

Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* Lecture 12

1. We have seen that the difficulty with transference raised at *PI* 302, whatever it is, does not arise from either a straightforward application of the rule-following paradox or from the supposed fact about pains etc. that they essentially belong to their actual owners. In fact as we shall see, there is a more plausible interpretation that makes Wittgenstein's considered views *incompatible* with this second line.
2. To see what it is we need to understand something about the evolution of Wittgenstein's views on solipsism. In the *Tractatus* he had insisted that there was *something* right about solipsism (viz that 'the world is my world': *TLP* 5.62c), only it could not be said but only shown. But he had also said that the self does not appear *in* the world, for it cannot be an object of either acquaintance or description (*TLP* 5.631, 5.633b-c). The denial that the self appears in experience is familiar from Hume (*Treatise* I.iv.6); Wittgenstein endorses this in his later work too; but instead of treating talk of 'the self' as the incoherent expression of a deep insight he diagnoses it as an illusion of grammar.
3. Perhaps the most helpful discussions in this connection are the 'geometrical eye' and 'pinball' analogies in the *Blue Book* (pp. 63-4 and 66-7). The geometrical eye is what you point to when your finger is aligned with the gradient of its visual size (i.e. you point to it by making its tip grow as visually big as it can as fast as it can). Now as a matter of fact what you point to with this method is the same as what you point to using either tactile or *mirror*-based visual criteria. But these criteria might have come apart; and in particular it might have happened that when asked to point at your geometrical eye you pointed only at an empty space above your head. But it is your geometrical eye that you point to when you point to the 'I' that 'sees all this' (the visual field). '“What is seen *I* see” (pointing at my body). I point at my geometrical eye, saying this... In no case do I make a connection between what is seen and a person' (*NLPESD* 255).
4. The 'pinball' text starts by distinguishing two uses of the word I: the 'I' as subject and the 'I' as object. The 'object' case but not the 'subject' case involves the possible misidentification of a person: when I say 'I have a bump on my forehead' it is just possible that it is not my forehead but somebody else's that has the bump. Now in the 'subject' case this is not possible: somebody who says 'I am in pain' could not be right to think that *somebody* was in pain but wrong about who it was. This is a fact about the *grammar* of 'I' as a subject term i.e. that sentences would never be counted as mistakes. We mistake this grammatical fact for a metaphysical one through the following reasoning: (i) When you use 'I' as object you are talking about an object that you might misidentify; (ii) When you use 'I' as subject there is no possibility of error through misidentification; hence (iii) When you use 'I' as subject you are talking about an object that you *cannot* misidentify. In fact (iii) doesn't follow from (i) and (ii); but this is the line of thought that leads us to posit a self that inhabits the body. 'To say, "I have pain" is no more a statement *about* a particular person than moaning is' (*BB* 67; cf. *PI* 404-8).

5. As well as the *existence* of a self, distinct from but somehow inhabiting a body, Wittgenstein also queries the sense of saying that a body ‘has’ a self. Both queries appear at *PI* 283c—if you turn to stone whilst having the pain, in what sense can it be true that *the stone* is ‘having’ a soul or the pains; but then: why think that *anything* is having them? And the query about ‘having’ also appears here in a non-sensational context: ‘The chair is thinking to itself... WHERE? In one of its parts? Or outside its body; in the air around it? Or not *anywhere* at all? But then what is the difference between this chair’s saying something to itself and another one’s doing so, next to it?—But then how is it with man: where does *he* say things to himself?’ (*PI* 361).
6. Now you might say, in the ‘stone’ case, that it is part of the feeling of a pain that it feels located in the stone; or that it is facts about the stone that are causally related in the right way to the occurrence of the pain, and that it is in that sense that the stone can be said to be ‘have’ the pains. That may be true but its irrelevance becomes clear when we consider the bearing of this whole line of thought upon the question of transference.
7. For the nature of the special difficulty raised at *PI* 302 should now be clear. The whole idea of transference is based on the idea that we understand first-person ascriptions of pain as *relations* between two things, a pain and its bearer; we can then understand third-person ascriptions on their basis by varying the second component only. But now the whole idea of a bearer (and the relation it is supposed to have to the pain) has been undercut: ‘I have a pain’ could be written: ‘It’s paining’. And so when we move from the first- to the third-person case there is nothing to transfer the pain *to* or *from* in the first place. It is as though somebody were to introduce you to the word ‘dog’ by showing you various dogs, and then he said ‘These are all cases of *Tony’s* having a dog. And we say that *Gordon* has a dog just in case Gordon has just what Tony has when Tony has a dog.’ This manoeuvre explains nothing; and neither does the appeal to our other criteria for locating pain, for this gets me no further in extrapolating from my own pain to *the stone’s pain* as opposed to pain that *I* feel *in the stone*.
8. So the ‘transference’ model must be given up. Before seeing how he proposes to replace it let us consider what led us into the mistake in the first place. The decisive move in the conjuring trick was the idea that ‘pain’ denoted some inner state or process whose nature is to be decided later (*PI* 308). But all we really have here is our *use* of ‘pain’ and similar words: and we need *not* think of this on the model of object and designation. We could just as well think of it along the lines proposed at *PI* 403a (and cf. *Philosophical Remarks* 58-64). Not that Wittgenstein is endorsing this reform—the point is only that it would do as much justice to the facts as the way we talk now. Nor could it be objected that the essential thing—the pain itself—had been left out of the picture; for things only appear that way by comparison with a method for keeping it *in* the picture that we have just seen to be bankrupt.
9. The working of a clock is an illuminating comparison: we learn how to read the hands of a clock, and we say that the clock tells us the time. But imagine somebody’s now saying that what the clock knows, ‘the time’, is a mysterious

process in or state of an unknown medium (*PI* 363c). Is this behaviourism? 'If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a *grammatical* fiction' (*PI* 307). That is about as close as he ever gets in *PI* to giving a straight answer (though see also the 'soulless tribe' example at *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* I, 96ff.).