody's sensation from their behaviour only if that behaviour is somehow part of the meaning of the sensation word. It is by convention that a certain behaviour is taken to be sufficient for one to apply the sensation word.

But ultimately according to Wittgenstein we must come upon identifying techniques based...upon conventions...which determine criteria for applying the relevant predicates. (Ibid., p. 399)

They say quite explicitly:

...Wittgenstein appears to be arguing that the possibility of ever inferring a person's toothache from his behaviour requires the existence of a criterion of toothache. (Ibid., p. 398)

The view is that somehow criteria are established for the use of words, such that if those criteria obtain one is justified in using the word. In the case of tooth-ache the criteria for the use of the word when used to say that other people have tooth-ache, is tooth-ache behaviour. The meaning of the word "tooth-ache" is established so that this is the case. But it is only based on the behaviour that one says somebody has tooth-ache; for one infers from their behaviour that they have the mental state. It is this idea that Wittgenstein's view makes it necessary for one to make an inference from behaviour to mental states that is radically mistaken.

The problem with such a way of presenting Wittgenstein's

theory is that it makes it look as if Wittgenstein accepts the distinction between behaviour as bodily movements and the inner states of consciousness which the cartesian finds so attractive. In fact it is just this distinction which Wittgenstein denies. The whole problem of other minds is born when one accepts the distinction between bodily movements in space and inner sensations. For then it becomes impossible for one to ever be able to do anything but infer from their bodily movements that others have certain sensations. The possibility then arises that when I look at you I do not know that you are not just a body, a carefully constructed machine made to resemble a human being. The sceptic can accept that if we are to use sensation words to refer to mental states of others, we must base our use of the words on behavioural criteria, but that nevertheless perhaps we should not be using the sensation words to describe other people's mental states because there are no other people. Just because we would need to make use of behavioural criteria to use sensation words to refer to the mental states of others does not mean that other people have mental states. The argument is only that if other people had mental states then one would need to make use of behavioural criteria to use sensation words to refer to those states.

However such a view of the picture is quite wrong. For if all we ever do observe in other people is bodily movement then we can never observe their sensations themselves.

The sensation then becomes a private object situated in the depths of the mind. Each person could only be aware directly of his own sensation and of his and other people's bodily movements. The public rules of the use of the sensation word would be based on the bodily movements but there could be no public rules for using the word to refer to the sensation experience. For each person is the only person who is directly acquainted with his experience and he will have to extend the use of the sensation word to refer to this private experience by a private act of naming. And then in the light of this he can then say that other people are in pain etc. inferring that they have something similar to what he has, from this behaviour. But such a case of private reference was shown to be impossible in chapters one and two.

If one accepts that one can only perceive other people's bodily movements he is on the horns of a dilemma. Either he can say that to say that a person has a mental state is just to say that he makes bodily movements, which is to accept behaviourism which is untenable, or he can say that one infers from the person's bodily movements that 'behind' them he has an inner experience similar to the experience which one has privately named. The latter would be to fall back on the idea of a private act of naming which has been shown to be impossible.

The distinction between bodily movements and mental states is just denied by Wittgenstein. He is aware that the

distinction is only tenable if mental states could be private objects which one could name. With the refutation of the idea of sensations as objects which one owns inside one's mind as it were, falls the distinction between human behaviour and mental states assumed by the sceptic and cartesian alike. For if sensations were objects that only one could be aware of then one would have to name them privately. But one cannot do this. The problem is solved when one allows that other people can see other people in mental states directly. Then the use of the sensation word to refer to the mental state can have a public use. And Wittgenstein does this by denying that all we ever see in other people is bodily movements. He does this by denying the picture of a human-being as having an inner life which is somehow contained in a physical box that moves in space.

The move is not to distinguish between a mind and body as two distinct and independent entities in a human-being. What Wittgenstein insists on as basic is that when I perceive other people I do not merely perceive bodily movements. I perceive human actions, that is I see people in pain, people who are happy, people who are drunk, etc. When I see a man covered in blood and shrieking wildly I see a man in pain. On such an analysis pain becomes a state of a living human-being. I do not see the man's behaviour as colourless bodily movements and infer that behind them there lies a private object - the real pain. I see directly that

he is in pain from my perception of the state that the man is in. To ascribe mental states to somebody is not a construction from their bodily movements, it is something that we can do because we can see directly that somebody is in a mental state.

