AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY AS METHOD: A GRAMMATICAL INQUIRY INTO CARTESIAN DUALISM

by
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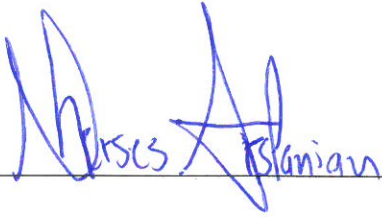Date of thesis defense: September 3, 2021

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ABSTRACT
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Title: Wittgenstein's Philosophy as Method: A Grammatical Inquiry into Cartesian Dualism

Wittgenstein once claimed to have solved all philosophical problems after the publications of the *Tractatus*. When he revised and developed his philosophy in the *Investigations*, he made similar remarks that philosophical problems are a result of a confusion and misunderstanding of grammar of our language. The claim being made that once we have achieved clarity (perspicuous representation) in the grammar of our words and concepts, philosophical problems associated our words and concepts will completely disappear.

In this paper, I set out to examine whether Wittgenstein's method does dissolve philosophical problems. I start by examining three features that characterize his method: anti-theory, intellectual humility, and anti-scientism. From there, I reconstruct Descartes articulation of the mind-body problems and try to show how Wittgenstein's method dissolves the problem by in his remarks on private language by examining the grammar of our sensation words (such as "pain"). The argument I try to make is that Wittgenstein dissolves Descartes' mind-body problem by revising our concept of mind and mental phenomena as a something, i.e., an entity. By examining the grammar of sensation words such as "pain", Wittgenstein shows us that there is no reason to posit mental phenomena as a substance.

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To my parents,
without whom none of this would have been possible.

CHAPTER I

WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY AS METHOD

A. Introduction

What is Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy? A broad and commonly accepted interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy is that most, if not all, philosophical problems are a result of a misunderstanding of the grammar of our language. To Heraclitus's dictum that "a man does not step into the same river twice" Wittgenstein responds, "one *can* step twice into the same river." (Wittgenstein 266) The core of Wittgenstein's philosophy is reflected in that reply.

This focus on language is a starting point for deeper discussions about logic, meaning, and the nature of philosophy itself. Wittgenstein does not present a coherent or systematic account of what his philosophy is and refuses to present any alternative theories to supplant the ones he is dispelling. This makes it difficult to follow his train of thought and makes first time readers of his work confused as to what he is trying to say. I do not want to present an interpretation of his work, since there are a lot of Wittgenstein scholars who have given a coherent account of Wittgenstein's early and latter philosophy. In this thesis I set out to examine what consequences Wittgenstein's method has on philosophy. More specifically, I set out to find out whether his method dissolves all philosophical problems.

In Chapter One, I'm going to go over two components in Wittgenstein's method, anti-theory and intellectual humility, and then illustrate how this method reflects Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy by applying it to Heraclitus' dictum. In Chapter

Two, I will go over a third component of his philosophy, anti-scientism, and then cover the historical background in which Wittgenstein's philosophy was situated. Finally, in Chapter Three, I will reconstruct Descartes' articulation of the mind-body problem and then apply Wittgenstein's method to show how Wittgenstein's philosophy dissolves philosophical problems.

B. Anti-theory

At one level, Wittgenstein's philosophy can be read as a critique of academic philosophy. But I contend that this is a surface level criticism. On a deeper level, Wittgenstein's project critiques fundamental assumptions philosophers make about concepts that we take for granted. It is in Wittgenstein's view that once these concepts are examined in such a way as to get a coherent understanding of what they mean, then the philosophical problems associated with these concepts will dissolve on their own. There is no new discovery or solution in solving these problems. All Wittgenstein is saying is that our philosophical problems come from a misunderstanding of the grammar of our language. Doing away with these problems requires what he calls a grammatical investigation:

> Our inquiry is therefore a grammatical one. And this inquiry sheds its light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. (PI 90)
> A main source of our failure to understand is that we don't have *an overview* of the use of our words. – Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. (PI 122)
> It is not the business of philosophy to resolve contradiction by means of a mathematical discovery, but to render surveyable the state of mathematics that troubles us – the state of affairs *before* the contradiction is resolved. Here the fundamental fact is that we lay down rules, a technique, for playing a game, and then, when we follow the rules, things don't turn out as we had assumed. So that we are, as it were, entangled in our own rules. This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand: that is, to survey. It throws light on our concept of meaning something. For in those cases, things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen. That is just what we say when, for example, a contradiction appears: 'That's not the way I meant it' (PI 125)

This emphasis on the "surveyability[1]" of the grammar governing the use of our words shows that philosophical problems, as far as Wittgenstein was concerned, are a result of misunderstanding the grammar of our language. Dissolving these problems involves rendering the grammar of our use of words "surveyable." While I'm not exactly sure what that means since Wittgenstein does not elaborate on this thought in other paragraphs explicitly, I think it has to do with what he means when he says that "philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – since everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain." (PI 126)

As I'll explain below, the meaning of our words and expressions come from their use in the language games in which they are at home. Different kinds of words, expressions and sentences have different meanings when used in a specific way in a language-game. Surveyability, I believe, refers to bringing the words, expressions, and sentences "open to view" by examining how they are used in their respective language game. I contend that Wittgenstein does this throughout the *Investigations* by detailing the different ways one talks about "pain", "color", and other kinds of words.

Wittgenstein contends that philosophers misunderstand the grammar of our language by taking words and phrases out of the language game in which they are at home. The meaning of a word, according to Wittgenstein, comes from its use. The conception of meaning where words get their meaning by standing for something is what is commonly referred to as the Augustinian picture. Wittgenstein summarizes this conception of meaning as such: "individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names. – In this picture of language, we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It

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[1] Hacker and Schulte translation of 'Ubersichtlichkeit'. Anscombe's translation: 'perspicuous representation'.

is the object for which the word stands" (PI 1). In attacking the Augustinian picture, Wittgenstein sets up an alternative conception of meaning. It is important to note that this is not an alternative theory, since Wittgenstein does not wish to posit any theoretical statements in his project, but to look at this new conception of meaning as a new method, maybe even a new way of doing philosophy.

How is it that Wittgenstein's conception of meaning isn't just another theory? Theories seek to explain phenomena by building a model. In science, one cannot build such models to explain phenomena without making certain assumptions (laws of nature, constants, rough estimations of natural phenomena) and having a testable hypothesis. In philosophy, the object of investigation isn't the natural world, but the concepts, ideas, and laws that scientists take for granted so that they can be able to *do* science in the first place. Wittgenstein's conception of meaning is not a theory because he does not make any assumptions about the nature of language or meaning. His investigation into language is wholly descriptive; his method in setting up his conception of meaning involves an examination and description, not an analysis or explanation, of how language functions. Theories tend to make general statements about phenomena. For example, when physicists study motion, they assimilate all kinds of motion (motion of stars, of human beings etc.) into one. Wittgenstein's conception of meaning does not posit or make any general statement about meaning. In fact, his grammatical investigation looks at the grammar of our words on a case-by-case basis[2]. If there are still any doubts as to whether Wittgenstein's conception of meaning is just another theory, I refer to an explicit statement in one of the more important paragraphs in the *Investigations* where he summarizes his method: "And we may not advance any kind of

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[2] Credit to Saleh Agha for pointing out this feature of how Wittgenstein's conception of meaning is not just another theory.

theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All explanations must disappear, and description alone must take its place." (PI 109).

Wittgenstein offers a new conception of meaning by looking at how language functions in its crudest form. The builder example in paragraph 2 of the *Investigations* shows how language is used as a tool in an activity. There are two builders, builder A and builder B. Builder A calls out for different kinds of stones – block, pillar, slab, beam – to be handed to him by builder B. Wittgenstein initially presents this example of a language where the Augustinian picture is right. The words "block", "pillar", "slab", and "beam" stand for their corresponding objects. But when Wittgenstein goes deeper into how these words are learned in this primitive society, it becomes obvious that the meaning of these words has less to do with what they stand for and more to do with the purpose they serve in the activity of building houses.

