U. T. PLACE Lecture 19 13/3/74

The ontological Commitments of Common sense psychology 4

Perception, topic neutrality and the properties of experience

The theory of sense perception

In the previous lecture I drew a threefold distinction between (a) mental activity whereby the individual regulates and in part creates the experiences he has or receives (b) the raw experiences themselves which constitute, as it were his 'window on the world' and (c) the interpretations or constructions which he puts upon his experience. This threefold distinction is the basis of the theory of sense-perception which I described in Lecture 2 as the theory "according to which sense perception consists in the acquisition by virtue of sensory stimulation and the resultant sensory experience of the knowledge that a certain proposition about the current state of the individual's sensory environment corresponds to or accurately depicts the relevant environmental state of affairs and is therefore true" (p. 3). In other words to say that someone has seen, heard, tasted, smelled or felt something is to say that he has correctly interpreted his experience as an experience resulting from a sensory encounter with an object or state of affairs of the kind in question. It is important to notice that this account of sense perception applies only to cases of what has been called 'veridical perception', that is to cases where the individual correctly interprets the current environmental situation as it impinges on his sense organs. This is in line with the ordinary use of sentence frames like 'A saw O', 'A saw that p', 'A heard O', 'A smelled O', 'A tasted O' and 'A felt O', where we cannot say that someone saw, heard, smelled, tasted or felt something, if the object or state of affairs in question was not there to be seen, heard, smelled, tasted or felt, and where we cannot say that he saw that p unless p is true. On the other hand there are sentence frames like 'A saw O as Φ' which although they imply the existence and presence of O in A's stimulus field do not entail that O actually has the property Φ which A attributes to it. This is the precedent for the technical use of the term 'perception' to cover so-called illusory as well as veridical perception.

As I pointed out in Lecture 2, this theory of sense perception, as it applies to veridical perception is wholly consistent with the doctrine known as naive realism according to which what we perceive are objects and states of affairs which actually exist in our immediate environment, physical energies from which are impinging on our sense organs and giving rise to the sensory experiences we are having. It is also consistent, as I pointed out in Lecture 2, with a form of the representative or causal theory of perception according to which the interpretation of the sensory experience in such a case, but not the raw experience itself, represents or corresponds to the actual state of affairs in the environment. What it is not consistent with is the doctrine known as phenomenalism or with what we may call the phenomenalist version of the representative theory of perception according to which what we directly perceive is not the environmental state of affairs, but the experience which, on the causal or representative the theory, it produces in us. This is not to say that we cannot ever be said to perceive or observe our experiences. We can do so, as I suggested in the last lecture, if we adopt the introspective attitude and interpret our experiences immediately instead of mediately. But what we do not and cannot do is to begin by perceiving the experience immediately as an experience of a certain kind and then somehow infer the nature of the environmental situation from the description of the experience. And the reason why we cannot do this is that the only way we have of describing an experience is in terms of the kind of publicly observable environmental situation which characteristically produces or is produced by an experience like the one we are trying to describe.

To suppose that we could begin by describing the experience and then infer the environmental situation from that description is to put the cart before the horse. We have to begin both logically and genetically by learning to describe our experience mediately in terms of the publicly observable environmental situation confronting us. It is only when we have learned to do this that we can begin to describe the experience itself, and then only in those cases where the experience has some features which has no counterpart in the objective environmental situation, by mentioning the kind of environmental situation which characteristically produces experiences of the kind in question.

The topic neutrality of phenomenal descriptions

The term 'topic neutrality' was first used by Professor J. J. C. Smart (14) to describe a feature of

introspective reports i.e.: the descriptions which the individual gives of his own private experiences, whereby such statements do not and necessarily cannot mention any actual properties of the experiences themselves. An experience on this view can only be described in terms of its resemblance to other experiences identified in terms of their standard publicly observable concomitants. According to Smart the underlying logical form of these phenomenal descriptions of experience is a sentence frame of the form 'There is something going on in me which is like what typically goes on in me when I look at, listen to, savour or feel something that is Φ' or alternatively 'There is something going on in me which is like what typically goes on in me when I am inclined or tempted to Φ'.

