

Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* Lecture 13

1. We saw that one of the illusions behind the temptation to think that third-person psychological ascriptions ascribe the same thing as first-person avowals was the idea that there is a 'self' that 'has' them. Another illusion, also operative in philosophical misunderstandings of mathematical statements, arises from the law of excluded middle. Not that Wittgenstein rejects this law (at least not when he discusses it at e.g. *PI* 352); it is just that he thinks it seduces us into a certain picture. 'Either he has pain or he does not'; and it looks now as though 'pain' describes a determinate state that he either has or doesn't have: God sees which, even if we do not. It seems as though the law shows us that the sense of 'he is in pain' has been fixed unequivocally. And the same goes for the statement that the sequence '7777' occurs in the decimal expansion of π . Either it does or it doesn't: and in either case we have already settled what demand is made on mathematical reality—only it is not something we can know. 'We see the straight highway before us, but of course we cannot use it, because it is permanently closed' (*PI* 426; see also 516).
2. Of course this is an illusion—we can certainly accept that the law of excluded middle holds without yet supposing that this settles 'what is in question' when we ascribe pains to another (see McDowell, 'On "The Reality of the Past"' in his *Meaning, Knowledge & Reality* 303n15). Of course we do know 'what is in question': but nothing in our use of these ascriptions warrants the picture of it as a hidden tract of reality.
3. So far I have only characterized Wittgenstein's positive semantics for mental state ascriptions in a very crude way i.e. as a form of behaviourism. In fact his position is very subtle (though still perhaps describable as behaviourism). At various places (e.g. *PI* 269, 344, 580) Wittgenstein describes the relation between behaviour and 'inner' or psychological states as being *criterial* i.e. the behaviour is a criterion for the inner state. What does this mean?
4. At *PI* 354 he draws an implicit distinction between criteria and symptoms. What he says is that there are different kinds of evidence for rain: there is the falling of the barometer, but there are also the visual impressions of rain. And there is an important difference between these, for the first is merely symptomatic and the second is criterial. What this suggests is that X is a criterion for Y if and only if X's status as evidence for Y is a matter of convention or definition. That is what he means by saying that the point about sense-impressions is that we understand their language; whereas it is *experience* that teaches us to treat the falling of the barometer as evidence for rain.
5. Applied to mental states the idea would be that pain-behaviour is criterial for pain. That is: part of what you learn when you learn the meaning of third-personal psychological ascriptions is the sorts of behavioural states and events that warrant their assertion. Note that on this conception of criteria, they are as the jargon has it *defeasible*: it seems as though somebody could satisfy criteria for being in pain and yet *not* be in pain.

6. But McDowell reads Wittgenstein differently. For him criteria are indefeasible: criteria for pain include pain-behaviour *expressing pain* but *not* externally indistinguishable cases of pretence. Read back into *PI* 354: visual impressions of rain are criterial for rain in non-misleading cases. But in misleading cases we only *seem* to have the criteria themselves. 'But surely the possibility of pretence shows that all we are ever *given* is bodily behaviour; hence if criteria play an epistemological role they must be behaviour'. But McDowell protests against this idea about the given, based as it is on what he calls an 'objectifying conception of the human'. We are *given* the whole human being; the body and its movements are just a (typically Cartesian) philosopher's artefact; and there is no way to recover our proper conception of the human from the factors into which science and philosophy analyze it. Here again we hear a Hegelian note.

7. At *PI* 428-465 Wittgenstein returns to the question of how thought or language can be *about* reality? The case of belief is what first comes to mind: but the point applies to orders and intentions and expectations as well as beliefs. Before the gun was fired I expected a report. 'So did the report somehow already exist in my expectation?' (*PI* 442). But considered by themselves our words (or even our thoughts) are just dead signs: how *can* they 'point beyond themselves' (*PI* 431-2)? Or if we say that thoughts are not dead but somehow self-interpreting then the question arises: how can thoughts have this magical power that mere words do not? And if hearing somebody's words does not tell me what he expects then how is seeing his thoughts supposed to help (*PI* 452)?

8. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had said that what makes linguistic signs (propositional signs) into propositions is the thinking subject; and he does this by thinking the sense of the proposition (the method of projection: *TLP* 3.11ff.) And having the thought (belief, desire etc.) itself amounts to the occurrence of a sentence in a sort of psychic language, one that stands in an *internal* relation to what it depicts (*TLP* 5.542). *How* exactly a psychic event is supposed to turn this trick was there relegated to empirical psychology (*TLP* 4.1121). It is evident that this simply relocates the mystery and goes no way towards solving it. Wittgenstein alludes to his earlier position at *PI* 454 and dismisses it curtly: 'This pointing [i.e. intentionality] is *not* a hocus-pocus which can be performed only by the soul.' Still he retains the view that the relation between an intention, say, and its content is internal.

9. In his *Analysis of Mind* Russell had said that the relation between a desire and its object is external: that is, a desire for an apple is a state that could have both existed and not been a desire for an apple but rather for a pear. We can see the pressure that leads to this way of thinking of things. A desire is what it is whether or not it is fulfilled: it must therefore be possible to characterize it in terms that do not mention some at best future and at worst non-existent object. Anyway, this follows from his causal theory: crudely, the object of a desire is whatever causes its quiescence. Wittgenstein rejects this on the grounds that what stops the desire need not fulfil it: what satisfies *you* need not satisfy the *desire*. 'Perhaps I should not have been satisfied if my wish had been satisfied' (*PI* 441).