The builders' language is just one example of what Wittgenstein calls a language-game. Language-games are any activities that involve language. (PI 7). They include but are not limited to activities by means of which children learn their native language. Examples include:

> Giving orders and acting on them –
> Describing an object by its appearance, or by its measurements –
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) –
> Reporting an event –
> Speculating about the event –
> Forming and testing a hypothesis
> Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams –
> Making up a story; and reading one –
> Acting in a play –
> Singing rounds –
> Guessing riddles –
> Cracking a joke; telling one –
> Solving a problem in arithmetic –
> Translating from one language to another –
> Requesting, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying." (PI 23)

Wittgenstein's examination of how words, sentences and expressions function in different language-games is one of his key methods of dispelling philosophical problems. The idea here is that philosophical and abstract concepts such as "time", "justice", "beauty", "truth" and the "good" are brought down to earth by examining the way these words are used in different language games. The reason why we find ourselves asking the same philosophical questions is because our language hasn't changed[3]. The way out of this endless cycle is to look at the way our language is used in the activity in which it is at home and to examine the grammar of our words in such a way as to prevent any philosophical confusion. The main charge Wittgenstein has against philosophers is that they take words that are so commonly used and understood in everyday life and place them in a vacuum in which their original content and meaning is stripped away[4]. It's placed in a vacuum in the sense that it is being used out of the language game in which it is originally at home. The job of the philosopher is to bring the words back from their metaphysical to their ordinary use. (PI 116) What this involves is bringing the context and the concrete situations in which the words are used

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[3] "You always hear people say that philosophy makes no progress and that the same philosophical problems which were already preoccupying the Greeks are still troubling us today. But people who say that do not understand the reason why it has to be so. The reason is that our language has remained the same and always introduces us the same questions. As long as there is a verb 'be' which seems to work like 'eat' and 'drink'; as long as there are adjectives like 'identical', 'true', 'false' 'possible' … as long as all this happens people will always run up against the same teasing difficulties and will stare at something which no explanation seems to remove." (Wittgenstein, 273)

[4] I am using content in the most general sense, not in a specialized linguistic sense. In everyday life, we normally take the content or meaning of a word to be its definition. This is true to an extent. But the meaning and usage of words cannot be exhaustively explained in this way. The word "block" used by person A in W's primitive language example can be explained by a dictionary as "a large solid piece of hard material, especially rock, stone, or wood, typically with flat surfaces on each side". But as Wittgenstein points out, the words "block", "pillar", "slab" and "beam" do not have the same meaning in the primitive language-game in paragraph 2 as it does in our everyday language. The words in that language game could be a word or a sentence: (i) A word because even if builder A utters "Slab!" as a command in his primitive language game, he's still only using one word. (ii) A sentence because, despite consisting of one word, it could be used as a command or assertion. In this case the word "slab" in the language game can have the same meaning as "hand me that slab!". This is why dictionary definitions cannot capture the myriad ways words and expressions can have different meanings in different contexts.

into view so that we may be reminded of the grammar of those words in their ordinary use. This suggests that the grammar of our words, the actual meaning of those words in our use in ordinary life, is hidden or something we tend to forget about when we're doing philosophy. This process of bringing the grammar of our words back into view by looking at how they operate in ordinary life may be what Wittgenstein was talking about when he mentioned the need for surveyability.

Marie McGinn notes that Wittgenstein was not referring to a systematic presentation of our grammar when he talks about surveyability. A systematic overview of the grammar of our language is inconsistent with Wittgenstein's unsystematic reflections. She uses Anscombe's translation, "perspicuous representation", to emphasize the need for clarity on a case by case basis:

> In focusing on the concept of perspicuous representation, Wittgenstein's aim is to reveal an order in how we actually operate with expressions, which he associates with 'the understanding that consists in "seeing connections"' (PI 122), and which may be achieved by the careful investigation of a particular case, or range of cases. Wittgenstein's grammatical enquiries are seen as aiming to produce a kind of understanding which consists in seeing an order in our use of expressions, in recognizing variations of a theme, in seeing one thing as a complication of another, in recognizing the significance of context; that is, in seeing clearly what is there before our eyes, but which we had previously neglected or overlooked. It is through an emerging sense of how we operate with expressions in our life with language that the essence of language, meaning, understanding, thinking, intending, and so on, is gradually revealed and understood. (McGinn 29)

McGinn is right to point out how Hacker and Schulte's translation of the original German can mislead readers into thinking that Wittgenstein was prescribing the setting up a kind of system. I want to focus on what both translations have in common, i.e., their emphasis on clarity. Solving philosophical problems does not involve advancing new theories or making arguments. It involves bringing the context and circumstances in which the philosophical problem arises, and in which it is formulated,

into view. For Wittgenstein, philosophical problems are nothing more than conceptual confusions. Conceptual confusions are a result of misunderstanding the grammar of our language. The way out is to bring the grammar of these concepts into more coherent view, i.e., to render the grammar of our words surveyable.

Does this mean that all of philosophy is nothing more than a misunderstanding of the grammar of our language? For Wittgenstein, yes. But does that mean that philosophers, as academics and teachers, are playing a different language-game with these words when they explain and argue for certain ideas in philosophy? Are philosophers themselves aware that they are playing a game with different words? Most metaphysicians don't think that all they're doing is playing these sophisticated language games. They think they are advancing theories that explain the fundamental building blocks of the world.

I'm not so sure myself, I have my doubts about what Wittgenstein says about doing away with all philosophy. But my intuition says that he is right about something that most philosophers take for granted. Metaphysicians want to understand and describe the world and taxonomize all kinds of being. Their project is similar to the scientists' project to study and understand the natural world. Scientists want to categorize, describe, and explain different kinds of natural phenomena. They want to study both the properties of natural phenomena and the laws that govern the natural world. Metaphysicians, however, seek to describe and explain phenomena that lie beyond the conceptual framework of the scientific method. Their methods, however, still share key characteristics with the scientific method: explaining phenomena (even such things that cannot be explained by the conceptual framework of the scientific

method) by constructing theories; this "craving for generality" (BBB 17) and the tendency towards reductionism.

I will address Wittgenstein's criticism of this tendency to assimilate scientific thinking into philosophy in Chapter Two. But for now, I want to focus on the anti-theoretical aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy. In addition to his comments in *The Blue and Brown Notebooks* which openly criticize this "craving for generality" (BBB 17) and reductionism, Wittgenstein's unsystematic structure throughout the *Investigations* and his comments about "not advancing any kind of theory" (PI 109) clearly shows that his conception of philosophy can be characterized as being anti-theory. His emphasis on description over explanation; the examination of the grammar of our language over logical argumentation; looking at philosophical problems individually, i.e., on a case-by-case basis, instead of looking at them as being part of a bigger phenomenon that can be explained and solved by a theory – all these features of his of philosophy point to an anti-theoretical method that goes against our contemporary conception of philosophy.

C. Intellectual Humility.

Humility is a character trait that has little to do with settling philosophical problems. Still, a lack of it can lead to problems not just in communicating with other philosophers by not being able to understand or accept their arguments, but it can also deprive one of being able to see philosophical problems from more than one point of view. If a philosopher is aware that he or she knows little or nothing about a topic, then he or she might not necessarily see a philosophical problem about that topic as insoluble, since one needs sufficient background in a field to understand, formulate and try to solve a problem in that field. Also, humility allows that some problems are better left unsolved,

or that not all philosophical problems can be answered or approached with the same methodology.

Analytic philosophy, the predominant school of philosophy in the English-speaking world, approaches philosophical problems in a similar way that mathematicians and scientists approach problems. They formulate a problem, posit premises, and use inductive or deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion to solve the problem. I'm not suggesting that there is no merit in some of the contributions from that school of philosophy nor that all philosophers who practice philosophy in this way lack humility. What I'm suggesting is that philosophers who fixate on one method of practicing philosophy are likely to lack intellectual humility. They may be unwilling or unable to admit that there are philosophical problems that not only can't be solved but can't even be articulated by that method. This lack of humility can lead to having major blind spots when it comes to practicing philosophy.

I think that Wittgenstein's deconstruction of the Augustinian picture was an attempt to try to get his readers to remove this blind spot. His simple language and crisscross way of approaching philosophical problems is perhaps the best way to engage readers with the moral subtext in his project. In effect, he is saying to his readers: "you think you know *how* words mean? Think again! Now imagine if you think the philosophical statements you're making with those very same words have the same import if you look at how these words get their meaning…".

Wittgenstein quotes from Augustine's *Confessions* in the very beginning of the *Investigations*. It is a bit strange to quote a Christian theologian from the 4th century instead of philosophers of his time. One common interpretation is that by choosing a passage from an ancient text, Wittgenstein was responding to deep-seated problem in

philosophy that went at least all the way back to Augustine's time. This is a commonly accepted interpretation as to why Wittgenstein chose to quote Augustine of all people at the beginning of the *Investigations*. I do agree that that is in part why Wittgenstein chose Augustine as opposed to Frege or Russel, but I claim that Wittgenstein's decision to quote Augustine, a Christian theologian, was to provide subtext for a moral concern he had among philosophers and intellectuals of his time.

Augustine wrote *The Confessions* in part to cleanse his sins by divulging his thoughts and feelings to God. I contend that Wittgenstein wrote the *Investigations* with a similar purpose but with a twist. Instead of wanting to cleanse himself of his moral and religious sins, Wittgenstein sought to challenge himself and other philosophers to a high moral standard by cleansing himself of *intellectual* sins. This goes back to the criticism of academic philosophy as it was practiced in Wittgenstein's time. But this criticism is not a criticism of methodology, but of character. While Wittgenstein never explicitly discusses this in the *Investigations*, several passages throughout the book indicate that he had a moral drive to hold people accountable to what they say and how they say it, i.e., the words they choose to express their thoughts and the sincerity of their words.

I believe this to be true, but I can't point it out anywhere in his text. It can be read in between the lines by observing at how cautious Wittgenstein is in choosing his words and in giving the right examples to make the smallest point. It's obvious in only one way, in that he keeps drawing attention to the reader how easy it is to be misled by the grammar of our language even for native speakers. This can be seen by how Wittgenstein talks about his being *tempted* to use certain words and expressions: "Then we have all of us who, like myself, are still tempted to use such expressions as absolute

good, absolute value etc." (Wittgenstein 292); "well if certain experiences tempt us to attribute a quality to them which we call absolute or ethical value and importance…". (Wittgenstein 295) By attributing his use of certain words or expressions to a temptation, Wittgenstein is clearly showing that what must be resisted are not bad or false arguments or philosophical ideas but a *temptation*, a tendency. This temptation cannot be overcome by means of philosophical debate or argumentation but through an overcoming of one's will: "Philosophy does not call on me for any sacrifice, because I am not denying myself the saying of anything but simply giving up a certain combination of words as senseless. In a different sense, however, philosophy does demand a renunciation, but a renunciation of feeling, not understanding. … It can be hard to refrain from using an expression as it is to hold back tears, or hold in anger." (Wittgenstein 263)

By attributing his and our own inclination to use certain words and expressions to a temptation shows that Wittgenstein was not just interested in philosophical debates, but a moral concern that underlies all philosophical and intellectual activity. Using the wrong words or expressions, whether intentionally or not, to describe, explain or argue for a certain position can lead not only to misunderstandings that hinder honest debate and discussion; it can also be a sign of intellectual dishonesty.