There are three distinct arguments which can be adduced in support of this doctrine of the topic neutrality of phenomenal descriptions. These may be characterised as (1) the empirical argument (2) the a priori argument and (3) the theoretical argument.

1. The empirical argument for topic neutrality

The empirical argument for the topic neutrality of phenomenal descriptions of experience is the argument that if we examine actual descriptions that ordinary people give of their private experiences in everyday life, we invariably find either that they are explicitly topic neutral or, if they are not explicitly topic neutral, can be readily shown to be in fact topic neutral by the absence of the usual entailments of the kind of description that is not topic neutral in this sense. Thus the vast majority of phenomenal descriptions are expressed in sentence frames of the form 'O looks, sounds, smells, tastes or feels to me like a Φ', or 'It appears, seems, looks, sounds, tastes, smells or feels to me as if p' or simply 'It's as if p' where p is a proposition describing either something happening to the individual or else something he is inclined or tempted to do. The topic neutrality of the propositions expressed by these sentence frames is shown by the fact that propositions expressed by sentence frames of these forms do not entail either the proposition p or in the first case the proposition 'O is Φ'. Thus if I say 'This book looks red to me' I can always add the proposition 'though it isn't red' without contradicting myself. Similarly if I say 'I felt as if I was going to be sick' I can always add 'though I wasn't really' again without contradicting my first statement.

In such cases the force of saying that something or the impersonal 'it' appears, seems, looks, sounds, smells, tastes, feels like or as if so and so is to withdraw the claim that the thing in question or (in the case of the impersonal 'it') that there is anything which actually has the property in question. Such descriptions constitute what C. B. Martin (7) has called 'Low claim assertions' whereby we describe our experiences in terms of how we are tempted to describe the environmental situation confronting us, and then explicitly withdraw the claim that the environmental situation actually is as it seems or appears to be. Paul Feyerabend (3) makes the same point when he argues that the source of the certainty which attaches to the individual's statements about his own mental processes is their 'lack of content'. "Statements about physical objects possess a very rich content. They are vulnerable because of the existence of this content. Thus the statement 'there is a table in front of me' leads to predictions concerning my tactual sensations; the behaviour of other material objects (a glass of brandy put in a certain position will remain in this position and will not fall to the ground; a ball thrown in a certain direction will be deflected); the behaviour of other people (they will walk around the table; point out objects on its surface); etc. Failure of any one of these predictions may force me to withdraw the statement. This is not the case with statements concerning thoughts, sensations, feelings; [...] the same kind of vulnerability does not obtain here. The reason is that their content is so much poorer. No prediction, no retrodiction can be inferred from them, and the need to withdraw them can therefore not arise"

There are, of course, cases where we do not explicitly withdraw the claim to be ascribing actual properties to things in our environment by using a sentence frame of the form 'it looks, appears, seems Φ to me'. For example most of us are ready to say of an after-image that it was say, red and round. Yet when we say this we do not imply that there is anything red or round in the area space in front of our eyes or that the after-image really is red and round as opposed to merely looking red and round. In the case of after-images the distinction between how it looks and how it is has no application. The case of the coloured after-image has been frequently adverted to in discussions of this problem since I first introduced it in my discussion of 'the phenomenological fallacy' in my 1956 paper 'Is consciousness a brain process?' (9b). But it has not always been recognised, not only that the case of the after-image is one of the very few cases where we apparently ascribe physical properties to experiences without using a 'low claim' formula of the 'it seems', 'it looks' kind, but also that although the man in the street frequently has after-images, he never has occasion to

describe them unless he is persuaded to do so by a psychologist. This is because such experiences are wholly useless to him as a guide to what is going on in his visual environment. If he adverts to them at all, he will mention their occurrence by saying that his eyes were temporally 'dazzled' by the bright light that had just been shining into them. I would suggest moreover, that it is only because there is no danger in such cases of anyone supposing that we actually believe in the existence of an environmental object answering to the description give that we are prepared to describe 'what we see' in such cases as something red and round rather than as something that seems to be present in our visual environment (though we know perfectly well that there is really nothing there) which, if it existed (which it doesn't), would be correctly described by saying that it is red and round.

