

WITTGENSTEIN'S TREATMENT
OF THE ASYMMETRY OF
MENTALISTIC TERMS

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is limited to an investigation of claims of asymmetry between first person present-tense and third person present-tense sensation sentences. The Cartesian claim to the epistemological priority of "I" (methodological solipsism) assumes that "I" (when uttered by myself) individuates a particular person. It is shown later that this assumption gives rise to difficulties. An analogy is drawn between statements about the pains of others and statements about the past, showing that the sorts of objections traditionally raised against making knowledge claims about the sensations of others may be raised against other sorts of knowledge claims. Ayer attempts to show the absurdity of the notion of a certain proposition (for traditionally, first person present-tense sensation sentences are certain). He tries to show that "I am in pain", like any other non-analytic proposition (for Ayer) is open to error. However, he has real difficulty in giving sense to the notion of my making a mistake when I say, "I am in pain." As preparation for using Wittgenstein's approach in relation to sensation sentences, an examination of the approach as such is made. Traditional analysis focussed on sentences of subject-predicate form, but the theory of 'meaning' which followed from this sort of analysis (referred to in the thesis as the "Meaning = Referring" theory) has a very limited application. Wittgenstein clearly distinguishes the grammar of a sentence (the form of the words) from the way in which it is used (its logical properties). Two sentences with the same grammar need not be used

in the same way; indeed, any one sentence may have a number of different uses. An examination is now made of Wittgenstein's approach in relation to "asymmetry claims". The distinction he draws between "I" used as object and "I" used as subject in *The Blue and Brown Books* is investigated. He assumes this category distinction to correlate in some way with the category distinction between sentences about public objects and sentences about "mental activities". The examples he gives of sentences in the "'I' used as object" category depend on the 'claim' "This is my body" being verified by an appeal to public criteria. It is shown that "This is my body" is not of the same category as the claim "This is my book" (which is verified by an appeal to public criteria), but is, instead, logically akin to "This is my sensation." Thus the sentences Wittgenstein gives as examples of "I" used as object turn out to be examples of "I" used as subject. Sense can be made of the category distinction by keeping the defining characteristics of the "'I' used as subject" category as: 1) no room for error, and 2) does not involve recognition of a person, is not a statement about a particular person; and keeping the defining characteristics of the "'I' used as object" category as: 1) room for error, and 2) involves recognition of a person, is a statement about a particular person. Then, by bearing in mind the distinction between a sentence and its uses, it may be shown that sentences in the "'I' used as subject" category correspond to both sets of examples given by Wittgenstein when uttered by myself, whereas sentences in the "'I' used as object" category correspond to both sets of examples when uttered by another person.

PREFATORY NOTE

At the beginning of each section a summary of the material contained is given so that the reader may more easily follow the direction and argument of the thesis.

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SECTION I

Limiting the scope of the thesis and indicating its direction.

Psychological concepts may be classified into at least the following: a) sensations, b) emotions, c) so-called "cognitive processes" (for example, understanding, knowing), and these different types of concepts require different treatments. It is my intention, therefore, to limit the discussion and to examine claims of asymmetry between first and other person statements in sensation language. Although there is claimed to be an asymmetry between first and other person sensation sentences, I shall make reference only to first and third person usages for convenience. Whatever claims are made about a third person usage of sensation language may, *mutatis mutandis*, be claimed about a second person usage.

The traditional asymmetry claims will be discussed and then, after examining Wittgenstein's philosophical approach as such, attention will be focussed on his category distinction between "I" used as object and "I" used as subject and its relation to asymmetry claims.

SECTION II

Cartesian (methodological) solipsism. Objection to a claim to the epistemological priority of first person "sense-content" statements, which type of statement is exemplified by Descartes' statements about his "ideas". The inter-dependency thesis (reference to Aune). The important claim of the thesis: that it makes no sense to speak of my experiences, if not mine as opposed to someone else's. And this is the same as the objection to a claim to the epistemological priority of first person "sense-content" statements (mentioned above).

It is one of the basic tenets of solipsism that there is nothing logically incoherent in claiming that there is, and has been, no other

person than myself, that I can make reference to my sensations and to my perceptions without being committed to the existence of the sensations and perceptions of others. Typical of this school is Descartes, whose entire programme is based on the epistemological priority of the "I". It seems obvious to him that statements about other persons and about material objects are far less certain than are statements about his own "ideas", i.e., his perceptions, sensations, "acts of volition", etc.. The Cartesian method is to find the most secure starting-point and to deduce as much as possible from it. This starting-point is the 'Cogito' - "I think, therefore, I am." This, Descartes claims, needs no other proposition to support it; it is complete in itself, invulnerable. He allows for his making mistaken judgements about material objects and about other persons, but however mistaken he may be in these respects, he declares, he cannot be mistaken about his "ideas". (It is at this point that one begins to feel uneasy at the lack of distinction between the "ideas" themselves and statements about them. I shall return to this distinction later, pp. 13-16.) Thus the priority of first person present-tense statements about one's own experiences is 'established' and along with it a host of philosophical problems: How can I know that there are material objects? How can I know that another 'person' does have sensations, perceptions, etc.? How can I know what sort of sensation I felt yesterday? How do I know that I did not come into existence a few seconds ago with a ready-made store of memories?

But should Descartes insist on this priority? Should he make the 'Cogito' his starting-point? More precisely - is he entitled to do so? What sense can Descartes attach to "I"? In what sense is this

"I" an individuated particular? It is true that "I" does not individuate a particular person in the same sense that, for example, "Socrates" does. "Socrates" serves as a proper name; that is to say, "Socrates" serves to individuate one particular person (a Greek philosopher, born so many centuries ago, etc.), and the person so individuated does not change according to who uses the term "Socrates", nor according to when it is used. (I am not here concerned with ambiguity caused by there having existed two or more people with the name "Socrates", since in such a case they may be distinguished as "Socrates₁" and "Socrates₂", and these latter would still function as proper names.) "I" does not serve as a proper name. Nevertheless, Descartes seems to hold that when it is uttered (or written) it does serve to individuate someone. Perhaps we may say here that given the context of utterance we may see who is being referred to (this invoking of the context of utterance being unnecessary in the case of a proper name). But if it is Descartes' view that "I" does individuate, it is difficult to appreciate how this may be if there is no other person and no other thing from which it is individuated. Given Descartes' proposed methodology, there is a need to make explicit the principle of individuation that allows him to say "I think" as opposed to "There is thought." (I hope to show later, after an examination of a Wittgensteinian category distinction, that there are serious difficulties arising from the assumption that "I" always individuates a particular person.)

In what sense are sensations mine if not mine as opposed to someone else's?

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other I can never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and can never observe any thing but the perception.¹

If I claim the epistemological priority of my experiences I am claiming that knowledge claims about them have a special status, that the immediacy of my own experiences gives knowledge claims about them a degree of certainty that is not found in knowledge claims about the experiences of others. They are of different categories, and it is implicit in this view that claims about my experiences may be made without reference to the existence of the experiences of others.

It may be objected that if the question of the experiences of others is logically distinct from claims about my experiences, then one should not speak of my experiences, but rather take a "no-ownership" stand.

An alternative solution, and probably more fruitful, is to deny the epistemological priority of first person present-tense avowals and to claim instead the logical inter-dependency of first person and third person experiential statements (a move made by Aune²). It is one of the attractions of such a thesis that it avoids the traditional problem of solipsism. The argument runs like this: I have no right to claim to understand a first person present-tense avowal, for example, "I am in pain", if I understand it only in the special circumstances of saying it myself; the sentence may be used by more than myself, and if I make a claim to understand it, then I must understand it whether it is

¹David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (London, 1964), I, iv, 252.

²Bruce Aune, *Knowledge, Mind, and Nature* (New York, 1967), p. 87.

uttered by myself or by another. Now this argument need not involve an isolationist theory of meaning. That is to say, a supporter of this view is not obliged to hold that the meaning of a sentence is contained within the sentence itself, within the form of words, taken in isolation. He is not obliged to hold that the context of utterance is of no relevance. Nor need he assume that for all sentences it is the case that the context of utterance is relevant to their meaning, or that for all sentences it is the case that the context of utterance is irrelevant to their meaning. In some cases it may seem that the meaning of the sentence is distinct from any consideration of its context of utterance, and with other sentences this may not be the case. Sentences are not all of one logical mould. Those containing proper names as subjects, for example, "Socrates was a philosopher", may be thought to be likely sentences for which the context of utterance is of no relevance to the meaning. But often it is not clearly the case either that the context of utterance is relevant or is not relevant to the meaning of a sentence, for example, in the case of "The king is bald." There is a whole spectrum of degrees of relevance of the context of utterance of different sentences. It is especially relevant for an understanding of sentences whose subject terms are personal pronouns. For a large class of cases a person understands the meaning of a sentence if he can use it and if he can appreciate the use others make of it. It is an advantage of this approach that one is not limited to dealing with sentences of subject-predicate form in accounting for the meaning of a sentence. The supporter of the inter-dependency thesis accepts this approach:

In order to understand the *sentence* "I am in pain" you must understand it whenever and wherever it is properly used - and this means understanding it when it is uttered by another person.³

Just to say this sidesteps the Cartesian claim since it has been already taken for granted that when another 'person' uses the sentence "I am in pain", the sentence is "properly used". This, however, is just the assumption which the solipsist questions; or, to be more precise, he is questioning our right to say that we have evidence for such uses of the sentence being legitimate uses.