Philosophers and scientists can argue about anything and claim that they're right because their arguments are valid and sound. Wittgenstein, however, is not interested in showing his readers that he's right about anything. He is interested in showing that underlying our reasoning are deeply embedded dogmas and beliefs that not even some of the greatest thinkers are aware of. This is not to say that all philosophers, scientists, and intellectuals in general are guilty of this, but that even people who claim themselves

to be free of prejudice and dogma struggle with intellectual humility. This is because the kind of humility Wittgenstein is asking from his readers is not one of abandoning one philosophical position for the sake of taking up another, but to come to a point where we no longer have this need to theorize. As he puts it in the *Investigations*: "the real discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophizing when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question." (PI 133)

This is what I think Wittgenstein meant when he said that he'd solved all philosophical problems in the *Tractatus* and in the *Investigations* when he says that "all explanation must disappear, and description alone must take its place" (PI, 109). Despite some drastic rejection and revision of his views in his early work, Wittgenstein still maintains what scholars call his 'deflation-ism', or his view that there are no real philosophical problems, only linguistic and conceptual confusions that we mistake for philosophical problems. Wittgenstein re-envisions philosophy as a therapeutic method that we apply to ourselves so that we can reach a state where we are no longer perplexed by philosophical problems. He says this in one of his few direct remarks about philosophy: "philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language" (PI, 109).

Overcoming one's *intellectual* sins requires a kind of moral drive to overcome one's intellectual prejudices and dogmas. It requires the same kind work that is needed to overcome our tendency to slip into simplistic pictures like the Augustinian picture. I don't know exactly what kind of method Wittgenstein has in mind for this work on oneself, but I think it has a lot to do with this need for intellectual honesty exhibited throughout his work. This kind of work on oneself is not necessarily an intellectual

exercise or method. It is something that can only be achieved through a genuine attempt at overcoming one's prejudices by an act of intellectual confession.

D. Wittgenstein's Response to Heraclitus' Dictum

I've so far described two aspects that characterize Wittgenstein's philosophy. I will expand on the third aspect in Chapter Two. For now, I want to illustrate aspects of Wittgenstein's method by applying it to Heraclitus' dictum. What Wittgenstein is dispelling here is not a philosophical problem, but a philosophical claim, i.e., that everything is in flux. Heraclitus' dictum is a philosophical claim that draws attention to a certain feature of existence. The dictum specifically refers to a feature in reality that is not easily expressed in ordinary language; that everything flows.

David Egan gives an interesting interpretation to Wittgenstein's response to the dictum by stating that Heraclitus was trying to revise the way we use language to better understand reality. Egan claims that Heraclitus' dictum shows us how our "noun-bound language can't capture the ceaseless flow of existence and that language is an inadequate tool for limning reality". (Egan 2) Heraclitus was trying to show that just because objects in the world appear static and immutable, doesn't make them so.

Wittgenstein dissolves philosophical problems by comparing the language in which they are formulated to a game. I've already defined language-games earlier in this section as any activity that involves language. But I did not mention a crucial aspect that distinguishes each language-game from another: rules. Each language-game has a specific set of rules by which it is played. Words, sentences, and expressions in one language-game may have a completely different meaning in the context of another. From Wittgenstein's point of view, what Heraclitus is doing is playing a different

language-game with the word "river". One which prohibits us from saying of rivers that we can step into them twice.

By comparing language with games, Wittgenstein shows us that there are different kinds of language-games that we participate in, each with a different set of rules. Just as moving a chess piece in a game of chess alters the state of play in the game, so does making a move in language (uttering an exclamation, making as assertion, asking a question) changes the state of play in a language-game. The point of talking is to *do* something: expressing one's thoughts and feelings, asserting a fact, establishing new facts, asking questions, giving, or taking orders, making requests, praying, reciting a poem and so on. But just as a move in a game of chess counts as a legitimate move if there's a certain amount of stage setting, so does a move in a language-game counts as legitimate provided there's sufficient stage-setting to distinguish that language game from another. One of the reasons we tend to get confused by language is because this stage-setting happens in the same medium as the actual moves in our language-games, i.e., in language itself[5]. (Egan 3)

Heraclitus wants to point out a feature in our world that isn't obvious to us, that everything flows, by using the word "river" metaphorically. In doing so, he is making a philosophical claim about the world, i.e., that everything is in flux. Wittgenstein takes issue with this. His conception of philosophy is based on dispelling this need we have

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[5] Not all stage-setting is linguistic. There are non-verbal cues and non-linguistic activities we do before making moves in a language-game. Think of the subtle shifts in conversations between talking seriously about something and then joking about it. These are things we don't notice because we're so used to doing this in everyday life that we don't question it. The stage setting for joking could be a mere change in facial expression, tone, irony etc. In a more literal example, actors in a theater or movie set need to be surrounded by props and have the right direction and lighting before they can be said to "act" in a play or movie. Reading off a script from a play or movie on its own does not amount to "acting" in a play or movie without the stage-setting that is usually involved in plays and movies.

for trying to explain phenomena[6]. Heraclitus may have been using metaphorical language for saying something about the world that cannot be said in plain language. The dictum could very well have been a line in a poem. It is a sentence that has a meaning in its own language-game (say, as a metaphor that points to something in the world that can only be shown). But it cannot be a philosophical claim that says anything fundamental about the essence of reality.

Why? Nothing about the use of our language says anything about reality. This is Egan's main point. He says that we need two things to find out if our language-games can in any way be adequate to describe reality: our language-game and the reality that it's meant to represent. But here is where we run into difficulties. How can we compare our language-games, which are one way reality is represented to us, to reality free of all representation? (Egan 5) We may use language to *do* different things in different-language games. But we must keep in mind that language does not and cannot describe reality. The meaning of our words and sentences comes from their use of our words in different language-games, not in its standing for objects or states of affairs in the world.

Wittgenstein does not counter Heraclitus' dictum by setting up another theory. Instead, he focuses on the grammar of the dictum. By concentrating on the grammar of these metaphysical statements, by showing us that the meaning of words come from use, not from what they stand for in the world, Wittgenstein has the upper hand against metaphysicians and other philosophers who've fallen into the spell of simplistic pictures such as the Augustinian picture. If metaphysicians are busy constructing arguments and making inferences about the nature of the world like scientists do to explain natural

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[6] "We feel as if we had to *see right into* phenomena: yet our investigation is directed not towards *phenomena*, but rather, as one might say, towards the '*possibilities*' of phenomena. What that means is that we call to mind the *kinds of statement* that we make about phenomena… our inquiry is therefore a grammatical one." (PI, 90)

phenomena, they can't understand Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Any meaningful criticism against Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy must be done at the level at which he is operating, i.e., grammar. His critics must show that his conception of meaning doesn't hold.

I hope I've explained Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, his method, and his views on traditional philosophy. I will expand on the third aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy in Chapter Two and provide a more thorough sketch of how Descartes' articulation of the mind body problem can be dissolved using his method in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER II

SCIENTISM

A. Introduction

In this Chapter, I will expand on the anti-scientistic aspect of Wittgenstein's method. I will discuss how Wittgenstein's early and later philosophy have elements that can be characterized as anti-scientistic.

B. Defining Scientism

While not yet an officially adopted term in contemporary scholarship, scientism is often used to describe scientific dogmatism. Purveyors of scientism often criticize religious dogma. While they do not use scientism to describe themselves, their commitments and worldviews are strongly influenced by the notion that all major problems in the world (social, political, ethical, *and* scientific, technological) can be solved, in one way or other, by the methods of science. Critics of scientism claim that all that its purveyors are doing in espousing their views is replacing one dogmatic view of the world with another.

To help situate my discussion about scientism within the context of Wittgenstein's philosophy, I will limit the main commitments of scientism to the following:

- A materialist metaphysics.

- An epistemology that valorizes scientific knowledge.

- Endorsing the narrative of Progress.

- A dogmatic overconfidence in science.

Criticism of scientism should not be regarded as criticism of science. Science involves a set of activities (observation, experimentation, research and formulating hypothesis and theories) that are used to study and explain the natural world. Thomas Kuhn gives a more restrictive definition to what he calls "normal science": research based on one or more scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for further practice. (Kuhn 10)

Normal science is scientific activity that occurs within an already established paradigm. Paradigms are achievements that have the following characteristics: (1) They are so successful that they attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity; and (2) they are sufficiently open ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve. (Kuhn 10-11) Science requires a paradigm to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant facts, to narrow down the kind of questions that can be asked with the conceptual tools at hand. In other words, paradigms are a necessary criterion for what counts as a scientific question, scientific fact, and theory. Science is therefore an activity that is fixed within its own conceptual framework. Scientism is the dogmatic commitment that science can answer and solve questions that lie outside this framework.