Now this way of seeing other people is not an opinion that one has but is rather a natural way of reacting to other people. One does not infer that the person bleeding in the street is a human-being in pain from any evidence that one may have. Thought or opinion does not come into the matter. It is a basic act of human perception that one sees other people as being in certain states. As Wittgenstein says:

My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul. (P.I., Pt. II, Sect. iv)

By a soul he means a human-being, somebody that sees, is blind, is happy, is in pain etc. Our attitude towards human-beings is not the result of evidence, of opinion. One does not infer from his body that another does have a certain sensation. It is natural for us to regard other people as human-beings, that is as people in states of various kinds. Wittgenstein makes this clear:

It is a help to remember that it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat the part that hurts when someone else is in pain... (Zettel 8540)

and then:

But what is the word "primitive" meant to say

here? Presumably that this sort of behaviour is pre-linguistic: that a language game is based on it, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought. (Ibid., K541)

We react to other people as human-beings, and this is the basis upon which our language and thought are built. That we see other people in pain, in distress, is not the result of thought but is a natural way for us to see them.

The argument is really that if I am to be able to describe myself as being in pain, for example, then other people must be able to describe me as being so. Otherwise one would have to fall back on a private act of naming. It is necessary that a sensation is analysed as a state of a human-being and that this state can be realised by the owner and by other people as well. Of course when I am aware that I am in pain I do not have to observe my human actions as somebody else does to be aware that I am in pain. I know it directly. There is this lack of symmetry between first and third person ascriptions of mental predicates. And so I can say that I am in pain even if I remain completely still and show no outward signs of pain. But for me to use the word pain it is necessary that I can act as a person in pain, so that my use of the word is checked according to public rules. For it is necessary that my acting in pain, that is my human action of being in pain, is the same state as the state I am in when I know directly that I am in pain. Otherwise the word "pain" could have no public rules for its use

Thus ... and do ...

sensations, especially as they become adult. But they must still be able to carry out the public actions of being in a certain state.

Of course even when one is aware of one's pain directly one is not aware of a private object that one has. Rather one is aware of a state that one is in. There is just one individual in a state. Thus when I am aware of my pain, my pain is not an object which I possess or own. It is a state that I am in. And this state that I am in and aware of is the same state as the state you see when I act as a being in a certain state. This has to be so if we can use sensation words according to public rules. This is why the question whether or not two people have the same sensation cannot be answered except by reference to the criteria of identity that we actually do use for saying that two people have the same sensation, i.e., by reference to their public actions. Two people are said to have the same sensation according to how they act publicly. Thus if two people are both bleeding and crying we say that they have the same sensation, viz. pain. But when it is further asked, "yes, but is what they feel in each case the same?" this must be dismissed as a specimen of nonsense, for if it asks more than what we actually do call the same, it can only ask that we should be able to both experience each other's sensation in order to carry the comparison out. Yet this only makes sense if we are still construing the grammar of sensation under the model of object

and name. Two people could both experience an object, and if it was private, then they could, it might be thought, both experience it in principle. It might be thought that in some possible world I could experience what you experience when you are in pain, and compare it to my pain, but that we cannot do this in this world because of our limitations.

But if a sensation is not an object of inner sense, but is a state of a living human being then the suggestion that two people could both experience the same state becomes meaningless. As Cook points out in his article "On Privacy" (Pitcher collection), we cannot ask if two people could have numerically the same build but we can only ask if they have qualitatively the same build. A build is not something that is owned by an individual that can conceivably be given to somebody else, it is rather a characteristic of the person who's build it is. Only of what is an object that can be owned by somebody can it be asked if somebody else's is numerically the same. I cannot experience your sensation not due to any limitations of my power of experience but because of what your sensation is. Because it is a state that you are in it makes no sense to ask if I could experience it. The idea of a person being able to experience the other's sensation and then compare it to his own is meaningless. In this case all that can be asked for when one asks if two people have the same sensation is that they both manifest the same human action of being in the state that the sensation

is. I can see that you are in a certain state and if I see another person in the state then it is correctly said that you both have the same sensation. Any further question is senseless.

Thus it is necessary for one to be able to use sensation words to refer to one's states that other people be able to refer to one's states as well. And this is done by analysing sensations as states of human-beings which are publically accessible. Thus the state that I am aware of when I say that I am in pain is the same state that you see when you see me bleeding and screaming. This has to be so if sensations words are to be able to be used according to public rules. More than this any further sceptical questioning as to if what two people actually experience is the same has been shown to be senseless, the mistake being to misconstrue what a sensation is, taking it to be a private object rather than a state of a living person. All that we can meaningfully ask when we ask if two people have the same sensation, is whether the public state of their having the sensation is the same. This is manifested in their actions which we can directly see.