Actually, once it is noticed that understanding a sentence is a matter of understanding it whenever and wherever it is properly used, it becomes apparent that "I am in pain" and "He is in pain" are so related that an understanding of either requires an understanding of the other. . . . The logic of pronouns turns . . . on a fundamental contrast between "I" and "he": anyone calling himself "I" is a *he* (or *she*) to others. When others talk about me, when they relate what I have said, they use "he" or perhaps even "you" in reference to me, and I must accordingly know something about these words to know how my remarks about myself are taken. . . . Hence, the grammars of "I" and "he" are intimately related, and to understand the *full* force of one, you must understand the force of the other.⁴

But the fact that an understanding of "I am in pain" requires an understanding of "He is in pain" does not imply that what I understand by each of them is the same; it does not imply that both sentences function alike. This is a most important point, and I hope that its significance will be clear later in the discussion (pp. 51-52). The full force of the inter-dependency thesis lies in the claim that we must be able to speak of the pains of others if there is to be any force to the "my" when I speak of "my pains". (This does not preclude an

³Aune, p. 87.

⁴Aune, p. 88.

asymmetry of criteria here.)

SECTION III

A closer examination of the traditional claim of an essential asymmetry between first and third person present-tense sensation statements. Types of criteria used in ascribing pain to others. Attacks on the premises of the traditional argument for the epistemological priority of first person present-tense sensation statements. An analogy between statements about the pains of others and statements about events which occurred before my birth, to show that so-called "direct" evidence is in both types of case impossible, that in neither type of case do we make a claim of infallibility, that the types of objections raised to making knowledge claims about the sensations of others may be raised to making other types of knowledge claims (for example, knowledge claims about events which occurred before my birth). The traditional objections to my making knowledge claims about the sensations of others are not special to this type of knowledge claim. Modification of the traditional thesis.

I wish now to examine more closely the traditional claim of an essential asymmetry between first and third person present-tense sensation statements, between, for example, "I am in pain" and "He is in pain." These I shall take as typical cases. The claim rests on the 'immediacy' of my own sensations which allows me to make knowledge claims about them - the "privileged access" theory - whereas I have no such access to the sensations of others. Here I must rely on the other person's behaviour, and at best I can only infer that he feels, say, a pain.

It is one of Wittgenstein's aims to deny that there are any special difficulties involved in making knowledge claims about the sensations of others. In what ways can we make knowledge claims about the sensations of others?

We have at least four sets of criteria we use in ascribing pain

to others:

a) causes of pain;

We allow that certain things are likely to cause pain, for example, cutting oneself with a knife, putting one's hand on a hot stove, banging a shin on a chair, and also cases such as an infected appendix, a bad tooth, or an ulcer, where the cause is more typically described as being a state of the body, rather than as something we did or something that happened to us.

b) linguistic evidence;

There is a distinction to be drawn between someone's writhing and someone's saying "I am in pain." Dogs may writhe, but they do not offer what would typically be described as linguistic evidence.

c) other sorts of behaviour;

We allow certain types of behaviour as being typical of a person in pain, for example, crying, writhing, clutching the painful part of the body.

d) autonomic nervous system indicators;

There are some indicators of pain which would not normally be considered as behaviour. Typical members of this class are changed Galvanic Skin Response readings (sweating in the palms of the hands), change of blood pressure, change of heart rate. There are indeed some things which we may be unsure whether to place in this class or in class (c), for example, tears being produced. Nevertheless, since there are some members of this class, (d), which we would not be tempted to place in class (c),

we may make the distinction.

All of these four types of indication are open to public check. Of course, when I do make knowledge claims about the pains of others, I do not observe first the cause, then the person's behaviour, etc.. The evidence on which I base my claim is not neatly parcelled in this way. Rather, I take in the whole situation.

At this stage I wish to draw an analogy between statements about the pains of others and statements about the past. Suppose it is argued that no matter how much another person winces, I cannot know that he is in pain since his sensations are his own and inaccessible to me. This is in effect saying:

- 1) I cannot have the pains of another person (which is taken to be tautologous);
- 2) I cannot know that another person is having pain, nor what they are like if he does have them, unless I have access to them (which here seems to be taken as - unless I can have them);

therefore, 3) I cannot know that another person is having pains, and since to ask what his pains are like presupposes that he does have pains, then of course I cannot know what 'they' are like.

Both premises may be attacked. To refute number (1) an attempt may be made to give sense to the notion of two people having the same pain, where "same" means "numerically identical", not just "qualitatively the same". To do this, criteria must be found which distinguish a pain's being qualitatively the same as another from its being numerically

identical with it. This is no easy task - there is difficulty in making sense of two pains being "qualitatively the same". Are location and duration relevant here? If not, then what is? It is the second premise which, I think, must be rejected after an analysis of the use of "know" here. If I may claim to know that something is happening even though I myself am not a witness of it, may it not also be legitimate to claim to know that another person is having pains even though I do not have direct access to them? What are the relevant differences, if any, between the two types of cases? An attempt may be made to show that a confusion has been made over two different uses of the word "know", the two uses being "to know that something is the case" and "to know by acquaintance". Alternatively, an attempt may be made to show that here the demand is for knowledge with certainty, that is, that here we may not legitimately speak of "knowing" unless there is no possibility of our having made a mistake; an infallibility is being demanded, and this is not appropriate when we are making empirical claims. These approaches are standard, and I do not intend to examine them here. I do wish to point out, however, that an analogous argument may be constructed about statements about the past. (To make the argument set out below as plausible as possible, I shall restrict it to statements about events which occurred before my birth.)

- 1) I cannot have witnessed events that occurred before I was born;
- 2) I cannot claim to know that an event has occurred unless I have witnessed it;

therefore, 3) I cannot claim to know that certain events occurred before

I was born.

We do make knowledge claims about events that we have not witnessed, and our claims, so far from being haphazard, may be supported by any amount of evidence, which evidence may be more or less reliable, more or less relevant, more or less trivial. We are often capable of acquiring a wealth of so-called "indirect" evidence by means of photographs, contemporary official records, remains, reports of eye-witnesses (written or spoken). We do assess our sources of information, including the eye-witnesses. We do test a person's veracity and reliability of memory when it is important to do so, and there are various ways of doing so. We may ask for information about which we have other independent knowledge to see in what measure the witness's report matches the one we already have. We may see whether the report explains anything that had previously been unintelligible. On a more basic level we may test for consistency within the report. We may try to ensure that the witness is disinterested. We may try to think of any obvious motives for misreporting or for concealing some fact. We can do all the things that are done in law-courts if the issue is important. Nevertheless, we make no claim to infallibility, any more than we do when we make knowledge claims about present states of affairs or about events that we have witnessed. The sorts of considerations that support the first type of argument (about our claiming to know that another person has pains) are the considerations that support the second type of argument (about statements about the past); and the sorts of considerations that would break down the first argument would also break down the second. If we claim that we cannot make knowledge claims about the sensations of

others on the sorts of grounds given in the first argument, we must also be prepared to make no knowledge claims about events that occurred before we were born, and statements about events that will occur in the future, and, indeed, about any event that we have not witnessed. In both types of case (i.e., in making knowledge claims about the sensations of others and in making knowledge claims about events which occurred before we were born):

- 1) We rely on "indirect" evidence, including the reports of others, (for we cannot have the pains of others and we cannot have witnessed events that occurred before we were born). (Consider what knowledge claims we could make if this were not so.)
- 2) We do allow that some people serve as more reliable 'witnesses' than others, and there are various means open to us for distinguishing between them.
- 3) We do not claim infallibility; we do not demand certainty in the sense that - "there is no possible way I could have made a mistake" - before we make knowledge claims.

The sorts of differences involved in making knowledge claims about the pains of others are not special to this kind of claim; they are involved in most, if not in all, empirical knowledge claims. The philosopher who takes a sceptical view on the possibility of making knowledge claims about events which occurred before he was born, is unlikely to allow that he may make knowledge claims about events which he has witnessed in the past. If he demands knowledge with certainty before allowing that a claim is a knowledge claim (see p. 10 above), then he will demand the infallibility of his memory before claims about events which

he has witnessed in the past may have the status of knowledge claims.