C. Wittgenstein's Anti-Scientism

Except for a few remarks in *The Blue and Brown Books* and *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*, there is little to no indication that Wittgenstein had explicit concerns about scientism. The word "scientism" was not even coined at the

time. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein had expressed anti-scientistic sentiments both in his early and later philosophy.

I will refer to a few remarks in the Preface of the *Tractatus* and a letter he wrote to his first publisher (Ludwig von Ficker) of the *Tractatus* to highlight anti-scientistic sentiment in his early philosophy. I will also refer to remarks in *Culture and Value* and *The Blue and Brown Notebooks* to show how Wittgenstein's later philosophy was in part a response to what he saw as a trend in philosophical thinking in his time.

1. Anti-Scientism In The Early Wittgenstein:

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein examines and makes assertions about the nature of propositions and their relationship to the world. The world is divided into different states of affairs. Propositions get their meaning by mirroring states of affairs. This is what is known as the picture theory of meaning. The upshot of this conception of meaning is that only the propositions that can stand for (i.e., they are able to correspond to or fail to correspond to) a state of affairs have any meaning. Propositions that do not stand for a state of affairs don't or can't say anything about the world, i.e., they have no descriptive content. In addition to nonsense, some of these latter propositions include propositions of logic, aesthetics, ethics and the mystical. But it is precisely these propositions (of ethics, aesthetics, and mystical) that Wittgenstein considers to be of utmost value. This is proven by one of the few direct remarks of how Wittgenstein wished his philosophical work to be interpreted:

In reality ... the point of the book is ethical. ... I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one. For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book; and I'm convinced that, *strictly* speaking, it can ONLY be delimited in this way. (Wittgenstein 82-98)

While he does make a few remarks about ethics at the end of the *Tractatus*, most of the book is devoted to developing his picture theory of meaning, explaining the relationship between propositions and the world and to addressing the logical and philosophical problems raised by Russell and Frege. How do his remarks about ethics, that it can only be delimited from within, reveal anti-scientistic sentiment?

Scientism is the dogmatic overconfidence in science. It entails that science can extend its explanatory powers outside its conceptual framework. If Wittgenstein's main argument in the *Tractatus* is ethical and that the only way he can delineate ethics in his book is by leaving it out altogether, then Wittgenstein is conceding that ethical, aesthetic and religious problems and considerations cannot be addressed by propositions grounded in states of affairs, which include the propositions of natural science. His position is rather more extreme in that he doesn't think we can even assert ethical propositions.

> So too it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions express nothing that is higher. TLP 6.42
> It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. TLP 6.421

I don't think this means that we can't literally *talk* about ethics, but that the class of propositions that belong to this category (ethics, aesthetics, the mystical) do not have descriptive content. They can't say anything about the world because they don't have descriptive content. They don't have descriptive content because they don't get their meaning by standing for a state of affairs. But these propositions do have meaning in that they express thoughts. The proposition "you shouldn't drink and drive" has meaning even if it does stand for a state of affairs. Wittgenstein appears to account for their

meaning by stating they make themselves manifest. (TLP 6.522) They do not describe a state of affairs in the world, but they point to something higher. While these propositions are meaningful, they do not describe a state of affairs. They don't because instead of descriptive content they have prescriptive content; they point to what *ought* to be the case.

On the one hand, I'm not sure exactly what Wittgenstein is trying to say by positing these propositions as something transcendental; as something that cannot be put into words but that can only be made manifest[7]. It sounds like Wittgenstein is relying on mysticism to account for the meaningfulness of propositions with prescriptive content because of his picture theory of meaning. The picture theory of meaning reduces the meaningfulness of our propositions to its ability to correspond or fail to correspond to a state of affairs. Every proposition that gets its meaning this way has a truth-value. For example, the meaningfulness of the proposition "The cat is on the mat" is verified as true or false by checking whether the proposition corresponds to a state of affairs. Propositions that cannot be verified in this way are dismissed as meaningless or nonsensical. The propositions of ethics, aesthetics or the mystical (word choice: religion) fall into this category. This is what leads me to think that Wittgenstein is relying on mysticism to account for the meaningfulness of these propositions.

On the other hand, I think that the early Wittgenstein was genuine in his belief that these propositions expressed something that is, so to speak, higher or transcendental. The later Wittgenstein held a similar view on ethics long after discarding the picture theory of meaning[8]. Furthermore, his remarks in the Preface to

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[7] Ogden translation: This *shows* itself TLP 6.522

[8] see, W's lecture on *Ethics, Life and Faith*. "My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language... Ethics

the *Tractatus* substantiate this interpretation of his remarks on ethical, aesthetic and

religious propositions:

> I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final
> solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second
> thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is
> achieved when these problems are solved. (Wittgenstein 4)

One of the main goals of the *Tractatus* was to address the problems raised by

Russell and Frege. Both wanted to establish a foundation of mathematics by reducing it

to logic. Wittgenstein spends the majority of the *Tractatus* writing about these

problems. At some point, however, Wittgenstein shifted his focus to a new set of

philosophical problems and considerations: ethics, aesthetics, the soul (the metaphysical

subject) and the meaning of life; topics that have almost nothing to do with

Wittgenstein's treatment of the logical problems that motivated the *Tractatus*. Ray

Monk attributes this sudden shift in Wittgenstein's subject matter to his experiences in

the first World War[9]. But even if this were the case, we shouldn't treat the late inclusion

of these remarks as a mere addendum. As his letter to his publisher and his remarks in

the Preface clearly show, it is this part of the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein considers to be

the important part of the book; and it is this section of the *Tractatus* that shows elements

of anti-scientism.

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so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good,
the absolute valuable, can be no science." (Wittgenstein 296)

[9] "If Wittgenstein spend the entire war behind the lines, the Tractatus would have remained what it almost
certainly was in its first inception of 1915: a treatise on the nature of logic. The remarks in it about ethics,
aesthetics, the soul and the meaning of life have their origin in precisely 'the impulse to philosophical
reflection' that Schopenhauer describes, an impulse that has as its stimulus a knowledge of death,
suffering and misery." (Monk, 137)

First, Wittgenstein states that there is still something left untouched even if we were to solve all the problems of logic, mathematics, and science. Wittgenstein is referring to the problems of life (ethical, religious problems). This is further substantiated by propositions 6.52 and 6.4312, which explicitly express Wittgenstein's belief that the solutions of scientific problems do not and cannot affect ethical, aesthetic, and religious problems. I think this is a clear sign of anti-scientism in the early Wittgenstein. For if scientism entails the belief that science can extend its explanatory powers to address fundamentally human problems, then Wittgenstein's assertion that very little is achieved in the solution of all scientific problems is a rejection of this belief.

Second, Wittgenstein makes a distinction between two class of propositions: descriptive propositions (propositions that *say* things about the world, i.e., the propositions of natural science) and transcendental propositions (propositions that *make themselves manifest*, the propositions of ethics, aesthetics, and religion). There is a distinction in how either class of propositions get their meaning. Transcendental propositions get their meaning by corresponding or failing to correspond to a state of affairs. (TLP 4.2) Transcendental propositions get their meaning by making themselves manifest. (TLP 6.522) Wittgenstein isn't clear in how these propositions make themselves manifest, but it is suggested that the kind of truths these they convey are of a kind that can only be revealed in life[10]. Because of this distinction in how each class of proposition gets its meaning, the method of verifying one class of proposition cannot be used to verify the truth-value of the other class of propositions. I think it may even be

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[10] The solution to the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem. (Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have then been unable to say what constitutes that sense?) TLP 6.521

misleading to talk about verifying the truth-value of the transcendental propositions because the very term "truth-value" implies a specific criterion of meaning (that the proposition gets its meaning by standing for a state of affairs). Indeed, how can one "verify" transcendental propositions? It would be more accurate to say that because each kind of proposition has a different criterion of meaning, we cannot use the same method to verify descriptive propositions to verify the truth of the transcendental propositions since transcendental propositions don't have any truth-value. Transcendental propositions reveal their meaning to us in personal, spiritual, existential experiences. The criterion for what counts as a meaningful transcendental proposition is incommensurate with the criterion for what counts as a meaningful descriptive proposition. These two classes of propositions express different *kinds* of truths.

So how is this anti-scientistic? By distinguishing between these two classes of proposition, Wittgenstein is doing more than drawing a boundary in language, i.e., between what can be said and what can be made manifest. He is making a value judgment which states that one cannot and should not use the same methods to verify the truth of descriptive propositions to verify the truth of transcendental propositions. This means that progress and advances in the sciences and technology, however revolutionary in their impact on the lives of human beings, cannot solve fundamentally human problems.

2. Anti-Scientism In The Later Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein's later anti-scientism developed alongside his later philosophy. To get a clear understanding of Wittgenstein's later anti-scientism, we first need to get a better understanding of how he came to develop his later philosophy. Wittgenstein's

later philosophy developed out of a transitional stage of his philosophy. In this period, Wittgenstein and revises and expands on elements of his early philosophy as expressed in the *Tractatus*.

