Philosophical Investigations
The self

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Last week

- Wittgenstein offered two arguments against the possibility of a private language: the private diarist and the beetle in the box.
- We saw three versions of the first argument and found problems with them all.
- The beetle in the box argument threatens to prove too much: there is nothing essentially *private* about it.
Talk outline

Transference

Pain ascriptions
Recall that, on the Cartesian picture, my ‘inner’ world is importantly different from the ‘external’ world. In principle, we all have equal access to the external world. But I have privileged access to my inner world. My inner life can only be inferred by others from my behaviour. The ‘I’ that can directly observe my inner states is my self.
First-person pain

- Recall Wittgenstein on first-person pain ascriptions:
  
  *The sentence “Sensations are private” is comparable to “One plays patience by oneself”*. (248)

  *What does it mean when we say, “I can’t imagine the opposite of this” or “What would it be like if it were otherwise?” – For example, when someone has said that my mental images are private; or that only I myself can know whether I am feeling pain; and so forth.* (250)

- Saying ‘I don’t know whether I’m in pain’ is like saying ‘It’s snowing’ on a sunny day in the Summer.

- If we sincerely say it, we will be taken to have misunderstood the words.

- So I can be certain of my first-person pain ascriptions.
Third-person pain

- How about third-personal?
- Wittgenstein asks:
  
  *What gives us so much as the idea that living beings, things, can feel? (283)*

- A plausible answer he suggests is transference:
  
  *Is it that my education has led me to it by drawing my attention to feelings in myself, and now I transfer the idea to objects outside myself? That I recognize that there is something there (in me) which I can call “pain” without getting into conflict with other people’s usage? – I do not transfer my idea to stones, plants and so on. (283)*
Transference

- Here we find an early suggestion of a *simulation* theory about other minds (as opposed to the *theory* theory of e.g. functionalism).
- There is not supposed to be any mystery about this.
- I grasp first-personal pain.
- On reflection, I realise that for *them* to be in pain is for them to have what I have.
- The process is something like *abstraction*. 
Wittgenstein rejects the idea:

*If one has to imagine someone else’s pain on the model of one’s own, this is none too easy a thing to do: for I have to imagine pain which I don’t feel on the model of pain which I do feel. That is, what I have to do is not simply to make a transition in the imagination from pain in one place to pain in another. As from pain in the hand to pain in the arm. For it is not as if I had to imagine that I feel pain in some part of his body.* (which would also be possible.) (302)
Further, we get a famous analogy:

“But if I suppose that someone is in pain, then I am simply supposing that he has just the same as I have so often had.” – That gets us no further. It is as if I were to say, “You surely know what ‘It’s 5 o’clock here’ means; so you also know what ‘It’s 5 o’clock on the sun’ means. It means simply that it is just the same time there as it is here when it is 5 o’clock.” – The explanation by means of sameness does not work here. For I know well enough that one can call 5 o’clock here and 5 o’clock there “the same time”, but we do not know in what cases one is to speak of its being the same time here and there. (350)
Transference

- What exactly is the problem here?
- It could be an instance of rule-following: nothing in my past usage of ‘pain’ dictates how to apply it to others.
- This seems unlikely:
  1. Why have yet another instance of rule-following problems?
  2. Wittgenstein allows that transferring pain talk from *my hand* to *my arm* is possible. But, if the problem was rule-following, it would apply here too.
Hume famously held that, when we reflect on our experiences, we find no ‘self’ that ties them together (Treatise, 1.iv.6).

In TLP, Wittgenstein sympathised:

There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called The World as I found it, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book. (5.631)
Nevertheless, in the TLP, he acknowledged a ‘metaphysical self’ not found in experience:

*The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it.*

(5.641)
In *PI*, Wittgenstein no longer required a metaphysical self:

“When I say ‘I am in pain’, I don’t point to a person who is in pain, since in a certain sense I don’t know who is.” And this can be given a justification. For the main point is: I didn’t say that such-and-such a person was in pain, but “I am ...”. Now, in saying this, I don’t name any person. Just as I don’t name anyone when I grown with pain. Though someone else sees who is in pain from the groaning. (404)

“I” doesn’t name a person, nor “here” a place, and “this” is not a name. (410)

There is no self for ‘I’ to name.
The self

- There are conventions of associating ‘I’ with bodies, hence why someone knows who is in pain.
- To master use of ‘I am in pain’ I just need to associate ‘pain’ with various feelings, but this says nothing of how it applies to others.
- In this way, ‘I am in pain’ serves simply to show who is in pain.
- Crying would achieve the same.
- This explains why, as we saw in Lecture 9,
  
  “So you are saying that the word ‘pain’ really means crying?” – On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying, it does not describe it. (244)
The self

- So ‘I’ does not refer to a person.
- This seems to be why we cannot abstract from the first- to third-person perspective when we say ‘They are in pain’.
- Similarly for place:
  1. It is 5 o’clock at Cambridge
  2. It is 5 o’clock at \( x \)
  3. It is 5 o’clock at the sun.
- We understand 1 but cannot abstract to 2 in order to understand 3.
- Instances of \( x \) in 2 are limited to cases on Earth.
In this way, transference fails.