Again, this demand for certainty is out of place when making empirical knowledge claims.

And here a parallel may be drawn with the general problem of induction. It may be argued that while the truth of any one belief which is supposed to be based on memory may be tested by reference to another, there can be no question of justifying memory as a whole: the demand for such a justification would be illegitimate.¹

In the light of the above examination of the negative part of the claim, the traditional thesis may be modified to read: although I may make knowledge claims about the sensations of others, these are far inferior to those I make about my own, since the latter have a degree of certainty which is not possible in the case of the former.

SECTION IV

Statement of two approaches to this modified claim:

- a) an examination of the concept of a certain proposition as such;
- b) considering in some detail the logical differences between the sentence "I am in pain" and other sentences about myself or sentences about the sensations of others.

An examination of the concept of a certain proposition as such. Reference to Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*. Has Ayer appreciated the difference between looking for the criteria which make a sensation a pain and, for example, looking for the criteria which make a geometrical figure a (Euclidean) triangle or looking for the criteria which make an animal a horse? Ayer's difficulty in giving sense to the notion of my making a mistake when I speak of my "sense-contents". The theory of meaning underlying the search is not adequate for this type of case; Ayer's focussing on propositions of subject-predicate form has led him to treat "pain" substantively.

There are two major approaches to this modified claim:

- a) by examining the concept of a certain proposition as such;

¹A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (New York, 1965), p. 150.

or b) by considering in some detail the logical differences between the sentence "I am in pain" and other sentences about myself or sentences about the sensations of others.

In the former examination the crucial distinction is between experiences themselves and propositions about them. This distinction has not always seemed obvious.

. . . I am the same who feels, that is to say, who perceives certain things, as by the organs of sense, since in truth I see light, I hear noise, I feel heat. But it will be said that these phenomena are false and that I am dreaming. Let it be so; still it is at least quite certain that it seems to me that I see light, that I hear noise and that I feel heat. That cannot be false; properly speaking it is what is in me called feeling; and used in this precise sense that it no other thing than thinking.¹

No matter how deceived I may be as to the causes of the phenomena, even admitting that I may be dreaming, says Descartes, still it is "quite certain" that it seems to me that I feel heat. What is being suggested is that my statements can be certain if I make no reference to causes, to physical objects, but speak only in terms of my experiences. And it is here that philosophers such as Ayer drive a wedge between the sensation, say, and the proposition about it. Descartes is suggesting that statements which directly report an immediate sensation are unlike other empirical propositions in that future experience is irrelevant to establishing their truth. They are incorrigible literally. The supposed reason for this 'incorrigibility', says Ayer, is that these propositions are taken to be "purely demonstrative".² Now to speak

¹René Descartes, *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, from *Descartes Selections*, ed. Ralph M. Eaton, trans. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York, 1955), p. 101.

²A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd ed. (London, 1964), p. 91.

of an ostensive proposition, he argues, involves a contradiction of terms. In making a proposition one is not naming something, one is not pointing to something. One is characterizing something, classifying it as a thing of a certain sort. It is for this reason that propositions are informative. They contain general words, classificatory words. The contradiction, then, lies in this:

A sentence which consisted of demonstrative symbols would not express a genuine proposition. It would be a mere ejaculation, in no way characterizing that to which it was supposed to refer.³

Furthermore, it is argued that one cannot in language point to an object without describing it. The example given is of the proposition "This is white", where the words are taken to refer to a "sense-content".

Now how is this classificatory? Says Ayer:

. . . what I am saying about this sense-content is that it is an element in the class of sense-contents which constitutes "white" for me; or in other words that it is similar in colour to certain other sense-contents, namely those which I should call, or actually have called, white. And I think I am saying also that it corresponds in some fashion to the sense-contents which go to constitute "white" for other people⁴

I shall adapt the example by speaking instead of "This is a pain." Then according to Ayer I am saying of the sensation, a) that it is an element in the class of sensations which "constitutes "pain" for me", and b) that it "corresponds" in some way to the sensations which "constitutes "pain" for other people". In pointing out the properties of the so-called certain propositions, Ayer makes clear that he is not implying that the sensations themselves are doubtful. Sensations are neither true nor false, nor doubtful.

³*Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 91.

⁴*Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 92.

A sensation simply occurs. What are doubtful are the propositions which refer to our sensations, including the propositions which describe the qualities of a presented sense-content, or assert that a certain sense-content has occurred.⁵

How successful is this attempt to remove the difficulties of the traditional standpoint? Consider the following:

- a) This is a pain;
- b) This is a triangle;
- c) This is a horse.

Ayer has pointed out the similarities between them. For him, in saying (a), I am saying at least that it is an element in the class of sensations which "constitutes "pain" for me". The second part of the claim that Ayer makes with respect to sense-contents, viz., that it "corresponds" in some way to the sensations which "constitute "pain" for other people", is presumably a property of this particular type of sentence, that is, those referring to sense-contents. There is real difficulty in analysing this second claim. It is important to note that Ayer does not attempt to explain in what way my sensations of pain "correspond" to those of other people, although such an explanation is essential if the word "correspond" is not to become a convenient blanket-term to avoid the problem of solipsism. For Ayer, in saying (b), I am classifying a figure as a triangle; (a) and (b) are similar in this respect (i.e., in that they are both classificatory). But there may be important differences between the two. In the case of (b) I have unambiguous criteria for calling a figure a triangle, it must be i) three-sided, ii) a closed figure, and iii) lying in a plane. There

⁵*Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 93.

are consequently tests that I can apply before deciding whether or not the figure is a triangle. When asked: "Why do you say that it is a triangle?", I am able to reply - that the figure is three-sided, is closed and lies in a plane. It is true that we do not always have such unambiguous criteria available. In case (c) there is no one list of criteria such that if all apply the animal is a horse, and if less than all of them apply, then it is not a horse. The notion of necessary and sufficient conditions has a limited application. Nevertheless, there are certain characteristics of horses - they are four-legged, have hoofs, have a mane, have long tails (unless cut), they whinney and neigh, they eat hay, etc.. If we found an animal which looked like a horse, moved like a horse, ate the same things as a horse, but barked, we might or might not decide to call it a horse. The hesitation is of little importance. What is important is that whichever decision we come to, we could give the criteria that influenced our decision. Usually in such cases we apply the term in question if there is a sizeable "cluster" of the more obvious criteria satisfied. But what happens in case (a)? Are there any criteria available, whether unambiguous or not?

Ayer finds it difficult to give sense to the notion of my making a mistake when I speak of my "sense-contents". The nearest he comes to this is to invent a case in which I have discovered that, whenever I sense a sense-content of a certain quality, I make some distinctive overt bodily movement; and then I may on one occasion be presented with a sense-content which I declare to be of that quality, and then fail to make the bodily reaction I have come to associate with it.

In such a case I should probably abandon the hypothesis that sense-contents of that quality always called out in me the bodily reaction in question. But I should not, logically, be obliged to abandon it. If I found it more convenient, I could save this hypothesis by assuming that I really did make the reaction, although I did not notice it, or, alternatively, that the sense-content did not have the quality I asserted it to have.⁶

It is curious, then, that after meeting with such difficulty in trying to give meaning to a mistake in first person present-tense avowals, Ayer does not examine more closely what sense it makes to speak of first person present-tense avowals being correct, more especially since he lays great stress on the role of verification in a theory of meaning. I have suggested that there is a straightforward sense in which we can verify the statement "This is a triangle" and the statement "This is a horse." We know what properties triangles have, and we know what properties horses usually have. And what properties does a sensation have that makes it a pain? This is the question Ayer should have posed, bearing in mind that for (a) ("This is a pain") to be the sort of sentence which may be true or false, he must be able to verify the statement. Just as Ayer emphasizes the possibility of verification before allowing that a sentence may be a proposition, i.e., true or false, so does Wittgenstein throughout his later work emphasize the need for public criteria (for verification) before we may claim to know that something is the case (for when we say "I know that . . .", what follows the "that" must be the sort of sentence that may be true). (I am not suggesting that the notions of verification for both philosophers are the same in all respects.)

But what happens if we ask the question, "What properties does a

⁶*Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 92.

sensation have that makes it a pain?" A pain is a sensation which is unpleasant. But to say of something that it is unpleasant is not to say something of it in the same way as to say, for example, that it is square. In saying that I find something unpleasant, I am not implying that everyone will find it unpleasant. But on Ayer's model, my pain "corresponds" in some way to those sensations which "constitute "pain" for other people". Is it not supposed to mean at least this - that the sort of sensation I find unpleasant is the sort of sensation that other people would find unpleasant? But how can one make sense of verifying that the sensations which "constitute "pain" for me" correspond to the sensations which "constitute "pain" for others"?