One of the first significant moments that led him to develop his later conception of philosophy is a discussion he had with a noted Italian economist Piero Sraffa. Wittgenstein was explaining to Sraffa that "a proposition and that which it describes must have the same logical form. To which Sraffa replied with a Neapolitan gesture of brushing his chin with his fingertips, asking: 'what is the logical form of that'?" (Monk 261) The response eventually led Wittgenstein to abandon his picture theory of meaning. It forced Wittgenstein to revise his conception of language and meaning. Propositions are the main unit of language in the *Tractatus*. The conception of meaning developed in his early philosophy only accounted for the meaningfulness of sentences qua propositions, without considering the different kind of meaningful sentences that are not propositions (questions, exclamations, commands, a greeting, prayers etc.) and the different kind of ways one can express meaning without using language (the Neapolitan gesture). The conversation with Sraffa therefore opened a fresh perspective on language. Rather than seeing language as something that is isolated from the circumstances in which it is used, Wittgenstein would start to see the importance of the context, circumstances, and the 'stream of life' that accompany our language. (Monk 261)

Wittgenstein also spent a lot of time discussing his philosophy with a group of logicians and mathematicians called the Vienna Circle. The members of the Vienna Circle were logical positivists. They believed that only propositions that could be verified empirically had any meaning. Propositions that could not be verified

empirically are discarded as meaningless. Part of their philosophical project involved

establishing a philosophical doctrine that argued for this position, the upshot of which

would do away with metaphysics and any other discipline not verifiable empirically or

the methods of science altogether. They were drawn to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* as a

candidate for just such a doctrine. They, however, mistook Wittgenstein's remarks on

logic, propositions and meaning as philosophical arguments for verificationism. Some

remarks do indeed give that impression:

> The sense of a proposition is its agreement and disagreement with possibilities of existence and non-existence of states of affairs TLP 4.2

> The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science – i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy – and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not feel satisfying to the other person – he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy – *this* method would be the only strictly correct one. TLP 6.53

This misinterpretation is understandable, but it seems that the members of the

Vienna Circle deliberately chose to pay attention to the propositions that validated their

positivist project and overlooked the propositions on ethics, aesthetics and the mystical.

It didn't help that Wittgenstein deliberately left out much of what he believed to be the

main point of the book.

Despite this misinterpretation, much of Wittgenstein's time with the Vienna

Circle was productive and collaborative. He gave a series of lectures and held

discussions of members of the Vienna Circle where he expanded and revised certain

elements of his early philosophy. Wittgenstein also cooperated with two key members

of the Vienna Circle to dictate his elucidations of his early philosophy so that they could

be published as an introduction to the *Tractatus*. But Wittgenstein's conception of language and meaning was undergoing a lot of changes in this period. He could not commit to a conception of language and meaning, much less to the conceptions of language and meaning expressed in the *Tractatus*. It was not until Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy underwent a fundamental change that his ideas coalesced into something that would later characterize one of the man features of his later philosophy.

What was the change? Wittgenstein stopped expressing his philosophical ideas in the form of theses and propositions. It was not enough to revise his early conception of meaning and language in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein had to change the way he expressed his ideas. For as much as some of the later propositions in the *Tractatus* expressed anti-metaphysical outlook (TLP 6.53) and even acknowledged the contradictions of trying to express that which is ineffable (TLP 6.522, TLP 6.54), much of the *Tractatus* expresses its thoughts in the form of propositions or 'theses'. Nearing the end of his time collaborating with the members of the Circle, Wittgenstein started developing a conception of philosophy without any theses at all.

Given all of this, how can Wittgenstein's later philosophy be characterized as anti-scientistic? There are few remarks in his later period that show that an aspect of his later project is to challenge what he saw as the "idol worship" (L&C 27) of science. These remarks are few and brief, but they give sufficient evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein's later philosophy was, at least in part, a reaction to scientism. Let me start by referring to remarks in *Culture and Value*:

> It is all one to me whether or not the typical western scientist understands or appreciates my work, since he will not in any case understand the spirit in which I write. Our civilization is characterized by the word 'progress.' Progress is its form rather than making progress one of its features. Typically it constructs. It is

occupied with building an ever more complicated structure. And even clarity is sought only as a means to this end, not as an end in itself. For me, on the contrary clarity, perspicuity are valuable in themselves.

I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible buildings. (CV 7)

This is one of the few instances where Wittgenstein mentions science and scientists in relation to his philosophy. Why does he bring up scientists if he doubts that they might not understand his work nor the spirit in which it is written? I think that this is Wittgenstein's way of saying that his work is a response to the scientistic way of looking at the world. By emphasizing the spirit in which his work is written, Wittgenstein is responding not to science qua scientific activity but the scientific "spirit" that permeated the culture and discourse of his time. Moreover, his remarks on civilization and progress, that progress is western civilization's form rather than one of its features, is an outright rejection of the narrative of progress. This remark is echoed by Nestroy's quote appended at the beginning of the *Investigations*: "The trouble about progress is that it always looks much greater than it really is." (*The Protégé*) Finally, Wittgenstein contrasts the scientific style of thinking with his method: "It constructs. It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure ... I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible buildings." (CV 7) As I've explained in Chapter One, Wittgenstein's method involves investigating the grammar of our words and concepts. Philosophical problems are not solved but dissolved by clarifying the concepts associated with these problems. Scientific thinking, on the other hand, addresses problems by formulating them within a conceptual framework and attempts to solve these problems by positing explanations. The scientific thinking seeks to explain phenomena by expanding on its already existing

conceptual systems, while Wittgenstein's method seeks to bring the concepts associated with the phenomena in question into view.

Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Blue and Brown Notebooks* also show a concern for the influence the success of the sciences has had on philosophical thinking:

> This craving for generality is the resultant of a number of tendencies connected with particular philosophical confusions. There is:
> The tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term.
> There is a tendency rooted in our usual forms of expression
> Our preoccupation with the method of science. I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws; and, in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalization. Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness. I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything. Philosophy really is 'purely descriptive'. (BBB 17-18)

The remarks point to a concern with a tendency to think in abstract and general terms. In Chapter One, I've explained how Wittgenstein's method emphasizes description over explanation, looking at philosophical problems on a case-by-case basis rather than as something part of a bigger phenomenon. I've also explained how philosophical problems arise out of misunderstanding the grammar of our words, expressions, and sentences. The aim of his project in the *Investigations* is to dissolve philosophical problems by bringing the grammar of our words, sentences, and expressions into view. Once we have a clear view of our words and concepts, then the philosophical problems associated with those concepts dissolve on their own. What does this have to do with his remarks on the craving for generality? Wittgenstein's remarks on craving for generality were said within the context of how it obscures us from having a clear view of how language operates its primitive form.

But how does craving for generality, this tendency towards abstraction, obscure us from having a clear view of how our grammar operates? I think this has to do with how our tendency to generalize takes us away from seeing how our words, sentences and expression operate in the specific language-games they are at home. Wittgenstein's method in the *Investigation* emphasizes the examination of how our words and concepts function in specific concrete circumstances. The tendency to think in abstract and general terms obscures the grammar of our language. But how? If we think of the meaning of a word, say "leaf", in general terms, we are likely to attribute the criteria for understanding the meaning of that word to having a general picture of a leaf. (BBB 17) So that when we ask someone what "leaf" means, he would explain its meaning either by pointing to a leaf and saying, "this is a leaf"; he would take out different samples of leaves in a book of plants and show us different samples of leaves; or he would list the common properties of all leaves (green, veined, bends towards sunlight). In this conception of meaning, the criteria of understanding the meaning of a word, such as the general term "leaf", is being able to explain the general image or picture of that word. For our tendency to generalize not only takes us away from the instances in which we use words and concepts in language games, it also makes us look for common elements (common properties) of an entity which we subsume under a general term. The meaning of the general term "leaf" comes to be associated with a general picture that has all the common properties of a leaf.

But how does this lead to philosophical problems? Philosophical problems are a result of misunderstanding the grammar that governs the use of our language. Anything that obscures our view or understanding of how the grammar of our language functions will inevitably lead to philosophical problems. As I've just described above, our craving

for generality affects our conception of meaning and language. It makes us attribute the criteria of understanding the meaning of a word to a person's having a general picture or idea of that term. If one of the sources of this craving for generality is "our preoccupation with science" of "see[ing] the method of science before their eyes" (BBB 17), then scientism does contribute to the conceptual confusions and simplistic pictures that give rise to philosophical problems.

D. Historical Context of Wittgenstein's Anti-Scientism

Unlike some of his contemporaries (Members of the Vienna Circle, Russell and Frege), Wittgenstein was influenced by works of philosophers and writers such as Spengler, Schopenhauer and Weininger. These influences, in addition to what is described as Wittgenstein's artistic sensibility, set him apart from the philosophers and mathematicians he was working with. Instead of looking at philosophical problems as problems that needed to be solved by coming up with explanations and theories, Wittgenstein saw these problems as symptoms of a kind of disease. The disease is the decay of Western culture. The cure for the disease can be found in the disease itself: language.

The success of science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century deeply affected people's conception of progress. Progress meant the discovery of new theories that changed or challenged old paradigms of thought. It also meant discoveries and innovations in technology that allowed for the mass production and distribution of goods. These sudden changes in science and technology deeply affected people's way of life. Wittgenstein's pessimism of the cultural attitudes of the so-called 'progress' of the early twentieth century is attributed to Spengler's influence:

Spengler believed that a civilization was an atrophied culture. When a culture declines, what was once a living organism rigidifies into a dead, mechanical structure. Thus, a period in which the arts flourished is overtaken by one in which physics, mathematics and mechanics dominate." (Monk 299)

This view of culture and civilization affected Wittgenstein's conception of what it meant to produce good philosophical work. Good philosophy for him was not 'producing' anything, but clearing up already existing concepts, ideas and theories by means of our language; by bringing the grammar of our concepts into view. This, more than anything, puts him at odds with, not just with the philosophers of his time, but with every intellectual that endorsed this conception of progress.