2. The a priori argument for the topic neutrality of phenomenal descriptions

The a priori argument for the topic neutrality of phenomenal descriptions derives from Wittgenstein's private language argument in the Philosophical Investigations to which I have referred on a number of occasions in previous lectures. As I pointed out in Lecture 1, this argument is a form of reductio ad absurdum which takes as its starting point the observation that the phenomenalist view according to which we begin by observing our private experiences and infer from these observations to the existence of objects and states of affairs in an external world beyond the senses necessarily pre-supposes a sense-datum or private sensation language the individual words of which "are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations". (16, p. 89). Such a language would be required in order to state what, according to the phenomenalist, are the primary observations from which the propositions about the external world are to be either inferred as suggested by Helmholtz (4) or derived by a process of logical construction, as suggested by Russell (12). Moreover, since any definition of the words composing such language in terms of a material object-public world language would involve a petitio principii, the only way of fixing their meaning would be by a process of private ostensive definition in which the individual who is constructing the language somehow inwardly resolves to use that word for this recurring feature of his experience.

Such a language however, could never be understood by anyone other than the individual whose private language it is, since ex hypothesei only he can 'see' what it is that he is inwardly pointing at. But if no one else can understand the language, such a private language could never be used for purposes of inter-personal communication and, hence could never be used to make statements that are available for public discussion and debate.

What follows from this argument is not, as has sometimes been supposed, that there is no conceivable way in which the words of a language could be used to refer to the private experiences of the individual, but that the basic undefined concepts of any language that is capable of being used as a vehicle of inter-personal communication, must acquire their meaning through an act of public ostensive definition in which two or more people agree to use a particular word to refer to a feature of the public three dimensionally extended spatial environment to which they can all point. It also follows that the only way to explain to another person the meaning of words like 'pain', 'throbbing', 'tickle' and 'itch' which refer to varieties of private experience is by pointing either literally or by the use of words to the standard publicly observable concomitants of such experiences, either their standard causes such as wounds or swellings or their standard effects on behaviour such as groaning, scratching or giggling.

These considerations explain both why it is that we have very few words in ordinary language which actually refer to private experiences - apart from the word 'experience' itself which, as Farrell (2) has pointed out, is not very often used in this sense in ordinary language, all the words of this type in ordinary language refer to bodily sensations - and why it is that the descriptions which people give of their experiences invariably display this topic neutral character whereby the experience is characterised, in so far as it can be characterised at all, in terms of the standard publicly observable concomitants of the kind of experience which the particular experience in question resembles.

3. The theoretical argument for the topic neutrality of phenomenal descriptions

The theoretical argument for the topic neutrality of phenomenal descriptions is based on theoretical considerations concerning the process whereby a child learns to speak and understand its native tongue. The earliest statement of this argument which I have come across is in a paper by Quine (11) published in 1951. The relevant passage in this paper on 'Mental Entities' reads as follows: "It is significant that when we

try to talk of the subjective we borrow our terminology from the objective: I feel as if I were falling; I have a sinking sensation, I feel on top of the world, I see pink elephants (better: I feel as if I were really seeing pink elephants), etc. Even the terms which we have come to regard as strictly and immediately sensory, like 'red' are obviously objective in reference in the first instance: we learn the word 'red' by being confronted with an external object which our parent calls red, just as we learn the word 'sheep' by being confronted with an external object which our parent calls a sheep. When, at a certain stage of epistemological sophistication, we transfer the word 'red' to an alleged datum of immediate experience, we are doing just what we do when we say we have a sinking sensation: I feel as if I were really, externally falling, and I feel as if I were really confronted by an external red object". I presented the same argument in my own 1956 paper as follows: "It is assumed that because we recognise things in our environment by their look, sound, smell, taste and feel, we begin by describing their phenomenal properties, i.e. the properties of the looks, sounds, smells, tastes and feels which they produce in us, and infer their real properties from their phenomenal properties. In fact the reverse is the case. We begin by learning to recognise the real properties of things in our environment. We learn to recognise them, of course by their look, sound, smell, taste and feel; but this does not mean that we have to learn to describe the look, sound, smell, taste and feel of things before we can describe the things themselves. Indeed, it is only after we have learnt to describe the things in our environment that we can learn to describe our consciousness of them. We describe our conscious experience not in terms of the mythological 'phenomenal properties' which are supposed to inhere in the mythological 'objects' in the mythological 'phenomenal field', but by reference to the actual physical properties of the concrete physical objects, events and processes which normally, though not perhaps in the present instance, give rise to the sort of conscious experience which we are trying to describe. In other words when we describe the after-image as green, we are not saying that there is something, the after-image which is green, we are saying that we are having the sort of experience which we normally have when, and which we have learned to describe as, looking at a green patch of light". (9b, p. 49)