Our reason for being in these difficulties is that we spoke of a pain as though we were talking about a material object with readily observable properties which made it an object of a certain kind. Ayer, in his use of "sense-contents", seems to accept the model without qualms, even though it becomes clear to him that there are difficulties (for example, in giving sense to the notion of a mistaken judgement about them). It is significant that Ayer's treatment is of propositions of subject-predicate form; the picture of ascribing properties to an object is thus almost inevitable.

It positively seems to us as if pain had a body, as if it were a thing, a body with shape and colour. Why? Has it the shape of the part of the body that hurts? One would like to say for example "I could *describe* the pain if I only had the necessary words and elementary meanings". . . . As if one could even paint the sensation, if only other people would understand this language. -And one really can describe pain spatially and temporally.⁷

⁷Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Berkeley, 1967), para. 482.

It is a consequence of treating "pain" substantively that upon the information that we can describe pain spatially and temporally, that we can give the location, say when it began and how long it lasted, we meet with the reaction - yes, but that does not say anything about the pain; it tells us where it is located, when and for how long, but it does not tell us what it is.

SECTION V

An examination of Wittgenstein's approach as such, to see how it differs from traditional analysis. (This is a preparation for using approach (b), listed under SECTION IV, p. 13.) The traditional focussing of attention on propositions of subject-predicate form. The inadequacy of the Leibnizian thesis of no "purely extrinsic denominations". The many different kinds of sentences. Confusion arising from another traditional assumption - that any meaningful sentence is either true or false (not both). The importance of the context of some sentences in speaking of their truth or falsity. Wittgenstein's point that language is used, and used in any number of different ways. The distinction between the grammar of a sentence and the way in which it is used (i.e., the way it functions) illustrated. Logical differences between two sentences not always accompanied by a difference in grammar. Inadequacy of the "Meaning = Referring" theory.

It will be helpful at this stage to examine Wittgenstein's approach as such before applying it to "the problem of asymmetry". It was customary until recently for philosophers to concentrate their analyses on sentences of subject-predicate form. Syllogistic logic, founded by Aristotle, met with no opposition until the developments of twentieth century logic. The work of Aristotle was developed during this time, but the basis was not altered. This basis is the claim that every proposition can be reduced to one of the following types:

- 1) All -'s are -'s;

- 2) No -'s are -'s;
- 3) Some -'s are -'s;
- 4) Some -'s are not -'s.

It is one of Leibniz's fundamental propositions that relational statements are reducible to statements of subject-predicate form. He claims that there are no "purely extrinsic denominations" (where an "extrinsic denomination" may be taken to mean a relation, and an "intrinsic denomination" may be taken to mean a predicate):

To be in a place is not a bare extrinsic denomination; indeed, there is no denomination so extrinsic that it does not have an intrinsic denomination as its basis. This is itself one of my important doctrines.¹

There are no extrinsic denominations, and no one becomes a widower in India by the death of his wife in Europe unless a real change occurs in him. For every predicate is in fact contained in the nature of the subject.²

It is true that there are some relations which are reducible to propositions of subject-predicate form. This type of relational proposition is not reducible to a single subject-predicate proposition, but to a conjunction of such propositions. An example of this type of relation given by Rescher is: $xRy = x$ is the same colour as y .³ Then if we know the colour of the object x and that of the object y , we can determine whether xRy holds or not. The conjunction of subject-predicate propositions which this relational proposition reduces to in this instance will be something like: $(x \text{ is red}).(y \text{ is red})$. But contrary

¹Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, trans. and ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Chicago, 1956), p. 857.

²Leibniz, p. 606.

³Nicholas Rescher, *The Philosophy of Leibniz* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1967), p. 72.

to the Leibnizian thesis, there are also some irreducible relations where we cannot be rid of the relation by constructing a conjunction of subject-predicate propositions. The relation will still be found in the predicates of the propositions so that, in effect, no reduction has taken place at all. An example of such a relation is that of "being to the left (or to the right) of".⁴

It seems that we are to discover the limitations of the subject-predicate analysis by drawing up a list of the types of propositions it fails to cover. And at this point Wittgenstein breaks away from this approach. If we take a propositional schema in first order calculus we may, by certain decision procedures, discover whether or not it is valid. The procedures are purely mechanical, and we deal with the propositional schema by itself. We cannot find out all there is to know about sentences in a natural language in this way; it is not innocuous here to examine them in isolation.

But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question, and command? -There are *countless* kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. . . . Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others:

- Giving orders, and obeying them-
- Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements-
- Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)-
- Reporting an event-
- Speculating about an event-
- Forming and testing a hypothesis-
- Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams-
- Making up a story; and reading it-
- Play-acting-
- Singing catches-
- Guessing riddles-

⁴Rescher, p. 73.

Making a joke; telling it-
 Solving a problem in practical arithmetic-
 Translating from one language into another-
 Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.
 -It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language.⁵

We are tempted to say that any meaningful sentence is either true or false. But consider what happens if we make the assumption. We are telling a child a fairy story, during which the following proposition occurs:

1) "The old woman gave Jack a bag of beans."

Is it true, or false? Every proposition is one or the other. Let us say that it is false then, since there really was no such person as the old woman and no beans either. And now let us adapt the story a little. The giant, on confronting Jack, asks him if the old woman gave him any beans. Jack becomes frightened and answers:

2) "No, no-one gave me any beans."

Now is this true, or false? We may say that it is true; there was no such person as Jack and no beans, for we should take the meaning of the sentence to be, "No-one gave Jack any beans." But now the child asks: "Is that true? Was Jack telling the truth?" Shall we persist in saying that proposition (2) is true? Shall I answer the child by saying, "Yes, it is true that no-one gave Jack any beans."? But then have I answered the child at all? The child may know that this is a fairy story, that there was really no Jack at all. He is not asking whether or not there really was such a person as Jack. He is asking whether the

⁵Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1963), para. 23.

proposition is true within the story. The point is not that it is difficult to say whether these propositions are true, or false, but rather that the presupposition that each of the propositions must be either true or false (and not both) is misleading. There is a danger of underestimating the importance of the context of the sentence, as though we could 'discover' whether the sentence was true or false by an examination of it alone. When we tell a fairy story we use sentences differently from when we describe a scene we saw earlier in the day. There is a sense in which we can speak of sentences being true even though they are found in a piece of fiction, just as we sometimes speak of actions within a play being genuine: "Hermia and Lysander are really lovers, but the two on the right are just acting; that's Bottom playing Pyramus and Flute is taking the part of Thisbe. They are performing a play in honour of Theseus and Hippolyte."

It is important to appreciate that in pointing out the different ways in which sentences may be used, Wittgenstein is not attempting to draw up an exhaustive list. The logician, on the other hand, would consider such a list an ideal to be aimed at, an exhaustive list of different types of propositions, so that any given proposition could be fitted unambiguously into one type or another. But propositions are used, points out Wittgenstein, and any one may be used in a variety of language-games.

. . . someone might object against me: "You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache, the part about the *general form of propositions* and of language."

And this is true. -Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one

thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, -but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language".⁶

Sentences are used for more reasons than communicating information. It was tempting to assume that the four types of propositions set out in Aristóteleian logic were assertoric, that the function of language was to affirm something to be the case, to describe some state of affairs. But it is to be appreciated that the grammar of a sentence does not necessarily give us a guide to its use.

Consider the sentence "Isn't that strange?" In what ways may the sentence be used? It is not always used in the same way. It may be used, not as a *bona fide* question, but as a comment, or as an exclamation. In such contexts "That's strange!" or "How strange!" would serve just as well. Here the 'questioner' does not wish to be told whether or not it is strange. It may be that nothing said to the speaker will cause him to change his mind. He is saying, "I find it strange" (and other people may not find it strange, and yet not take exception to what he says). Or it may be used as a question, asking for information. We may imagine a visitor listening to a psychiatrist discussing a case history. The visitor follows the conversation quite understandingly until he is told of a certain action performed by the patient which strikes him as completely incongruous. Until then the visitor thought he had built up rather a good picture of the patient and the things he was likely to do, and the further along the account progressed the more able he was to predict what the patient was going to do. But this action took him by surprise. And

⁶*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 65.

so he asks the authority, the psychiatrist, "Isn't that strange?" He most definitely would like an answer. Perhaps here the psychiatrist would advise the hearer to wait a while until the whole picture is presented, and then he will see that it fits in, that it was not strange at all. Or, on some occasions, the sentence may be used as a warning. Imagine the psychiatrist listening to the visitor who is unconcernedly relating the day's actions of an acquaintance. The psychiatrist listens uneasily, and finally something that the acquaintance is reported to have done convinces him that something is wrong. "Isn't that strange?", he says. And this is not a question, nor is it an exclamation. We may say that he is warning the visitor that something is strange. The different number of uses any one sentence may have is indefinite. An examination of the grammar of the sentence will not present those different uses before us. Nor may we assume that two sentences having the same grammar will have the same range of uses. There may be some uses that are common to both sentences, and there may be other uses that one of the sentences has but which the other does not.