Wittgenstein's concern with what he called the "idol worship" (L&C 27) of science was not a concern with scientific discovery and progress. His concern is directed at how the success of science led people in general (both academics, intellectuals, and the public) to adopt a way of thinking. More specifically, he was concerned that people would use the methods of science to tackle problems outside the domain of scientific enquiry:

Aesthetics and religious belief are two examples of areas of thought and life in which the scientific method is not appropriate, and in which efforts to make it so lead to distortion, superficiality and confusion. (Monk 404)

It is appropriate to use the scientific method to test hypotheses and make discoveries in the natural world. But it is wrong to use this same method to tackle questions in religion, ethics, and aesthetics. The scientific method is not just a methodology by which its practitioners study the world. It is a commitment to certain epistemological and metaphysical assumptions and principles that one must take to be

true to practice the method in the first place. I must stress that this is not a criticism against science when scientists want to ask and engage in *scientific* questions; questions that deal with events and phenomena that fall within the purview of scientific investigation. This is a criticism against a tendency to apply the same commitments and assumptions that come with scientific thinking to questions that are outside the domain of scientific inquiry: metaphysics, religion, ethics, and aesthetics.

The most obvious way this way of thinking shows itself is in its need for explanation to account for phenomena. Wittgenstein's method is supposed to do away with explanation and replace it with description. Similarly, explanations in questions of ethics, aesthetics and religion should be replaced by description or by bringing into view that which can only be shown. Instead of trying to explain what makes a painting beautiful with a theory or explanation, one can measure the beauty of a painting by observing the gestures and facial expressions of people as they appreciate it. (Monk 405) Similarly, Wittgenstein does not think that we can dispute religious and ethical problems by formulating and positing arguments. He famously remarked that both Russell and the parsons have done "infinite harm" by trying to settle theological questions by positing arguments:

> Both the atheist, who scorns religion because he has found no *evidence* of its tenets, and the believer, who attempts to *prove* the existence of God, has fallen victim to the 'other' – to the idol-worship of the scientific style of thinking. Religious beliefs are not analogous to scientific theories and should not be accepted or rejected using the same evidential criteria. (Monk 410)

I think that this aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy is overlooked because there are few remarks in his body of work that suggest a coherent argument against scientism. This aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy is intimately tied to the anti-theoretical aspect

in that it resists the tendency to emulate scientific thinking, i.e., the tendency to explain phenomena by reducing them to them to laws of nature and the tendency to subsume common elements of different phenomena under a general term. I also think that anti-scientism in Wittgenstein's philosophy is tied to intellectual humility. The kind of work that is required to overcome the "idol worship" (L&C 27) of science is not intellectual insofar as it is impossible to reason your way out holding dogmatic beliefs. The kind of work required to overcome scientism involves the same kind of renunciation, i.e., a renunciation of feeling, an overcoming of one's will, that is needed to overcome simplistic pictures or conceptions of the world. In an age where scientific discovery has changed the way we live and think about the world, we must do our utmost not to replace one dogmatic view of the world with another.

CHAPTER III

APPLYING WITTGENSTEIN'S METHOD ON DESCARTES' MIND-BODY PROBLEM

A. Introduction

In this Chapter, I will apply Wittgenstein's method to the mind-body problem. I will first illustrate how his remarks on private language dispel the problem of other minds. From there I will extend the application of his remarks to the mind-body problem as articulated by Descartes.

B. Descartes' articulation of the mind-body problem

Descartes articulates the mind-body problem in his search for absolute and indubitable truth. The problem is articulated after he has established with absolute certainty that his self, his ego, exists and that its essence is the mind. This certainty is asserted after he has doubted everything else that he has once taken to be true: anything and everything that can be apprehended through the senses, i.e., the physical world.

The mind-body problem arises when Descartes identifies the ego with the mind. He does so because he rules out that the one thing that he can be certain of, the ego, can be identified with anything that can be called into question, his body. This is where the split between mind and body is made. Now that Descartes has identified the ego -- the self-aware "I" -- with thinking, he will have to account for how it reconciles with his body. He is put in a position where he must answer the question, "what is the relationship between my mind and my body?".

Even though the key arguments that inform the mind-body argument are made in the Second Meditations, it is not until the sixth Meditations that the problem is fully articulated:

> First, I know that all the things that I clearly and distinctly understand can be made by God such as I understand them. For this reason, my ability clearly and distinctly to understand one thing without another suffices to make me certain that the one thing is different from the other, since they can be separated each other, at least by God. The question as to the sort of power that might effect a separation is not relevant to their being thought to be different. For this reason, from the fact that I know I exist, and that at the same time I judge that obviously nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I'm a thinking thing, I rightly conclude that my essence consists entirely in my being a thinking thing. And although perhaps I have a body that is very closely joined to me, nevertheless, because on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, insofar as I am merely a thinking thing and not an extended thing, and because on the other hand I have a distinct idea of a body, insofar as it is merely an extended thing and not a thinking thing, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it. (Descartes 96)

Descartes' posits his self and his body as being ontologically distinct: I exist as a thinking thing while my body exists as a body that is an extended thing. While this is the main argument behind Descartes' mind-body problem, what I will focus on is Descartes' conception of mind and body as entities, which is what ultimately leads to the mind-body problem.

C. Wittgenstein's private language argument

1. The Grammar of our Sensation Words

Wittgenstein's remarks on private language mark the beginning of his examination of the grammar of our sensation words such as "pain". Grammar in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* does not refer to the formal set of rules that we learn in

school to learn how to conjugate different kinds of sentences. It refers to how we operate with words and expressions in different language-games. To understand the grammar of a word, one must be able to use it in the different circumstances in which it is at home. An example may be being able to define it or use it in a sentence, but the main criterion for knowing the grammar of a word involves a mastery of a technique; of knowing enough of the use of the word to carry on using it on one's own. This could mean being able to differentiate between different forms of expression and the different meanings a word may have in different contexts. It also means knowing the "the different kinds of statement that we make about phenomena." (PI 90) For example, knowing that it would make sense to say of a ball that "I kicked it" but not of the number 2. There are different grammatical possibilities as to what we can say about different kinds of words. Wittgenstein's examination of sensation words such as "pain" is a grammatical investigation of how these words operate in our lives, not a psychological or metaphysical argument about the nature of pain and other sensations.

The remarks on private language give an insight into Wittgenstein's method at work. To get a better understanding of our sensation words, Wittgenstein analyzes the grammar of "pain". In doing so, he takes up an extended discussion with his interlocutor to show how "pain", like all words, gets its meaning by being embedded in the myriad language-games in which it is at home. In analyzing the grammar of "pain", Wittgenstein challenges the role of private ostensive definition (i.e. concentrating our attention to sensations and associating them with their corresponding name) in establishing a connection between our sensations and their corresponding names. By showing that our concept of "pain" does not come from an act of private ostensive definition, but from its use in different language-games, Wittgenstein dissolves a certain

conception or picture we have of our sensations; namely, that they are mental states or inner processes that occur in our brain.

Even though Wittgenstein does not directly address traditional philosophical problems throughout the *Investigations*, his remarks on how our concepts and words get their meaning dismantle longstanding philosophical positions. His remarks address philosophical problems at a more fundamental level than the premises on which they stand. He addresses the conceptual commitments we make that ultimately inform our philosophical positions. He does so by radically revising the concept of meaning that gives rise to a deeply rooted and ingrained conception of the mind.

Let me start by going through the opening paragraphs of the private language argument. In PI 246, Wittgenstein addresses the idea that our sensations are private:

> In what sense are my sensations private? - Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it. -- In one way this is false, and in another nonsense. It can't be said of me at all (except as a joke) that I *know* that I'm in pain. What is it supposed to mean - except perhaps that I *am* in pain?
>
> Other people cannot be said to learn of my sensations *only* from my behavior. -- For I cannot be said to learn of them. I *have* them. This much is true: it makes sense to say about other people that they doubt whether I am in pain; but not to say it about myself. (PI 246)

In PI 244, he addresses the link between our words and sensations:

> How do words refer to sensations? -- There doesn't seem to be any problem here; don't we talk about sensations everyday, and name them? But how is the connection between the name and the thing named set-up? The question is the same as: How does a human being learn the meaning of names of sensations? For example the word "pain".
> Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive natural, expressions of sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behavior.