The culprit is the view that ‘pain’ refers to some sensational state.

That, and the similar grammar of ‘I am in pain’ and ‘They are in pain’, lead us to think that they behave semantically the same.

But this is not the case.
Talk outline

Transference

Pain ascriptions
Pain ascriptions

- That’s how the semantics does not work.
- What’s the positive story?
- One possibility here, of course, is behaviourism.
- But we’ve seen that Wittgenstein rejects that.
- He seems to take the relation between behaviour and third-personal pain ascription to be criterial:

  An ‘inner process’ stands in need of outward criteria.

(580)
Evidence

- The view is that behaviour is a *criterion* for having pain.
- What does this mean?
- Some evidence, to be evidence, must be observed to correlate with what it evidences.
- If we found the evidence to obtain in many cases where the state of affairs it evidences is absent, we would no longer count it as evidence.
- E.g. if we started finding the blood of innocent parties to be present at murder scenes (due to, say, widespread framing) we would come to reject blood evidence.
Evidence

- That much seems uncontroversial.
- But some evidence isn’t like that.
- Some evidence has its status as evidence *a priori*.
- What evidence could make us doubt that pain-behaviour was evidence for pain?
- Wittgenstein thinks none.
- It seems to be *this* sort of evidence that he calls ‘criterial’.
- The evidence is still *defeasible*, of course, but its status as evidence is not.
The fluctuation in grammar between criteria and symptoms makes it look as if there were nothing at all but symptoms. We say, for example, “Experience teaches that there is rain when the barometer falls, but it also teaches that there is rain when we have certain feelings of wet and cold, or such-and-such visual impressions.” As an argument in support of this, one says that these sense impressions can deceive us. But there one overlooks the fact that their deceiving us precisely about rain rests on a definition. (354)
How could pain behaviour fail to be *criterial*?
Imagine someone who does not exhibit standard pain behaviour.
And this same person winces and cries when we give them ice cream.
Would we conclude that this pain behaviour is not evidence of pain?
No: we would think that we are hurt by different things.
Compare to Lewis’s ‘Mad Pain and Martian Pain’ (1980).
Pain ascriptions

- What does this add up to as an account of third-personal pain ascriptions?
- You learn the *criteria* for pain.
- You have mastered this when you can correctly apply ‘pain’ and ‘non-pain’.
- You have mastered the concept when you get these third-personal ascriptions right.
- If someone doubts whether my pain-behaviour is some grounds for thinking I’m in pain, they haven’t understood its *criterial* nature.
- This is all very non-Cartesian.
The Cartesian may object here that a crucial component has been missed: what my pain and others’ pain has in common.

There is my pain, which I feel and which I cannot be wrong about.

Then there is others’ pain, which we have been discussing.

Why, on Wittgenstein’s account, are they both called ‘pain’?

*If I were to reserve the word “pain” solely for what I had previously called “my pain”, and others “L.W.’s pain”, I’d do other people no injustice, so long as a notation were provided in which the loss of the word “pain” in other contexts were somehow made good. Other people would still be pitied, treated by doctors, and so on. It would, of course, be no objection to this way of talking to say “But look here, other people have just the same as you!”* (403)
Ambiguity

This points to an ambiguity in ‘pain’.

But surely it is no accident that first- and third-personal pain are both called ‘pain’.

*But how can I decide what is an essential, and what an inessential, coincidental, feature of the notation? Is there some reality lying behind the notation, to which its grammar conforms? (562)*

*What’s the point of using the same word? In the calculus we don’t make use of any such sameness of sign! – Why the same chess piece for both purposes? – But what does it mean here to speak of “making use of the sameness of sign”? For isn’t it a single use, if we actually use the same word? (565)*

This seems wrong: consider, say, ‘duck’.
Wittgenstein makes another proposal:

And now it looks as if the use of the same word or the same piece had a purpose – if the sameness is not coincidental, inessential. And as if the purpose were that one should be able to recognize the piece and know how to play. – Are we talking about a physical or a logical possibility here? If the latter, then the sameness of the piece is part of the game. (566)

We are able to recognise a word in one context because of its use in another.
In the case of pain, we start with the first-personal case. Then we naturally extend this beyond ourselves. In particular, we make third-personal ascriptions based on similarity to our own experience. And we may be right to do so. This is a descriptive, empirical claim. Nothing like it is true for ‘duck’.
Conclusion

- When we extend our pain-talk to other people, what’s going on?
- We may think something like *transference*.
- The 5 o’clock argument suggests that this is not so.
- Rather, certain behaviour correlates with pain.
- But this is not *behaviourism*: the correlation is *criterial* and *a priori*.
- And Wittgenstein argues that this introduces no ambiguity.