The logical differences between two sentences are not always accompanied by a difference in grammar - which is to say, if we wish to avoid confusion in our use of language, we must resist the temptation to place propositions into different boxes by a consideration of their grammar alone. The logical differences are best illuminated by examining how we use the sentences, by seeing what role they have in various language-games. To understand the 'meaning' of a large class of sentences we are advised, not to study the sentences in isolation, but rather to examine them in use, to examine their functions, to compare them

with other sentences with the same grammar to discover their logical properties.

Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language. -Some of them can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another; this may be called an "analysis" of our forms of expression, for the process is sometimes like one of taking a thing apart.⁷

With this approach Wittgenstein breaks away from traditional meaning theories. The preoccupation with sentences of subject-predicate form, where one is saying something about the subject, led to a correspondingly narrow account of 'meaning'. This account I shall call the "Meaning = Referring" theory. To understand a sentence of the standard form "S is P" one had to know first, to what "S" referred, and secondly, what was being predicated of it. This presented immediate difficulties when the subject of the sentence did not exist. If one says, "Mercury had winged heels", is the sentence meaningless? The traditionalist feels obliged to say - yes, for how can we know to what the subject term refers if there is nothing for it to refer to? How can we predicate something of nothing? But must he then say that all sentences with "non-existent subjects" are meaningless? If so, then to say, "Mercury had winged heels", is meaningless just as to say, "Runs jumps sat", is meaningless, and this is very misleading. Wittgenstein avoids this and less obvious difficulties arising from this account of 'meaning'.

⁷*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 90.

SECTION VI

The second approach (i.e., (b) listed under SECTION IV, p. 13 above). Wittgenstein's distinction between "the use as object" and "the use as subject" of "I" (or "my"). His claim that I cannot know that I am in pain. His demand for public evidence (i.e., public criteria) so that the notion of my making a mistake has sense, without which it makes no sense to speak of knowing.

Now let us examine his approach as it is applied to psychological concepts, especially in relation to sensation language.

There are two different cases in the use of the word "I" (or "my") which I might call "the use as object" and "the use as subject". Examples of the first kind of use are these: "My arm is broken", "I have grown six inches", "I have a bump on my forehead", "The wind blows my hair about". Examples of the second kind are: "I see so-and-so", "I hear so-and-so", "I try to lift my arm", "I think it will rain", "I have toothache". One can point to the difference between these two categories by saying: The cases of the first category involve recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error, or as I should rather put it: The possibility of an error has been provided for. . . . On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I say I have toothache. To ask "are you sure it's *you* who have pains?" would be nonsensical.¹

Wittgenstein is arguing that whereas in the first category of sentences (the "use as object") the first person use and its third person use counterpart are analogous (i.e., "My arm is broken" is analogous to "His arm is broken"), in the second category of sentences (the "use as subject") there is a disanalogy between the first person use and its third person use counterpart (i.e., "I have toothache" is not analogous to "He has toothache"). That is to say, there is no possibility of my making an error when I say, "I have toothache" (to be construed as, "It is I who have toothache"), or "I am in pain" (to be construed as, "It is I

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1969), pp. 66-67.

who am in pain"), whereas there is room for error when I say, "He is in pain" (to be construed as, "It is he who is in pain"). But this may be an ambiguous fashion of putting the point. Wittgenstein is not claiming infallibility when I say, "I have toothache"; in saying that a mistake is not possible he is not saying that on every such occasion I am right. Rather he suggests that in such cases the notions of right and wrong, i.e., of correct and incorrect, do not apply. To ask, "Are you sure that it's you who have pains?", says Wittgenstein, would be nonsensical. Now suppose instead the question was, "Are you sure it's he who has pains?"; this question is significant. The difference between the two cases is that if I answer that I am sure it's he who is having pains, that I know that it's he who has pains, and am asked to give evidence for the claim, I can do so. I may mention any or all of the four types of evidence set out earlier (p. 8): the cause of the pain, linguistic evidence, other behaviour, and possibly autonomic nervous system indicators. For example, I may say that he is the one who put his hand on the hot stove, who is shaking his hand, and who is sweating. And these are public criteria to individuate him as the person in pain. But if I say that I know that it's I who have pains and am asked on what I base my claim, what am I to say? Am I to say that I am the one who put her hand on the hot stove, etc.? Would it be relevant to observe my behaviour in this way when asked, "Are you sure that it's you who have pains?"? Suppose I do remember that I placed my hand on the hot stove. But one feels tempted to say, "Even if I do shake my hand, even if I do recall having put my hand on the hot stove, if I do not feel a pain then it is not I who am in pain, and the fact that I shake my hand and

remember having put it on the hot stove will not persuade me that it is I who am feeling a pain. I know I am in pain because I can feel it." - which is to say, "I know I have a pain because I have it." In picking out myself as the person in pain, there is no evidence given; there is nothing offered as relevant that other people may check on.

By now it is clear that so far from considering myself in a privileged position when I claim that "I am in pain", Wittgenstein suggests that I cannot claim to know that it is I who am in pain at all. The notion of "introspective evidence" (and many attempts have been made to make sense of this notion), insofar as it refers to some sort of evidence which is private, i.e., not available to more than one person, constitutes a contradiction in terms.

This demand for public criteria before we can be said to know that something is the case is made most clear in the following passage:

Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. -I will remark first of all that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. -But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition. . . . A definition surely serves to establish the meaning of a sign. -Well, that is done precisely by the concentrating of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between the sign and the sensation. -But "I impress it on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion *right* in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'.²

To be right is to be distinguished from merely thinking that I am right; but for this distinction to be drawn, there must be some independent criteria that may be appealed to. A feeling of conviction here is not

²*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 258.

enough.

One says "I know" where one can also say "I believe" or "I suspect"; where one *can find out*."³ [My emphasis]

SECTION VII

Objections to the Wittgensteinian thesis. Aune's contrast between "He knows that 'p'" and "He does not know that 'p'." The ineffectiveness of this objection. Aune's second objection: the possibility of knowledge resting entirely upon the analysis of concepts such that there would be many cases in which the criteria for understanding a statement would be the same as those for recognizing its truth. Wittgenstein's reply.

Wittgenstein's claim that it makes no sense to say that I know that I am in pain has been vigorously attacked. I shall mention one set of objections.

Aune articulates Wittgenstein's basic point as follows: "He knows that 'p'" makes sense only if "He doubts, or merely thinks, that 'p'" makes sense.¹ But, says Aune, why not contrast "He knows that 'p'" with "He does not know that 'p'"? Now I strongly doubt whether Aune has appreciated the point of Wittgenstein's 'contrasts', namely to emphasize the demand for evidence before a claim is allowed to be a knowledge claim. The point of the contrast between "I doubt" or "I suspect" and "I know" is that to move from one to the other, one must perform certain investigations or tests, to acquire evidence on which to base the claim; one can "find out".

Aune offers two types of cases in which his suggested contrast

³*Philosophical Investigations*, p. 221.

¹Aune, p. 95.

(between "He knows that 'p'" and "He does not know that 'p'"), is brought out. First, a person may never have had, or may have lost, the concept of pain, and hence would not know that he is in pain. But this seems to be irrelevant to Wittgenstein's standpoint; from the previous discussion and his examples, etc., Wittgenstein's claim appears to be that if one has the concept of pain, then it makes no sense to say "I doubt/am unsure whether I have a pain", (for Aune change "I doubt" into "I do not know"). It is no objection to this (Wittgenstein's) thesis to say that it does make sense to say, "I doubt . . ." (for Aune, "I do not know . . ."), when one does not have the concept of pain. To show this claim to be relevant, Aune must first argue that the looking for the contrast within the limited discourse of those who have the concept is not only unnecessary, but also misguided. It may be noted that if we restrict Aune's choice of "not know", as opposed to "doubt", to avowals where the person does have the concept of pain, then there is very little point in his opting for "not know" rather than "doubt" since they may be used interchangeably:

If he now said, for example: "Oh, I know what 'pain' means; what I don't know is whether *this*, that I have now, is pain" -we should merely shake our heads and be forced to regard his words as a queer reaction which we have no idea what to do with.²

I see **no** objection to substituting "I am not sure whether . . ." for "I don't know whether . . ." in the above quotation.

Aune's second objection, where he gives his second type of case, is more interesting. We are asked to consider that if there were knowledge resting entirely on the analysis of concepts, then we may

²*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 288.

suppose that there would be many cases in which the criteria for understanding a statement would be the same as those for recognizing its truth. This is how Aune phrases it,³ but presumably we are to take it that there is such knowledge. The example given of such a statement is: "One plus one equals two."