"So you are saying the word 'pain' really means crying?" -- On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying, it does not describe it. (PI 244)

The opening paragraphs of Wittgenstein's remarks on private language give us an idea of his grammatical investigation: "it makes sense to say about other people that they doubt whether I am in pain; but not to say it about myself." (PI 246) The grammar of the word "pain" is such that it bars me from saying "I doubt that I am in pain". I can of course utter the sentence and write it down on a piece of paper, but the rules of our language-game for expressing pain and other sensations are set-up in such a way so that it would be absurd or nonsensical to doubt first-person ascriptions of pain. Wittgenstein goes even further: "It can't be said of me at all (except as a joke) that I *know* that I'm in pain. What is it supposed to mean - except perhaps that I *am* in pain?" (PI 246) I can imagine a few situations where it would make sense for me to doubt my own pains. For example, when I am under the effect of an anesthetic and feel a numb tingling where I once felt pain or discomfort; or when I experience a throbbing pain in my arm that disappears once I get it examined by the doctor only for her to say that it is psychosomatic pain from stress. In other words, there may be actual circumstances where it would make sense for a person to doubt their pain or other bodily sensations. But in the more common experience of being hit by a football, of having a throbbing toothache, of being run over by a car, or worse, having WAP come up on the radio, it would be absurd for someone to say of their pain that they doubt it.

Wittgenstein goes so far as to say that it is even absurd to say that "I know that I am in pain". In the ordinary use of the word "know", we very often know when other people are in pain; through their outward expression of pain that we see by observing their facial expressions (grimace) or posture (limping), their loud exclamations

("ouch!") or from their simply telling us that they feel pain somewhere in their body. But what would prompt us to say of our pains that we *know* we have them? There is no knowledge involved in experiencing unpleasant sensations. We just experience them, which is why it is more accurate to say that "I am in pain" instead.

To get a clearer view of the grammar of "pain", Wittgenstein goes back to how we teach the word to children: "words are connected with the primitive, natural, expressions of sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behavior". (PI 244) Wittgenstein offers this example as a possibility to answer the question of how our sensation words refer to sensations. He rephrases the question to how it is that we come to learn the meaning of sensation words such as "pain". In this example, Wittgenstein points out that a "primitive, natural expression" precedes our verbal utterance of pain. The child who feels pain already has a natural expression of pain by screwing up his face and crying. The adult teaches the child how to express this pain linguistically. The expression of pain is just another way to show others that one is in pain. It does not refer to (it does not mean) the expression of pain itself. It replaces it. (PI 244)

We can already see in the early paragraphs on the remarks on private language that Wittgenstein is resisting the urge to attribute the meaning of our sensation words to their corresponding sensations. Such a conception of grammar is reminiscent of the Augustinian conception of meaning, where the meaning of the word is the object for which it stands. Wittgenstein counters the temptation to attribute the meaning of sensation words to sensations by sticking to his original conception of meaning, i.e., meaning as use. As I will try to show in the following remarks on private language,

Wittgenstein dissolves a longstanding conception of our sensations as inner processes that take place in our brains. Part of this involves challenging the presumed role of private ostension in naming our sensations.

> What about the language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand? *How* do I use words to signify my sensations? -- As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? In that case my language is not a 'private' one. Someone else might understand it as well as I. -- But suppose I didn't have any natural expression of sensation, but only had sensations? And now I simply *associate* names with sensations and use these names in descriptions. PI 256

> When one says, "He gave a name to his sensation", one forgets that much must be prepared in the language for mere naming to make sense. And if we speak of someone's giving a name to a pain, the grammar of the word "pain" is what has been prepared here; it indicates the post where the new word is stationed. PI 257

> 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 first want to observe that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. - But all the same, I can give one to myself as a kind of ostensive definition! -- How? Can I point to the sensation? - Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation -- and so, as it were, point to it inwardly. -- But what is this ceremony for? For that is all it seems to be! A definition serves to lay down the meaning of a sign, doesn't it? - Well, that is done precisely by concentrating my attention; for in this way I commit to memory the connection between the sign and sensation. -- "But I commit it to memory" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connection correctly in the future. But in the present case, I have no criteria of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem correct to me is correct. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'correct'. PI 258

There are different interpretations as to what is the main purpose of these remarks. Wittgenstein's remarks clearly address the impossibility of constructing a private language. What scholars disagree over is what is the main point being made in showing that a private language is impossible. One standard interpretation of the private language argument is that in showing that the private language user cannot

meaningfully name his sensations by associating them with signs, Wittgenstein is trying

to tell us that our psychological expressions (sensation words such as "pain") need a

public criterion of meaning. On this reading, 'I have no criterion of correctness' is to be

glossed as 'I have no non-circular, usable criterion of correctness', and that is why

'whatever is going to seem correct to me is correct', and why, therefore, it makes no

sense to talk about 'correct.' The only remedy is to provide some form of independent

check on the future use of 'S', by linking its use with public criteria of application. The

point of Wittgenstein's remarks on private language is to prove that the meaningfulness

of a psychological expression depends upon its possessing a public criteria of

application. (McGinn 156)

McGinn posits an alternative interpretation. According to her, the point of the

remarks on private language is to explore in detail what actually goes on when we try to

imagine a word being defined by means of a private ostensive definition. The point is

not to prove that our psychological expressions must possess public criteria, but to put

in question the role that introspection, or turning our attention inwards, has in

understanding the meaning of a sensation word. On this reading, the force of PI 258

should be interpreted as "introspection can never lead to a definition." (McGinn 157)

I do not favor one interpretation over the other, but McGinn's reading of

Wittgenstein's remarks more directly addresses how the grammar of our sensation

words tempts us to conceive of our sensations as a something, i.e., as something that

only I have access to; as something that occurs in my mind. While I do think that there

might be some structural evidence (the structure of the *Investigations* in general and

how the comments on private language fit into the overall structure) that gives this

reading of the remarks on private language more credence, I do not think it is as important as the overall aim of the book.

I think that *Investigations* is to be read as a radical revision of our ordinary concepts. There is something about our language that gives us the impression that the world and certain phenomena, must be in a certain way. The tendency to view pain, or any other sensation, as something private; as something that only I have. This tendency is a result of looking at language as functioning in just one way, i.e., that it is only used to describe things world or to convey information. Wittgenstein is trying to show us that our conception of things like the mind or our sensations as a something, or as an entity, is a result of just this tendency of looking at language in a uniform way.

I argue that the physicalist conception of our sensations and other mental phenomena as something reducible to brain states is a byproduct of this very same tendency. What we view as the instrinsic property of our sensations and mental states as something private, something that only I have access to, or as something that can be reducible to brain states, is just the grammar of our sensations. When I tell my friend that "you've been on my mind", nothing in my utterance suggests that I've posited an entity. I am simply telling my friend that I am thinking of him. But when a philosopher asks "What is really going on in my mind when I am thinking of my friend?", he is misled by the grammar of the word "mind", into thinking that the word must describe (or correspond to) a something, i.e. an entity, in the world.

It is only after having come to understand that our language functions in myriad ways, that when I tell my friend that he's been on my mind I'm simply telling him that I've been thinking of him lately and not describing my inner mental state, that we can break free from this picture, or this conception, of mind as a something. Nothing about

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the grammar of the word "pain", for example, suggests that it is something that we can locate in our brains. For it is not my brain that feels pain, but me. We say that "I feel pain" if we want to express our pains, not "my brain feels pain."

I consider McGinn's interpretation to be more directly relevant to the discussion about how the grammar of our sensation words gives us the mistaken impression that sensations are something that only I have access to; or something that occurs in my mind. By examining the role of private ostension in giving meaning to our sensation words, we get to see to what extent we can truly say that of our sensations that they are private. For if I can define sensations in my own private language, if I can attach meaning to my symbols through introspection alone, then I can prove that my sensations (or any mental phenomena of that matter; thinking, believing, wishing, imaging etc.) are private. But if Wittgenstein can prove that such a language is impossible, that we cannot establish a meaningful connection between our sensations and symbols in a private language, then we must radically revise this conception of our sensations.

So does private ostension on its own establish the link between the meaning of sensation words and their corresponding sensations? Wittgenstein clearly says that no, there is nothing in my act of concentrating my attention inward to associate a sensation to a symbol 'S' that suggests that I have given a name to anything. For giving a name to something, whether to a sensation, an object, or a person, requires a mastery of a certain linguistic technique; it requires an understanding and participation of a language-game which provides the necessary stage setting that makes the act of naming possible in the first place. Wittgenstein makes this point explicit in the preceding paragraph: "much must be prepared in the language for mere naming to make sense. And if we speak of

someone's giving a name to a pain, the grammar of the word 'pain' is what has been prepared here; it indicates the post where the new word is stationed." (PI 257) All that the private language user is doing in concentrating her attention inward is carrying out a practice that she has already learn in her natural language while transposing it into this private language. Even then, she needs a criterion for correctness that guarantees consistency in her use of that word. If all she has to go by for a future correct application of her symbol 'S' is her memory of associating that symbol with a particular sensation, then "anything that is going to seem correct is correct." (PI 258) So in the end, the private language user does not have a sound criterion of meaning. If she misremembers which symbol to use for one particular sensation, or confuses one sensation for another, then the rules that underpin the grammar of her private language will come crumbling down.

I've established that (i) private ostension does not amount to a definition and that, consequently, (ii) we need to revise our conception of mind and mental phenomena in general. How is this relevant to the mind-body problem? I think that Descartes' mind-body problem is a byproduct of just such a conception of our sensations and mental phenomena. More specifically, I think the problem arises from his conception of mind as an entity:

> But how do I know there is not something else, over and above all those things that I have just reviewed, concerning which there is not even the slightest occasion for doubt? Is there not some God, or by whatever name I might call him, who instills these very thoughts in me? But why would I think that, since I myself could perhaps be the author of these thoughts? Am I not then at least something? (Descartes 63)

Descartes does not explicitly posit the mind as an entity here, but his inquiry, which begins with a search for an entity that can be known beyond doubt, leads him to assert his first certainty - the existence of his self - which he then immediately identifies with thinking.