It has been shown that a sensation could not be a private inner object in chapters one and two, by showing that we could give no meaning to sensation words if a sensation was so. In this chapter it has been shown what

Wittgenstein views a sensation as being. This view is that a sensation is a state of a living human being. In this way it has been shown how other people can see the sensations that one has without falling into behaviourism. This was done by showing that people do not perceive other people's bodily movements but perceive their actions. And as somebody's pain is the state they are in, people can see each others pain by seeing their states. Thus to see somebody crying and bleeding is to see him in pain, is to see him in the state of pain. The basic point is that for one to use a sensation word to refer to his mental states, it must be possible for other people to use sensation words to refer to the same states, and this means that other people need to be able to see other people's states. This is done by breaking the mind-body dichotomy. Wittgenstein's view does this in that one can see another person in pain, for example, by seeing what he is doing. The state that he is in is seen by observing his action, which is of course brought about by his bodily movements. Thus instead of locating states of pain, of fear, necessarily in the mind, Wittgenstein gives an analysis which makes it necessary that sensations can be publically observed, that for example I can see that you are in the state of pain by seeing your actions. That this is not behaviourism is clear because when one sees another's person's state of pain it is not bodily movements that he sees but is the action of a human-being. The theory of sensations is successful in

that it avoids the impossibility of private acts of naming while also avoiding behaviourism.

To conclude then, I have tried to show in chapters one and two that the notion of a private object of experience is unintelligible. This was done by showing that a private language is impossible and thus that a person could not devise a language of his own to describe his private experiences, and also that there is no possibility of private reference of sensation words that are used in a public language. In the final chapter it has been shown what sensations must be if they are not private objects. The essential point here is that there must be public states of people having certain sensations if one is to be able to describe his own sensations. Thus for me to say that I am in pain there must be a public state which I can display which is being in pain. This is necessary in order to avoid private acts of naming. The private language argument has a crucial place in the whole argument for it is because of this argument that a certain theory of what a sensation could be is dismissed, and the realization of what the sensation is not is of great assistance in deciding what a sensation is, for whatever it is, it must not have the properties which the necessarily private "sensation" had which made it unintelligible.

APPENDIX

In this appendix I will consider some objections to the private language argument. It will be set out in dialogue form, firstly giving the criticism as fully and as fairly as I can and then criticising it by either showing any inconsistencies there may be or by pointing out any fundamental misconceptions about the private language argument that are incorporated in the objection. My criticisms of other people's objections will in most cases fall back on my exposition of the private language argument as given in the thesis. For instance if an objection is based on a misunderstanding of the argument then it will be possible to show this objection to be invalid by showing what the argument really is and thus why the objection does not affect it. In such cases I will try to give the criticisms of the objections as quickly as I can and thus without too much repetition. However it is inevitable that there will be a certain amount of repetition because my criticisms of other people's objections will often be to show what the private language argument really is and of course this has been done in the thesis already.

Objection

The first objection is given by Ayer in his article "Could language be invented by a Robinson Crusoe?". Ayer points out that Wittgenstein maintains that the ascription of meaning to a sign is something that needs to be justified, the justification consisting in there being some independent test for determining that the sign is being used correctly. The independence in question is independence from the subject's recognition of the object which he intends the sign to signify. Wittgenstein makes this point in section 265 of the Investigations. Not only must the justification be independent of recognition, it must be independent of memory claims too. It must be public. Ayer's criticism is that unless there is something that one is allowed to recognize without further justification there could be no justification for the use of any sign at all. Thus Ayer considers how one can check his memory of the time of a train that he has formerly read from a time-table. One checks this for instance by looking up the time in the time-table once more. But Ayer argues that even here one has to trust one's eye-sight, that is, one has to recognize what one sees. Even if one argues that one could check what one sees by consulting other people then one still has the same problem. For one has to understand their testimony, one has to recognize what they say. The assurance that one is using a word correctly must in the end rest upon

a recognition which has to be accepted. It is through hearing what other people say, or through seeing what they write that one is able to check one's use of a word. And thus Ayer claims:-

But if without further ado I can recognise such noises or shapes or movements why can I not also recognise a private sensation.