. . . if a person did not know that one plus one equals two, it would probably be held that he did not know what addition is, or that he did not know what is meant by "one," "two," or "equals."⁴

He then goes on to say that if we accept the Wittgensteinian thesis, we should be obliged to conclude that "One plus one equals two" states something that could not be known - "which is absurd, considering the normal usage of the word "know"." I take it that when Aune speaks of statements in which the criteria for understanding are the same as those for recognizing its truth, he is referring to what are ordinarily called "analytically true statements". It is a characteristic of this type of statement that we can see that they are necessarily true by an examination of the statement alone, and they are in an important sense timeless. Whenever the question is asked, "Is 'One plus one equals two' true, or false?", the answer is always the same. It does not matter who asks, it does not matter who answers, it does not matter when it is asked. That is to say, the context of utterance is of no relevance in determining the truth of the statement. This is typical of a mathematical statement.

A passage from *Zettel* will best illustrate the answer I think

³Aune, p. 95.

⁴Aune, p. 95-96.

⁵Aune, p. 96.

"I know what 97×78 is." "I know that 97×78 is 432." In the first case I tell someone that I can do something, that I possess something; in the second I simply asseverate that 97×78 is 432. For doesn't " 97×78 is quite definitely 432" say: *I know* it is so? The first sentence is not an arithmetical one, nor can it be replaced by an arithmetical one; an arithmetical sentence could be used in place of the second one.⁶

[I suspect there was no philosophical reason for Wittgenstein's choosing an incorrect answer to 97×78 ; he probably made no attempt to work it out.]

What is the distinction that Wittgenstein is trying to draw? The first kind of use is not arithmetical, it tells us that the speaker has a certain ability, namely the ability to give the correct answer when asked, "What is 97×78 ?", or, since the figures we are dealing with in this example are quite large, perhaps we should wish to speak of his ability to calculate the correct answer. And it is important, since it is an ability, that the person be able to give or calculate the correct answer on more than one occasion; he must be able to give it on most occasions, he must normally be able to give it. Such an ability or skill is usefully accounted for in dispositional terms. The person's successful attempts provide us with evidence for ascribing the ability to him; and what is more important, they also provide him with evidence for attributing the ability to himself. This would seem to justify the use of "know" here. From this account it may be seen that the sentence "I know what 97×78 is" has a certain predictive content, which content tells us something about the person. On the other hand, with the second sentence ("I know that 97×78 is 432"), we are not saying something about the person, we are not ascribing an ability and a dispositional account is out of place. The sentence is arithmetical, timeless; just the sort of

⁶Zettel, para. 406.

sentence whose truth can be recognized by "an analysis of concepts". I gather that Wittgenstein is claiming that here the "I know" does no work, that, indeed, both in the case of "I am in pain" and in the case of sentences like "One plus one equals two", the prefix, "I know", would have no function. This passage from *Zettel* shows very clearly the importance Wittgenstein lays on the possibility of verification of a proposition before I can claim to know it.

SECTION VIII

The disanalogy between "I am in pain" and "He is in pain" referred to in *The Blue and Brown Books* (and mentioned above - SECTION VI). Sentences function in many ways. Although the sentence "I am in pain" is not reportative like "He is in pain", this does not mean that it has no meaning.

Wittgenstein is suggesting, then, that the sentence "I am in pain" (to be construed as, "It is I who am in pain"), does not function as a report in the same way as does the sentence "He is in pain" ("It is he who is in pain"), the reason for the distinction being that in the case of my saying, "I am in pain" (as opposed to, "He is in pain"), nothing counts as evidence for it.

And now this way of stating our idea suggests itself: that it is as impossible that in making the statement "I have toothache" I should have mistaken another person for myself, as it is to moan with pain by mistake, having mistaken someone else for me. To say, "I have pain" is no more a statement *about* a particular person than moaning is.¹

The difference between the propositions "I have pain" and "he has pain" is not that of "L.W. has pain" and "Smith has pain". Rather, it corresponds to the difference between moaning and saying that

¹*The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 67.

someone moans.²

I wish to make clear that I take the point in the second quotation to be that the sentence "I am in pain" is comparable to a groan in the following respect: that neither is reporting who is in pain in the same way as does the sentence "He is in pain". But to say that the sentence "I am in pain" (or "I have a pain") does not report a state of affairs in the same way as does "He is in pain", is not to say that the sentence has no meaning. Of course, if we accept that to report something or to describe a state of affairs is the only function of language, then we should be obliged to abandon the sentence at this stage.

This use of language (i.e., reporting or describing) has been taken to be the predominant function of language (if not the only function) throughout most of traditional philosophy, and a most damaging assumption it has shown itself to be. The existence of "mental" objects, states and processes has been insisted upon in order to allow sentences to serve as descriptions. "Mental pictures" and "images" have been posited to account for what we mean, for example, when we say that we "imagine" something. But it is not so easy to make the notion of "mental processes" intelligible. As soon as we reject the assumption that to report or describe is the primary function of language, much of the temptation to speak of "mental pictures" and "images", etc., is removed. To say that a sentence does not function as a straightforward report is not to say that it does not have a function at all.

Consider what Wittgenstein says when he speaks of the concept of a pain in *Philosophical Investigations*:

²*The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 68.

"But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behaviour accompanied by pain and pain-behaviour without pain?" -Admit it? What greater difference could there be? -"And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a *nothing*." -Not at all. It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here.³

In the light of the previous discussion I suggest that what Wittgenstein is trying to say here is, that in the past philosophers have tended to take for granted that "sentences about pain" are used to describe the pain or the state of someone's mind, that a person uses sentences such as "I am in pain" in order to inform another person or himself that he has a particular type of sensation; and he may attempt to describe this "mental object". But there are differences between describing a chair, say, and describing this "mental object which I have before me". In the case of the chair it makes sense to say that I have misdescribed, that I have made a mistake. There are public criteria which I may appeal to to decide whether or not it is an accurate description. There are not public criteria which I appeal to when I "describe a pain". When Wittgenstein in the above quotation says that "It (i.e., the pain) is not a something", I take him to be saying just this: that to speak about pains in the same way as we speak about, say, chairs causes confusion. The grammar of pain-sentences may be the same as those of chair-sentences, but rather than dwell on this similarity, we should examine the differences in the way we use these different types of sentences. In the second half of the paradox - "but (the pain is) not a nothing either!" - I take Wittgenstein to be pointing out that even though to speak about a pain is not like

³*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 304.

speaking about a chair, even though pain-sentences are not like chair-sentences (i.e., they are used in different ways), this does not mean that pain-sentences are meaningless. This account makes the paradox intelligible and also shows the significance of Wittgenstein's last part of the paragraph:

The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts -which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please.⁴

SECTION IX

A closer examination of the "use as object" sentences, especially of the supposed analogy between "My arm is broken" and "His arm is broken." The seeming connection of the category distinction between "I" used as object and "I" used as subject with the category distinction between a material object and a "sense-content". An important distinction between two questions:

- a) Does the question involve a public object?
- b) Are the criteria appealed to in settling the question public or not?

The reliance on public criteria in asking "Are these books my books?" My reliance in answering the question "Is this foot my foot?" on my 'knowing' that this body is my body. "This body is my body" may not be assimilated to sentences like "This book is my book." Logical similarity between "This body is my body" and "This sensation is my sensation."

Let us now consider sentences belong to Wittgenstein's first category ("the use as object"¹). Here there is a supposed analogy between members of this category and their third person use counterpart, between, for example, "My arm is broken" and "His arm is broken." The sentences in this category receive little attention from Wittgenstein;

⁴*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 304.

¹*The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 66.

his activities are directed towards bringing out the disanalogies between "I am in pain" and "He is in pain" (i.e., illuminating the "use as subject" category). It is significant that the examples he gives of sentences belonging to the "use as subject" category all involve what have usually been labelled "mental processes" or "mental states" (see *The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 69 para. 2 to p. 70 para. 1 and 2).

In fact one may say that what in these investigations we were concerned with was the grammar of those words which describe what are called "mental activities": seeing, hearing, feeling, etc..²

The examples he gives of sentences belonging to the "use as object" category all involve public objects, and one has the impression that the two categories correspond in some way to sentences about "mental activities" and sentences about "material objects"; and it is here that I think Wittgenstein has oversimplified the issue.

Consider:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| I) Is this broken arm mine or not? | -Room for error. |
| II) Is this sensation mine or not? | -No room for error. |

I wish to emphasize that the mistake Wittgenstein refers to is not the mistake of claiming my arm to be broken when, in fact, it is not broken; it is rather the mistake of claiming the broken arm to be mine when, in fact, it is not mine. There is one major difference between the two types of sentences, already mentioned: that in type (I) reference is made to some public object, a claim is made about such an object. This is not the case in type (II). The public objects are publically recognizable, publically identifiable. We have criteria for deciding that "this" is a broken arm. We may make an X-ray examination, perform or witness an

²*The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 70.

operation in which the bone is reset. There is no limit to the number of people who could help in identifying the object in this way. But there is nothing similar we may do in a type (II) sentence. A sensation is not an object that is publically identifiable in this way. Indeed, I suggest we beware of speaking of "a sensation" as an 'object' at all.