> But now what am I ... Can I not affirm that I possess at least a small measure of all those things which I have already said belong to the nature of the body? ... What about being nourished or moving about? ... What about sensing? ... What about thinking? Here I make my discovery: thought exists; it alone cannot be separated from me.
> I am; I exist—this is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking; for perhaps it could also come to pass that if I were to cease all thinking I would then utterly cease to exist. At this time I admit nothing that is not necessarily true. I am therefore precisely nothing but a thinking thing; that is, a mind, or intellect, or understanding, or reason—words of whose meanings I was previously ignorant. (Descartes 65)

I argue that this is the key move behind Descartes' mind-body problem. In order for us to make a distinction between the mind and body in the first place, we must have a certain conception of mind. Descartes articulates his conception of body as something that is extended in space; as something that is mutable and divisible. (Descartes 101) He likewise articulates his conception of mind as something that is not extended in space, that is immutable and indivisible (ibid); or as something that has a host of mental operations: "A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and that also imagines and senses." (Descartes 66)

2. Do Wittgenstein's Remarks on Private Language Dissolve the Mind-Body Problem?

Dissolving the mind-body problem using Wittgenstein's method entails dissolving these conceptions of 'mind' and 'body'. If we dissolve the conception of

'mind' as a something, then we dissolve the mind-body problem. So how does Wittgenstein's remarks on private language dissolve our concept of 'mind', as a something? Wittgenstein's private language argument effectively dissolves this conception of mind.

If our sensation words do not refer to private inner states, then what do they refer to? Our behavior? Not exactly. This tendency to separate the inner (private) and outer (public) aspects of our conception of sensations is what leads some scholars into labeling Wittgenstein as a kind of behaviorist. Part of Wittgenstein's project in the *Investigations* is to critique this very tendency since it is symptomatic of the Augustinian conception of meaning.

Even if it appears that the meaning of our words for physical objects are the objects for which they stand (a chair for "chair", a table for "table"), this doesn't mean that our words get there meaning for standing for things; as I've already explained in Chapter One, Wittgenstein's conception of meaning states that the meaning of our words are their use in different language-games. Likewise, our sensation words do not *refer* to our inner states, nor do they refer to our outward behavior. They are used in such a way as to be part of an activity that involves both the presence of an inner sensation (the pain) and the outward manifestation of that sensation (pain-behavior).

Wittgenstein's extended discussion on private language does not dismiss the role that our inner sensations have in the formulation of our concept of sensations: "you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior with pain and pain-behavior without pain" - 'Admit it? What greater difference could there be?' (PI 304) In this case, the presence of the inner sensation marks the difference between two different language games: genuinely expressing pain and feigning pain. The presence of pain as

the inner state does play a crucial role in our understanding the difference between someone who is in pain and someone who is pretending to be in pain. For this reason, I don't think it would be correct to label Wittgenstein as a behaviorist.

What does this have to do with Descartes conception of the mind as an entity? I think that Descartes conceives of the mind as an entity precisely because he takes for granted the outer (public) activities that underwrite our concept of 'mind'. When he writes down "I am, I exist" or "I am a thinking thing", he forgets that much has been prepared for that assertion to make sense in the first place. Descartes could not have learnt basic concepts of mind, body, and self without first having taken part in different language-games that have taught him those concepts: studying language in school, talking with people, playing games, guessing riddles, telling jokes, reading, writing and so on. His assertion that "it is very certain that this notion and knowledge of my being, thus precisely understood, does not depend on things whose existence is not yet known to me" (Descartes 65) is proof that he has forgotten or took for granted that his own concept of self is inextricably tied to being acculturated in society. Here is what Adam Smith has to say about the role of society in developing our concept (or sense) of self in the Theory of Moral Sentiments:

> Were it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. All these are objects which he cannot easily see, which naturally he does not look at ... Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before (TMS, III.1.3)

I don't think that Descartes would go so far as to deny that he owes his own conception of mind, body, and his own sense of self by being part of society. But I think

that his tendency to discard some of the basic properties of what it means to be a human being, i.e. having arms, legs, feet and senses, shows that he is operating with a radically different concept of human being; one that divorces the human being from, not just his body, but society and the language-games that we play therein; the same language-games that make our conception of 'mind', 'body', and self - not to mention our own sense of self - possible.

If this is not enough to show that Wittgenstein's remarks dissolve Descartes's conception of mind as an entity, then I would like to end this chapter by focusing on two more remarks by Wittgenstein on the grammar of our sensation words:

> Suppose that everyone had a box with something in it which we call a "beetle". No one can ever look into anyone's else' box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle. - Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. - But what if these people's word "beetle" had a use nonetheless? - If so, it would not be as the name of the thing. The thing in the box doesn't belong to the language-game at all; not even as a something: for the box might even be empty. - No, one can divide through by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is. If we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and name', the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. (PI 293)

Wittgenstein is continuing his extended discussion on the grammar of our sensation words. He has already established that private ostension on its own does not and cannot establish a meaningful link between our sensations and their corresponding words. Through his interlocuter, he entertains the idea that "it is only from my own case that I know what the word 'pain' means". He revisits this picture of our sensations as something private, as something that only I have access to, and carefully examines the roots of this picture by using analogies, examples and fictional language games.

In this example we see Wittgenstein at first conceding to this conception of our sensations as something private. The "beetle" is posited as a thing that only each person has access to. Everyone has a box with a beetle in it, but each person can only look at his own box. It is naturally assumed that people know what a beetle is by looking at their own box. The beetle, like our sensations, is conceived in this language-game as something private, something that only I have access to.

Wittgenstein then suggests that it is entirely possible that everyone has something different in their box; that it could be the case that this thing in the box could be constantly changing or that the box could even be empty. But if the word "beetle" has a use in describing the contents in the box, regardless of its being empty or dissimilar with what everyone else has in it, then "we can divide through the thing in the box" and "cancel out" whatever is inside it. The actual presence of the beetle is not as important as the use of that word "beetle" in this language-game.

Second remark:

> "But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior with pain and pain-behavior 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's not a Something, but not a Nothing either! The conclusion was only that a Nothing would render the same service as a Something about which nothing could be said. We've only rejected the grammar which tends to force itself on us here.
> The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves that same purpose: to convey thoughts - which may be about houses, pains, good and evil or whatever. (PI 304)

"It's not a Something, but not a Nothing either!" Wittgenstein is challenging the deeply ingrained tendency we have of conceiving our sensations as a Something, i.e., an entity, by addressing a more deeply ingrained tendency we have of viewing our language as functioning in one way.

But how exactly is this conception of language, that it functions in one way, related to our conception of sensations? Wittgenstein is saying that we're rejecting the *grammar* which tends to force itself on us. There is something about the grammar of our sensation words that gives us that impression that our sensations are a something, an entity. He then says that this paradox, or this tension that leads us to say of a "pain" that it is either a "Something" or a "Nothing", disappears when we stop thinking of language as functioning in one way. This is because if we do look at language in this way, that its chief purpose is to describe states of affairs or to convey thoughts, then we are limiting the different ways words, sentences and expressions get their meaning: if all that language can do is to describe or convey thoughts, then words and sentences can only get their meaning by referring to objects or states of affairs. Our conception of sensations as a something, as entities, is a result of this conception of language. Dissolving our conception of sensations as a something therefore entails revising this conception of language.

But what does that mean for our conception of the mind? Does this mean that the mind is nothing more than a (grammatical) concept? Our concept of the mind, like our concept of sensations, is inextricably tied to the use of that word in the different language-games in which it is at home. To put it more concisely: our concept of things in general is tied to language. As far as Wittgenstein's method is concerned, there is no way of getting around this. Any temptation to view the mind as an entity is a result of a certain picture or conception of language. The temptation has its roots in the Augustinian picture. This picture, which while not exactly an articulated philosophical position, entails a conception of meaning whereby our words correspond to objects or states of affairs. It is this conception of meaning that ultimately gives rise to

philosophical problems such as the mind-body problem. Dissolving our conception of the mind as a something, or an entity, (and thereby dissolving the mind-body problem) therefore requires overcoming this picture. Which is why Wittgenstein's philosophy requires a distinctive method that does not adhere to the traditional format of philosophical works.

The lack of strict or conventional structure in the *Investigations* makes it easier for readers to see that what is being addressed at the heart of the book is not a philosophical problem, but a picture, i.e., a certain conception of meaning that influences our concepts of things such as our concept of mind. Pierre Hadot claims that it is this unique structure (or lack of structure) of the *Investigations* that helps us overcome philosophical problems. He notes that the structure of the book "imposes a certain literary genre: the work cannot be the exposition of a system, a doctrine, a philosophy in the original sense... the *Philosophical Investigations* wishes to act little by little on our spirit, like a cure, like a medical treatment". (Hadot 17-18)

The purpose of the *Investigations* is not to advance philosophical arguments that refute a philosophical conception of the mind, but to work on our spirit, that is, our will. The goal is more a kind of philosophical conversion, a conversion that results in overcoming, among other things, the Augustinian picture, our conception of language as operating in one way, on our conception of the mind as a something, i.e. an entity. It is after this conversion, which involves a renunciation of will (of wanting to hold on to our pre-conceptions), that one can finally let go of the need to philosophize.

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