("Could language be invented by a Robinson Crusoe?"
The Private Language Argument, ed. Jones, p. 64)

Reply

Ayer has misconstrued Wittgenstein's point. It is not one of there being a kind of "absolutely conclusive justification" in the public case and merely one that rests on a supposed recognition in the private case. Wittgenstein does indeed accept that in the public world one does recognise things as being of a certain kind and that this is the end of one's justification. He states clearly:-

Justification by experience comes to an end.
(P.I. #488)

Earlier when talking about red things he says:-

How do I recognise that this is red? 'I see that it is this'. (Ibid, #380)

How do I know that this colour is red? - It would be an answer to say: 'I have learnt English'.
(Ibid, #381)

Thus one is simply aware of the colour as being red and then says that it is red. One simply recognises it as so. And this is what is involved in learning a language.

Thus if Wittgenstein accepts that one does recognise public shapes and movements without any conclusive justification - that one just recognises them "without further ado" - why does he deny that one can recognise private sensations. For if, when one recognises a colour as red, one just sees it as red, it would seem reasonable to suppose, as Ayer does, that one could recognise a private sensation.

The point that Wittgenstein makes is not what Ayer takes it to be but really is concerned with following a rule. One can recognise a colour as red and this will be the end of the justification that one has for saying that it is red. The justification here has an end. But nevertheless there are criteria which establish if one is right or wrong when one makes the judgement. These will, as we have seen, be ultimately based on human agreement. Thus, if one is wrong in one's judgements there will be ways in which the error can be detected. But in the private case one can only be under the impression of following the rule, for whatever seems to one to be the case will be. The justification in hand is not a question of the "reasons" that one has for making a particular judgement - as if recognition is not enough - but is a question of one's having a check which will distinguish his seeming to follow a rule from his actually following it. This is why it marks a distinction between the public world and a supposed private world. In

the public world one's use of a word can be checked. This will be by the agreement of human-beings. This will be independent from one's recognition. But in the private case one cannot check on one's use of a word and nobody else can. From one's supposed recognition one can only seem to be following the rule - there will be no check to distinguish this case of seeming to follow the rule from actually following it. And thus one cannot talk about rules here. Because Ayer's objection misses the point it is without any force at all.

Objection

Ayer has a second objection that I will give. He asks us to imagine a Robinson Crusoe left alone on an island while still an infant without any language training. After conceding psychological reasons to doubt that Crusoe would invent a language. Ayer claims:-

But surely it is not self-contradictory to suppose that someone, uninstructed in the use of any existing language, makes up a language for himself.
 ("Could language be invented by a Robinson Crusoe?"
The Private Language Argument, ed. Jones, p. 56).

Ayer simply finds it conceivable that Crusoe could invent words to describe his island. And then he argues:-

But if we allow that our Robinson Crusoe could invent words to describe the flora and the fauna of his island, why not allow that he could also invent words to describe his sensation? (Ibid., p. 56).

Reply

However, one should be wary of such "snap-conceptions."

Wells found it conceivable that one could travel in time but despite the obvious initial plausibility in time-travel there is a philosophical problem about whether or not it is conceivable. And similarly with Ayer's Crusoe, we tend to think that there could be no problem here. But on closer analysis the picture becomes more and more problematic.

This argument from the snap conception of Crusoe's inventing names for objects and sensations in fact begs all the questions which Wittgenstein at least draws our attention to. I suppose that Ayer has in mind that Crusoe should become aware of a sensation and think up a name for it and impress upon himself the connection between the name and sensation. But this can only be done if Crusoe goes on to use the word according to more or less fixed rules, that is to say if he can go on to use it correctly. But in the private case Crusoe can have no criterion or check to establish that he is using the word correctly. What seems to him to be the supposed sensation will be. But this will mean that he cannot be said to be following any rule at all. Also Ayer imagines that Crusoe could invent names for objects and then go on to use the words to refer to the same objects. Yet Wittgenstein as we have seen, argues that the notion of the same and the notion of a rule can only be used when one has a convention establishing what is to count as the same and what is to count as being an instance of an application of a rule. And Crusoe, brought up totally outside any social life of human-beings, could not

possibly share such customs. Thus he could not invent a name for an object and then go on to use it regularly.