But here it is important to distinguish two questions:

- a) Does the question involve a public object in this way (i.e., as in question (I) above)?
- b) Are the criteria appealed to in settling the question public or not?

I am not satisfied that Wittgenstein has distinguished the two, and I see a temptation to assume that if a question is "about a public object" then it will be settled by appealing to public criteria.

I shall now quote a paragraph from *Philosophical Investigations* which prompted an examination of sentences like number (I) (above):

Consider how the following questions can be applied, and how settled:

- (1) "Are these books *my* books?"
- (2) "Is this foot *my* foot?"
- (3) "Is this body *my* body?"
- (4) "Is this sensation *my* sensation?"

Each of these questions has practical (non-philosophical) applications.

(2) Think of cases in which my foot is anaesthetized or paralysed. Under certain circumstances the question could be settled by determining whether I can feel pain in **this** foot.

(3) Here one might be pointing to a mirror-image. Under certain circumstances, however, one might touch a body and ask the question. In others it means the same as: "Does my body look like *that*?"

(4) Which sensation does one mean by '*this*' one? That is: how is one using the demonstrative pronoun here? Certainly otherwise than in, say, the first example! Here confusion occurs because one imagines that by directing one's attention to a sensation one is pointing to it.³

Consider the first example: "Are these books my books?" It may be pointed

³Para. 411.

out first of all that more people than myself may see and handle the books in question. "These books", by virtue of their being public objects, may be scrutinized by any number of different people. And to what criteria should I appeal to settle this question? There is no one criterion here, nor a set of fixed criteria, but there are typical examples. I may look to see if the title is one on the list of titles I have of the books that I have bought. If it is on the list, I may look to see if the initials "J.H." are printed inside the cover. I may examine the book cover itself, to look for the marks that were on the cover of my copy of this book. I may look inside to see if there are sections marked off in pencil, the sections I marked off in my copy of the book, etc.. Now not only can other people see and handle the books in question, they can perform all the tests that I should perform to answer the question, and they are in no worse a position than myself to do this. What I am saying is, that if there were one hundred of "these books", I could call in a few more people, give them a copy of my list of titles, against each title of which are notes on the pencil marks, stains and crease marks, etc., to be found inside or on the cover of my copy of the book, and ask them to assist me in the task. There is no reason here for supposing myself to be in any sort of privileged position. The criteria are public, and it because the criteria are public that it makes sense to say that there is the possibility of an error. It is possible, of course, for the notes to be incomplete or insufficient. The others, acting upon the notes, may say, "Yes, this one is yours"; and I may reply, "No, it does not have a red pen mark on the back" (this was not included in the notes that I gave them). And this is

either a fault of memory when I drew up the lists, or a fault of omission. The reason for my having little regard for any mysticism as regards my recognizing a book as mine is simple: we imagine a thief (of a rather warped variety) who steals one of my books, takes his own copy, and with great skill and patience reproduces all the pencil marks, stains and crease marks, etc., to be found on my copy on his copy. He then puts both copies among the pile of books being sorted, and watches as they are both picked out by my other helpers on the basis of what they have written on their lists, and as they are both "recognized" by me. Such an example shows clearly enough, I think, the sorts of criteria used and how an error is possible.

Let us now examine case (2): "Is this foot my foot?" May we treat it in the same way as the question: "Is this book my book?"? I suppose the case in which we should most expect the question "Is this foot my foot?" to be like "Is this book my book?" is when the foot has been severed, say, in an accident. Any number of people may see it, etc.. And now, what criteria will be appealed to to settle the question? Could I not draw up a list of marks, scars and so on, that they are to look for, and could not any number of people have a copy of this list and examine the foot by referring to it? (This whole example is necessarily gruesome.) The cases seem to be analogous. We might even imagine our warped thief turning to plastic surgery and bringing into the room another foot bearing all the same marks and scars as the foot already under examination. And now we have two objects with qualitatively the same appearance. Then we should try to establish spatio-temporal continuity between one of the feet and my foot. And have we not allowed

for error? But consider what the people are doing. They are appealing to the criteria to decide whether or not this foot was attached to this body. And this is all they are doing. The criteria would normally allow them to decide whether this particular foot was earlier attached to this particular body. But my question was: "Is this foot my foot?", i.e., "Was this foot previously attached to my body?", not: "Was this foot previously attached to this body?" But surely, it may be objected, what they are doing is relevant? Surely it is helpful? Let us suppose that I accept the result of their investigation. Then I may say: "This foot was attached to this body." To be able to say: "This foot is my foot", I need to be able to say that:

- 1) this foot was attached to this body;
- 2) this body is my body;

therefore, 3) this foot is my foot.

Thus, if (1) is true and (2) is true, then (3) is true. But for reasons which I hope will become clearer, I have reservations about treating sentence (2) as a sentence that is true or false.

The same sort of thing would happen if I asked, "Is this foot my foot?" and, instead of speaking of a severed foot, I was speaking of a photograph, or a drawing, or a film of a foot - of a representation of a foot, in fact. Again any number of people might see the photograph, and any number of people might appeal to a set of public criteria to decide whether this photograph was a photograph of this foot. And, as in the previous example, there is room for mistake in this. But what would have been established would be this: "This photograph is a photograph of this foot." What I should need to be 'established' would be:

- 1) this photograph is a photograph of this foot;
- 2) this foot is/was attached to/part of this body;
- 3) this body is my body;

therefore, 4) this photograph is a photograph of my foot.

Let us recall what Wittgenstein says on this example of the foot:

Think of cases in which my foot is anaesthetized or paralysed. Under certain circumstances the question could be settled by determining whether I can feel pain in this foot.⁴

I take him to be pointing out two different sorts of cases here (partly because if we look at what he has to say about number (3) - "my body" - he speaks of two different sets of circumstances there in much the same way; and also because if a limb is anaesthetized, there is little point in trying to determine the question by whether or not I can feel pain in the limb). The case in which the foot is anaesthetized is interesting. I suggest that the pattern of the case is something like the pattern of the two cases I have given - of the severed foot and of the photograph. If I were lying on an operating table under a local anaesthetic, I might ask, "Is this foot my foot?" And I should say, "It is attached to this body and, of course, this body is my body." But supposing the foot was not anaesthetized; presumably this is when Wittgenstein is suggesting that the question could be settled by "determining whether I can feel pain in this foot".

And these seem to be the alternatives: when I ask, "Is this foot my foot?" or "Is this arm my arm?", I end my justification for saying that it is in one of two ways, either -

- a) it is/was attached to this body and this body is my body;

⁴*Philosophical Investigations*, para. 411.

or b) I can feel pain (or whatever) in this foot, and so this foot is my foot.

Let us look at (b) first. Is there room for error? But to say that error is possible is to say that we can make sense of the notion of correction (see *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 258), and what sense can be given to this notion here? Does it make sense to say that I am in doubt as to whether or not I can feel pain in "this" foot? There is the same kind of asymmetry between first and third person uses here (i.e., between saying, "I can feel pain in this foot" and saying, "He can feel pain in that foot") as there is between saying, "It is I who am in pain" and "It is he who is in pain." If I say of someone else, "He feels pain in that foot", I may point out that the foot is wounded, that he is clutching the foot, and hopping on the other foot, etc.. These are the sorts of things that would count as evidence here, and any number of people may check them. But when I say, "I feel pain in this foot", do I look first to see if I am wounded? Do I 'see' that I am clutching my foot before I say that I feel pain in it? Are the criteria relevant for establishing that "He is feeling pain in that foot" relevant for establishing that "I am feeling pain in this foot"? And yet Wittgenstein claims that the question "Is this foot my foot?" may be settled on occasions by determining whether I feel pain in this foot. I have attempted to show that there is no sense to the notion of "determining" whether or not I feel pain in this foot, indeed, that to insist that there must be would be inconsistent on Wittgenstein's part; and that, since this is so, there is no advantage in his putting the point in dispositional terms ("whether or not I can feel pain . . ." [my

emphasis]). For the same sorts of reasons that it makes no sense to say that I know that it is I who am in pain, it makes no sense to say I know that I feel pain in this foot.

And what of the second attempt to support the claim that "This foot is my foot", i.e., that it is/was attached to this body, and this body is my body? Suppose I ask, "Is this body my body?", speaking of a photograph. This case is like that in which I asked, "Is this foot my foot?", speaking of a photograph of a foot. We cannot avoid an examination of the question "Is this body my body?" (not speaking of a representation).

