

WITTGENSTEIN *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS* LECTURE 6

1. Wittgenstein now considers the idea that when one reads there is a peculiar and characteristic experience: it is the feeling of 'the word-shapes somehow *causing* our utterance' (*PI* 169a). Now there is *something* behind this: it is the felt difference between making a noise, say 'i', when I see an arbitrary flourish (of the sort at *PI* 166) and making it when I see the written letter 'i'. In the first case there is a feeling of effort, perhaps; and in the second case a felt *lack* of restraint (*PI* 169c).
2. Wittgenstein is not denying that such a felt difference exists but only our interpretation of it as a difference between being causally influenced and not being causally influenced. For first: the felt lack of restraint that I just mentioned is also there when we say 'i' whilst *happening* to look at the flourish: so how can we interpret that feeling as a causal connection (*PI* 169c)? The mistake here is to think that something that we feel when we do the reading in slow-motion, so to speak, is also there (perhaps subliminally) in other cases too. But experience itself teaches that this is not so (cf. *PI* 171c). And second: causation implies the existence of a regular pattern that we can discover by repeated experiment: and how can such a pattern, which is extended in time and space, appear to us all at once (*PI* 169b)? Note that this is a Humean concept of causation.
3. Very well: maybe it is not the experience of being *caused* to do something but the experience of being *guided* in a certain direction. Now it is certainly true that somebody can be guided by the words towards uttering the appropriate sounds. But even if we look very carefully at what happens when we read the words slowly: where is the *experience* of guidance (*PI* 170b)? It is salutary at this point to try the experiment of drawing a parallel (*PI* 174a) or copying a doodle (*PI* 175a). *Where* is the experience of being guided?
4. Sellars said that Wittgenstein's discussion of the doodle experiment (*PI* 175-6) is the centre of the entire later philosophy. Great importance clearly attaches to the following point: that when you are copying the doodle there is nothing baffling; but when you look back it seems at once that there *must* have been more going on than just this: you looked at the doodle and you drew another. And it is this point that lies behind the thought that Wittgenstein will have got from Schopenhauer but which had earlier occurred to Berkeley, that the *will* is not a *phenomenon*, for nothing in my experience answers to it (*PI* 176).
5. What was the point of this discussion of reading? It illustrated in microscopic detail about the simpler phenomenon of reading the point that he had applied to understanding: 'for us it is the *circumstances* under which he had such an experience that justify him in saying in such a case that he understands, that he knows how to go on' (*PI* 155). What makes 'she is reading' true is not: a mechanism in the brain (*PI* 157-8), sensations of hesitating etc. (*PI* 159-60), of derivation (*PI* 162-3), of the words coming in a special way (*PI* 166), of causation (*PI* 169)

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or of guidance (PI 170-178); but what *justifies* it is her behaviour.

6. We now leave reading and return to the examples involving numerical sequences. When you grasp the formula—as we say ‘in a flash’—your characteristic expression of this is ‘Now I can go on!’ (PI 179a). Does this mean that ‘Now I can go on!’ reports a mental state that is contingently connected with a correct continuation of the series? Compare: when I am trying to remember a tune and suddenly say ‘I know it!’—am I reporting a felt mental state of then knowing it? It need not be reporting any mental state but rather it *expresses* one i.e. it is produced by it and is itself a signal of what is to come (PI 180).
7. The feeling persists that when you grasp the sequence/remember the tune every step is already taken—your mind has flown ahead and grasped them all (PI 188). But do we think of every step (or every note) *separately* in advance? No: we do this (in the case of the formula) by grasping the principle behind the formula and seeing that we should apply it just the *same* in each case. But now consider the recalcitrant learner (PI 185). *He* will say that he was carrying out the order ‘+2’ in the ‘same’ way at each step.
8. This doesn’t mean that we need a new ‘intuition’ at each step of the series: how would that help? ‘If intuition is an inner voice—how do I know *how* I am to obey it?’ (PI 213b). It is better to say that at each step we take a new decision (PI 186): really it is a leap in the dark (PI 219c-d). It is as though the *Tractatus* has been turned inside out: instead of meaning being guaranteed by a wholly impersonal logical form it demands human intervention at *every* step. But the saying/showing distinction has left a trace: the meaning of the signs—e.g. the way that the formula +2 determines its steps in advance—cannot be in anything that it says but is exhibited in what we do with it.
9. PI 186 resolves the unease that we had been feeling about PI 1d. What *real* grocer ‘says the series of cardinal numbers... up to the word “five” and for each number... takes an apple of the same colour of the sample out of the drawer’? But that *is* how you would picture the *inner accompaniments* of that trip to the grocers’ i.e. as robotic simulacra of the external processes that they accompany (cf. the Chinese Room). An inner voice does not explain but only duplicates the outer one—on which it was modelled all along: ‘The human body is the best picture of the human soul’ (PI II.iv).
10. At s187 Wittgenstein illustrates his non-revisionary conception of philosophy: really what you wanted to say—when you said that you already knew all the steps in advance—was in *some* sense all right. It was all right if it just meant a lot of subjunctives about what you *would* have said if you had been asked about e.g. the 500th step. But without any enduring state ‘behind it’ that too is just a disposition *to* make a leap in the dark.