If one wanted to claim that Crusoe did share our form of life because he shared the same reactions to the world as we do by an innate disposition then one could concede that he could use words to describe the flora and fauna. Then his use of words could be checked against the general agreement that we share in our culture. (He may use different words but these could be translated). Even if this were the case and he could use the word "same" and use rules, he could not extend his language to describe his "private sensations". This is because he would have no checks on the use of his "private words", whatever seemed to him to be the supposed sensation would be and there would only be impressions of rules. His words would have no meaning at all.

Thus we could only conceive that Crusoe could use words to describe the island if he somehow shared a form of life, so that there would exist an institution which gave the correct use of the words he used, and gave him an intelligible use of rules. But even so he could not then simply extend his language to describe his private sensations for there could be no distinction here between his seeming to follow a rule and following it. And so Ayer's objection, even when we have made his first point valid, (that Crusoe could describe the flora and fauna), still fails to successfully give an argument for the possibility of a private language.

For of course Crusoe's language to describe his island would not be necessarily private - it would indeed be necessarily translatable into a public language which would give the institution for the use of the words by its own customs or forms of life which Crusoe would have to share.

Objection

Moreland Perkins in his article "Two Arguments Against a Private Language" gives a similar objection to the one of Ayer's which we have just considered. It is rather more specific than Ayer's and is totally directed against Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of having a private rule. This is given in section 202 of the Investigations, and states that obeying a rule is a practice. I gave exposition to this argument in Chapter One in the section "Following a rule: Argument Two." Here it was argued that a rule can only be followed if there is a practice which establishes the right way of following the rule. Perkins objects to this argument by considering that by practice Wittgenstein could either have meant an individual practice or a social practice. If he meant the former Perkins argues that this would not count against a private language unless one invoked some form of verificationism. For if one allowed that one could privately have a practice of using words to name objects then one would have to allow that one could have a practice of naming private sensations, unless some further argument is brought in - and this could be an argument based

on the need for public verifiability. But if one does this then the argument from the fact that following a rule is part of a practice does not rule out the private language. Thus if this is to be taken as an argument against a private language one will have to take practice to mean a social practice. But if one does this Perkins objects that one is in error for he takes it as possible that a born and lifelong hermit could be a language user. More than this Perkins claims:-

that Wittgenstein admitted the conceivability of language that is not part of a social practice. ("Two Arguments Against a Private Language. P.103 Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds ed. Morick.)

Thus if one takes the argument from the nature of a rule as involving a practice to count against the private language, one is at fault, for the argument is either inadequate and needs further support or is plainly false.

Reply

I will meet this objection by showing that there is an argument against a private language based on the fact that following a rule is part of a social practice. I take it to be fairly clear that Wittgenstein means social practice by his word "practice" from what he says about rules in the Investigations. For instance in section 222 he points out that there is a grammatical connection between rules and human agreement.

Given this I will point out that Perkins' hermit could not be a language user unless he shared a form of life for the use of words. One could not invent a

custom for the use of a word as I pointed out above in reply to Ayer and in the section in chapter one. For if one did try one would be free to do anything - whatever seemed to one to fit in with the convention would, and this of course means that there would not be a convention at all. Only where there is an agreed way of following a rule, or the possibility of one, can there be a rule. Otherwise the rule will point in no direction. Perkins' hermit is on a par with Ayer's Crusoe. Unless he shared a form of life he would have no possibility of using rules for there would be no possibility of checking that the rule was being followed correctly. Perkins' hermit could not be a language user because there could be no human agreement, nor the possibility of such agreement, to establish the right way to follow the rule. And he could not set up his own practice, for whatever he did he could call the practice. He would be free to do anything he liked. And this is not following a rule.

Secondly of course Wittgenstein does not accept that it is conceivable that language could exist outside a social practice. Perkins thinks that Wittgenstein accepts this in section 243 of the Investigations:-

.... We could even imagine human-beings who spoke only in monologues: who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves - An explorer who watched them and listened to their talk might succeed in translating their language into ours.

Wittgenstein quite obviously talks about human beings who have activities. He never speaks of a lone individual

having such a language. Even though the human-beings only speak in monologue they will still presumably share words of the language and the way that they agree in the use of their words will establish the practice. If they share our form of life the explorer will be able to translate their language into ours. This is why Wittgenstein says that the explorer might be able to do the translating. Because they only speak to themselves does not mean that they cannot have a shared use of words of the language which establishes the correct use. Admittedly they will not tell each other how to use the words or when they make mistakes. But they can see how the others use the words and notice when their use diverges from the general use. In view of Wittgenstein's insistence on agreement if one has rules this seems to be a much better interpretation than Perkins'.