If the sentence "This is my body" is innocuous, then, on the Wittgensteinian view, there must be room for error (see SECTION VI, p. 28-31 above). That is to say, we must allow that when I said, "This is my body" I could have made a mistake, that I could have said something which was false; and the corresponding true statement here would be "This is not my body." And this sentence we must be able to give a sense to. Let us agree that there are public criteria for deciding that this body is "J.H.'s body", such considerations as height, weight, hair colour, etc.. These criteria are available to any number of people. That is to say, the sentence "This body is J.H.'s body" is established by an appeal to public criteria, and thus is open to error. We wish to give sense to the sentence "This is not my body." When I say this, other people proceed to check out that this body is J.H.'s body (as it seems to them to be), and they appeal to public criteria to establish that it is. Now how is what they have done relevant to my 'claim' that "This is not my body"? If I am not to be dismissed outright

as uttering nonsense, I shall be construed as saying something like, "I know this body is J.H.'s body using the same criteria as you; I am not questioning your investigations in this respect. But it's not my body; it's J.H.'s body and I'm not J.H.." And what are the others to do? What I am suggesting is that in saying, "This body is my body" I do not make a statement about a particular person any more than I do when I say, "This sensation is my sensation", or, to use one of Wittgenstein's examples from his "'I' used as subject" sentences, "I have toothache."

I shall now try to explain what is gained by this investigation. When I say, "This book is my book", what I am saying may be spelled out in the following way: this book bears marks, and pencil notes that were on my copy of this book; and by "my" copy here, I mean the copy bought at the bookstore at a specific time. Identifying this as my book, I should look for the marks and pencil notes, etc., and also try to establish the spatio-temporal continuity of this book with the one bought at the bookstore. And what entitles me to say that it is mine, that it belongs to me? The book is held (within our society) to be worth, say, ten dollars. At the time of purchase I paid ten dollars to the bookstore representative (to the lawful owner), and now I can make what marks I wish in it, take it with me or leave it behind, treat it carefully or tear it up, read or not read it as I please. I can do with it as I wish. In short, it is mine. Notice that here, so far from the notion of "possession" or "belonging to me" becoming mysterious, it seems to have evaporated. There is nothing "irreducible" or "unanalysable" about this concept of possession. But what happens when we try to make sense of "This body is not my body"? Can we spell it out in terms that

other people can make sense of? Can we decide whether this body is my body by an appeal to public criteria? When I say that this body is my body I am tempted to say that I am saying far more than that this body has such-and-such characteristics. But if I am asked what this "more" is, I do not know what to say. I might feel obliged to say that the notion of "possession" here, of the body's being "mine", is not open to analysis, that it is "irreducible" - which is just to say that I cannot explain the notion.

I suggest that the reason we feel this temptation is because we have tried to treat the sentence "This body is my body" as though it were used in the same way as the sentence "This book is my book." The picture that has forced its way on us is misleading. If we take the question "How do you know that it's your body?" to be significant, as is the question "How do you know that it's your book?", we have already the picture of the 'mind' or the 'soul' being "lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel."⁵ The thing that is odd is that we are directing the question not to Peter, but to Peter's soul. We are asking the "ghost" to tell us how he knows that this machine is his. But we do not know what this "ghost" is supposed to be. Is it supposed to know certain things? Well surely, it may be argued, the body does not know anything. And so the "ghost" must? And what means does it have to come by knowledge? People see, hear, touch; what does the "ghost" do? The whole picture becomes a mess, and it is this picture that I am suggesting can be avoided if we appreciate the logical similarity between "This body is my body" and "This sensation is my sensation."

⁵Descartes, p. 155.

SECTION X

The results of the investigation set out schematically as a prelude to asking a final question: Is the "'I' used as object" category an empty category? An attempt to make sense of the "'I' used as subject" - "'I' used as object" category distinction. Aune's failure to distinguish clearly between a sentence, and a use of a sentence. Conclusion.

I wish now to set out as clearly as possible the results of the investigation as a prelude to asking a final question.

Wittgenstein drew a category distinction between "I" used as subject and "I" used as object.¹ I shall present what he said about the category distinction schematically:

"I" used as subject"I" used as object

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) no room for error; | 1) room for error; |
| 2) ". . . no question of recognizing a person", ² not "a statement <u>about</u> a particular person"; ³ | 2) involves recognition of a person, is a statement <u>about</u> a particular person; |
| 3) the examples given of sentences in this category all involve so-called "mental activities", (Wittgenstein makes this association clear in <i>The Blue and Brown Books</i> , p. 69 para. 2 to p, 70 para. 1 and 2); | 3) the examples given of sentences in this category all involve public objects - my body, or parts of it; |
| 4) a disanalogy claimed between sentences in this category and their third person use counterparts (for example, between " <u>I</u> am in pain" and " <u>He</u> is in pain"). | 4) an analogy claimed between sentences in this category and their third person use counterparts (for example, between "My arm is broken" and "His arm is broken"). |

¹*The Blue and Brown Books*, pp. 66-67.

²*The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 67.

³*The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 67.

The claimed disanalogy was examined and found to hold. "I am in pain" and "He is in pain" are disanalogous. The disanalogy may be set out as follows:

<u>"I am in pain" (a sentence in the "use as subject" category)</u>	<u>"He is in pain" (its third person use counterpart)</u>
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- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) no public criteria available; | 1) public criteria available; |
| 2) I cannot <u>know</u> that <u>I</u> am in pain. | 2) I <u>can</u> know that <u>he</u> is in pain. |

The claimed analogy was then examined, and it was shown that the analogy does not hold. "My arm is broken" and "His arm is broken" are dis-analogous. The disanalogy corresponds to the disanalogy between "I am in pain" and "He is in pain" as set out above. The examples Wittgenstein has in the "'I' used as object" category depend on the claim "This body is my body" being open to public check. "This body is my body" was examined and found to be logically akin to "This sensation is my sensation" (not verified by an appeal to public criteria), and not to "This book is my book" (which is verified by an appeal to public criteria). Thus the sorts of sentences which Wittgenstein gives as examples of "I" used as object turn out upon examination to be further examples of "I" used as subject.

The question which finally presents itself is: Is the "'I" used as object" category, then, an empty category? Let us set out the category distinction itself, i.e., the defining characteristics of the categories, as follows:

"I" used as subject

"I" used as object

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) no room for error; | 1) room for error; |
| 2) does not involve recognition of a person, not a | 2) involves recognition of a person, is a statement <u>about</u> |

statement about a particular person. a particular person.
ular person.

To answer the question of whether or not the "'I' used as object" category is empty, it is crucial, I think, to distinguish:

- a) the sentence;
- and b) uses of the sentence.

This is not an original distinction, of course. It is one which Wittgenstein in his later work makes very clear. To understand how a sentence is used it is often necessary to look at the context of utterance, and this includes taking account of who utters the sentence in some cases. The context of utterance, I think, is most pertinent to the "'I' used as subject" - "'I' used as object" category distinction.

What I am suggesting is that:

- a) sentences in the "'I' used as subject" category
 - and b) sentences in the "'I' used as object" category
- correspond to:

- a') both sets of sentences given by Wittgenstein⁴ when uttered by myself;
- and b') both sets of sentences when uttered by another person.

Aune declares that in order to understand the sentence "I am in pain", I must understand it whether it is uttered by me or by another person.⁵ But, as has been pointed out already (p. 6 above), this does not mean that what I understand in the two sorts of usages is the same; it does not mean that the "I" functions in the same way in the two sorts

⁴*The Blue and Brown Books*, pp. 66-67.

⁵Aune, p. 87.

of cases. Aune blurs over the category distinction between "I" used as subject and "I" used as object (as I have set it out above):

". . . anyone calling himself "I" is a he (or she) to others."⁶ Surely anyone calling himself "I" is a he (or she) to others, but to say just this and no more oversimplifies the situation. In declaring that ". . . the grammars of "I" and "he" are intimately related",⁷ Aune makes no attempt to present the category distinction between "I" used as subject and "I" used as object (as set out above); that is to say, he makes no attempt to show that "I" has more than one logic (as does "he") depending on how it is used. I suggest that he is not sufficiently sensitive to the distinction between a sentence and its uses, and this results in a bypassing of the problem of "asymmetry claims" and not in that problem's being dispelled.

The thesis supports a claim of asymmetry between first person usages and third person usages of, for example, "I am in pain", and also between first and third person usages of, for example, "My arm is broken." That is to say, the asymmetry does not reveal itself only in sentences about "mental activities". My body, in my conceptual framework, is not on a par with other public objects. It has been the tradition of the empiricists to ignore this, and perhaps we may have a glimmer of an understanding as to why they have so often taken the concept of "oneself" to represent a purely passive observer.

⁶Aune, p. 88.

⁷Aune, p. 88.

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