Thus, because Perkins' hermit could only use language if he shared a form of life or a custom for the use of his words - (he could not invent a custom for if he tried to do so he would be free to do anything he liked as I showed in chapter one) - and because Perkins' textual evidence for his claims is wrong, the objection becomes groundless. For it can be seen to be the case that one can only use language if one is involved in a social practice and that Wittgenstein agrees completely with this. If this is so then this is a valid argument against a private language.

Objection

Judith Jarvis Thomson in her article "Verification Principle and the private language argument" argues that Wittgenstein claims that a man's use of a sign is not governed by a rule unless it is not merely possible that he should violate the rule but more, that he should violate it unwittingly:-

That is it must be possible that he should think he is following the rule, it need not follow that he really is following it.

("Verification Principle and the private language argument." The Private Language Argument, ed. Jones, p.189)

Wittgenstein does indeed insist that if one is to follow a rule there must be a distinction between what seems to be the rule and what is the rule. If this is the case then it must be possible for one to only be under the impression of following a rule, that is as Thomson rightly puts it, to be able to violate it unwittingly. This is one of Wittgenstein's main arguments against a private language. For it is the case that with the rules of a private language one will not be able to distinguish between what seems to be the rule and what is the rule. That is whatever one thinks is the rule will be. If it were possible to have such rules then one could never unwittingly make a mistake. Thus Wittgenstein argues that such rules would only be impressions of rules and would not do any work. For it is necessary that one be able to distinguish between what seems to one to be the rule and what

is the rule. That is, it is necessary that one be able to think one is following a rule but in fact not be.

Now Thomson argues that there are rules where there is not this distinction, that is where it is the case that what one thinks is the rule is. If there were such rules then Wittgenstein could not rule out the possibility of private rules on the grounds that there was no distinction between seeming to follow the rule and following it. For this would no longer be a necessary condition of following a rule. She argues by giving examples of rules where Wittgenstein's distinction does not hold.

Reply

The first example she gives is "Always decide to do what you think at the time it would be most fun to do" (Ibid, p.190). Thomson takes it as being necessarily so that if one seems to be following this rule then one must be. For so she argues, if one is under the impression that one has decided to do that which is most fun to do then one must have decided to do that which is most fun. To Thomson deciding to do something is something that one can't be mistaken about. If one thinks that one has decided to do something then one has. However is this really so clear? For instance I may think I have decided to do what I think it would be most fun to do and may have confused what "fun" means with say, agony. In this case I would only be under
 the rule for I would have

decided to do what I think would be most agonising. This is surely possible. It is also not clear that I cannot be mistaken about deciding to do something. There are public criteria which establish if one has decided to do something. There will be such that if I have decided to do something under certain conditions I will do it. And it may happen that I claim to have decided to do something and the conditions are satisfied but I do not do it. In this way one can be self-deceived - one thought one had decided when one had not. Thus Thomson's first counter-example seems to be at fault for we have noted two places in the rule where one could unwittingly violate it.

Her second and last counter-example is "Whenever you feel the least bit gloomy, think of your mummy." (Ibid, p.191). Must it be the case here that if one thinks one is following this rule one must be? It seems not. It does not follow from the fact that a rule involves a mental act that one must be following the rule because one thinks one is. For instance in carrying out the rule one may think of one's father or one's cat by mistake - thinking either one was one's mummy. Or to put the point more convincingly one may think of one's aunt, thinking one was thinking of one's mummy. In such a case one would think that one had followed the rule but in fact not have followed it. Similarly one may mistake what the word "gloomy" means, thinking it means happy. Thus

one would think of one's mummy when one felt happy and still think that one was following the rule.

Thus Thomson's second counter-example fails. Her conclusion:-

To say S is not a rule unless I can think I am following S and not in fact be, is to set out a condition on rules which would rule it out that rules of the sort I mention here... are rules. But that they should be ruled out... is surely by no means self-evident. (Ibid, p.191)

- is thus unconvincing, for the distinction that Wittgenstein maintains must hold for any rule does in fact hold for the rules she mentions.

Objection

The objection is often made that the argument against a private language is only really a form of the Principle of Verification. Thomson is one of the people who hold this thesis. She sums up Wittgenstein's position thus:-

A sign "K" is not a kind-name in a man's language unless it is possible to find out whether or not a thing is of the kind associated with "K" (over and above its seeming or not seeming to him to be so)... And it is plain that this is nothing more than a revised formulation of something very familiar indeed, namely the Principle of Verification. (Ibid, p.200)

Reply


The argument against a private language is based on the theory of meaning as use. This theory of meaning is quite distinct from the Verification Principle which Thomson takes

to be that a word can only be meaningful if what it stands for is observable. This is what she has in mind when she states in her article that it must be possible to find out what the person uses the word to stand for. In fact the Principle of Verification in most of its formulations dealt with statements. When it dealt with statements it was said that a statement could only be meaningful if it was either a tautology or could be verified by empirical methods. This meant that one would have to observe, for example, the things associated with the kind-names in the statement and then see if what the statement described was true or false. Thus we can roughly see what Thomson means by her interpretation of Wittgenstein's argument. However the private language argument has nothing to do with verifying statements or insisting that kind-names are associated with observable things. It rather stems from the nature of a rule.

A rule points in some direction, it does some work. This is to say that some actions will be subsumed under the rule and some will go against it. There will be right and wrong ways of following the rule. This means that there must be a distinction between what seems to be the rule and what is the rule. Thus there must be more to following a rule than just being under the impression of following one. To this extent there must be checks that can be made on the way that one follows a rule. As shown in the thesis and in

my reply to Ayer this check must be independent of the impression of the person who follows the rule. It must be made, or capable of being made, by other people. But this does not mean that one is committed to saying that a word of a language is only meaningful if what it is associated with is observable publically. Rather it means that the way the rules governing the use of the word are to be followed must be checkable publically. And this has nothing to do with observation in Thomson's sense. Because of this, meaning is not limited to the world of sense (apart from tautologies) as the verificationists supposed. This point can be best seen with the help of an example.

According to the Verification Principle as one imagines Thomson to construe it, the word "God" could not be meaningful for one could not observe what is associated with this word. People cannot observe God and check that this really is God that someone is talking about. But on the theory of meaning as use one can meaningfully make uses of words such as "God". This is because we use the word according to rules which give the word meaning. There are circumstances when one can quite correctly use the word. One can say of someone that he is praying to God when he carries out the activity of praying, one can say that someone is humble in the presence of God when he acts so. In other words there are human activities upon which the use of the word can be based. But of course there must be



checks that one can carry out to ensure the word is used correctly. To say of someone drinking a cup of tea that he is praying to God is an incorrect use of the word if one has said so only because he is drinking tea. But this has nothing to do with verification. The checks on the use of words are to ensure that the words are used regularly and tie in with the human activities with which they are linked. One does not need to be able to verify the use of words in the sense that one can observe what the words are associated with. Thus to say that the theory of meaning which Wittgenstein bases his private language argument upon is Verificationism is totally wrong. The private language argument is based on the theory of meaning as use and is concerned with following a rule.

Objection

Fodor and Chihara in their article "Operationalism and Ordinary Language" object to Wittgenstein's analysis of sensations and sensation-behaviour, and the way that he claims that one is justified in ascribing a sensation to another based on his behaviour. As we have seen already in chapter three they accept the distinction between behaviour as bodily movements and sensations as private inner states and take Wittgenstein's connection between sensation-behaviour and sensations to be merely conventional. They thus find it unconvincing that one should be justified in ascribing pain

to somebody on the basis of pain-behaviour, which is completely different from the pain itself, simply because it has been established by convention that one can do this according to rules of language. They suggest that in explanation we hypothesise a model which will explain whatever needs explaining, the model being chosen on grounds of simplicity and economy. Thus they argue that human-beings aware of their own sensations and other people's behaviour make the hypothesis that other people have sensations similar to the ones they have which bring about the behaviour. Such a model would of course be possibly subject to revision.

Reply

As I pointed out in chapter three Fodor and Chihara misinterpret Wittgenstein. The connection that he establishes between the sensation and the behaviour is not between sensations (mental) and bodily movements (physical) but between sensations and human actions. Wittgenstein's point is that we are aware of human-beings in pain because we are aware of their human actions. Thus one can see another person in pain, or angry etc., not by inferring from his bodily movements that he is so, but by perceiving his human action of being in a certain state. Thus the sensation and the behaviour are not at all two distinct things tied together by an arbitrary convention of language, but rather the behaviour is, in some cases, a state of a human-being.

And this state is the same state as that which one is aware of himself, when for example one says that one is in pain. Thus the objections which Fodor and Chihara have to Wittgenstein's thesis of the conceptual connection between sensations and sensation-behaviour do not tell against the real thesis that he maintains. For on Wittgenstein's theory the publically observable human action (called behaviour by Fodor and Chihara) is the same state as the sensation which one is aware of. And this has nothing to do with convention.

Secondly Fodor and Chihara's positive theory seems to have two faults. Each one of us would be aware of his own sensations and name them and then at some stage in our development make the hypothesis that other people have the same sensations. This would be based on our associating our own behaviour with certain sensations and then noting that other people have similar behaviour and then making the hypothesis that they also have similar sensations. But if this were so each of us would have to name his sensations by private ostensive definition. This has been seen to be impossible earlier in the thesis. The second fault is that it just seems implausible that children do make the hypotheses which their view makes necessary. Rather it seems more plausible that as Wittgenstein maintains children see other people in pain directly as it were by seeing their human-actions (which are of course public).

Thus Fodor and Chihara's view is implausible and their objection to Wittgenstein's view is based on a fundamental

misunderstanding of what that view is. The objection
therefore fails.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wittgenstein's Works:

Philosophical Investigations, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Blackwell, Oxford, 1968.

Zettel. Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright. Translation by G. E. M. Anscombe. Blackwell, Oxford, 1967.

The Blue and Brown Books. Blackwell, Oxford, 1958.

"Notes for Lectures on 'Private Experience' and 'Sense Data'", in The Private Language Argument. Edited by O. R. Jones. Macmillan, 1971.

Other Works:

Ambrose and Lazerowitz (ed.) Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophy and Language. George Allen and Unwin, 1972.

Ayer, A. J. "Can there be a Private Language" in The Private Language Argument edited by O. R. Jones. Macmillan, 1971.

Carnap, R. The Unity of Science. Translation by Black. London, K. Paul Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1934.

Chihara, C. S. and Fodor, J. A. "Operationalism and Ordinary Language" in Wittgenstein edited by George Pitcher. University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

Cook, J. "Solipsism and Language" in Ludwig Wittgenstein Philosophy and Language, edited by Ambrose and Lazerowitz. George Allen and Unwin, 1972.

_____. "Wittgenstein on Privacy" in Wittgenstein, edited by George Pitcher. University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

_____. "Human Beings" in Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, edited by Winch. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

Dilman, I. Induction and Deduction. Blackwell, Oxford, 1973.

Donagan, A. "Wittgenstein on Sensation" in Wittgenstein edited by George Pitcher. University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

Hacker, P. M. S. Insight and Illusion. Oxford, 1972.

Hervey, H. "Private Language and Private Sensations", in The Private Language Argument, edited by O. R. Jones. MacMillan, 1971.

Jones, O. R. (ed.) The Private Language Argument. MacMillan, 1971.

Kenny, A. "The Verification Principle and the Private Language Argument" in The Private Language Argument, edited by O. R. Jones. MacMillan, 1971.

Locke, D. Myself and Others. Oxford, 1968.

Locke, J. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Edited by Pringle-Pattison. Oxford, 1924.

Malcolm, N. "Exposition and Criticism of Wittgenstein's Investigations" in The Private Language Argument, edited by O. R. Jones. MacMillan, 1971.

Morick, H. (ed.) Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds. McGraw-Hill, 1967.

Mundle, C. W. K. "Behaviourism and the Private Language Argument" in The Private Language Argument, edited by O. R. Jones. MacMillan, 1971.

Perkins, M. "Two Arguments Against a Private Language" in Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds, edited by H. Morick. McGraw-Hill, 1967.

Pitcher, G. The Philosophy of Wittgenstein. Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1964.

_____. "About the Same" in Ludwig Wittgenstein Philosophy and Language, edited by Ambrose and Lazerowitz. George Allen and Unwin, 1972.

_____. (ed.) Wittgenstein. University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.

Rhees, R. "Could Language be invented by a Robinson Crusoe?"
in The Private Language Argument, edited by O. R.
Jones. MacMillan, 1971.

Schlick, M. Form and Content. University of London, 1932.

Strawson, P. F. "Exposition and Criticism of Wittgenstein's
Investigations" in The Private Language Argument,
edited by O. R. Jones. MacMillan, 1971.

Thomson, J. J. "Verification Principle and the private
language argument" in The Private Language Argument,
edited by O. R. Jones. MacMillan, 1971.

Winch, P. (ed.) Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein.
Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.