Topic neutrality and the properties of experience

In his discussion of the topic neutrality of introspective reports in his 1959 paper (14) Smart makes explicit the important point which is implicit in both Quine's and in my own account quoted above that although "raw feels [...] are colorless [...] this does not mean that sensations do not have plenty of properties". The point is that although experiences have many phenomenal properties in the sense of characteristic qualitative changes to which we respond differentially in making our assessment as to what is going on in our environment, as well as others like those of after-images which we usually ignore, we have no way of describing these properties except in terms of the publicly observable states of affairs whose presence in our environment is normally signalled thereby. The consequence which both Smart and I wished to draw from this observation is, as I put it (9b, p. 50) that "there is nothing that the introspecting subject says about his conscious experience which is inconsistent with anything the physiologist might want to say about the brain processes which cause him to describe the environment and his consciousness of that environment in the way he does." Smart, however has been inclined to take this feature of the topic neutrality of introspective reports rather further than I am personally inclined to do. He is inclined (a) to maintain that there is nothing that the introspecting subject can say about his experience apart from the topic neutral description that he gives of it and (b) to define private experiences or sensations themselves simply as those otherwise, from the standpoint of the introspecting subject, uncharacterisable somethings which topic neutral descriptions are descriptions of. I do not go along with Smart on either of these points because it seems to me that in discussing the topic neutrality of introspective reports we need to distinguish between on the one hand, the description of an experience and characterisation of its phenomenal properties which can only be done in topic neutral terms and, on the other hand, reports of the circumstances under which a given experience occurred and the temporal and causal relationships between one experience and another and between the experience and its causal antecedents and consequences whether publicly observable or intra-psychic. Now while it is certainly true that an introspective observer can only identify the particular experience he is talking about in topic neutral terms, once he has identified it in this way he can go on to tell us a great deal about its temporal and causal relationships to other experiences and to its actual as distinct from its standard, publicly observable concomitants. This means that we can derive a great deal of information from introspective observation about the temporal and causal relationships in which private experiences stand both to one another and to their publicly observable concomitants which enables us to characterise private experiences

in many other ways besides the topic neutral description in terms of which the particular experience is necessarily identified. These characteristics or properties of experience, as we may call them, provided we do not confuse them with the phenomenal properties of experience which can only be characterised in topic neutral terms, make possible a much richer definition of private experience than that provided by the fact of the topic neutral character of the identifying descriptions of particular experiences. Such a definition I suggest, might run as follows:

1. An experience is a process in the sense of an occurrence which is extended over time and subject to continuous change over the period of its occurrence.
2. An experience is a process which can only be said to occur in so far as it is had or undergone by an individual human being or other sentient creature.
3. An experience is a process, not ordinarily detectable by an external observer, which goes on somewhere not clearly specified, beneath the skin of its owner.
4. An experience is a process of a kind such that experiences of one sort or another are continuously occurring as long as the individual in question is awake and intermittently in the form of dream images while he is asleep.
5. An experience is a process of a kind such that the characteristics of most of the experiences which occur while the individual is awake (his sensory experiences or sensations) are determined by the way his sense organs and sensory nerve endings are being stimulated at the time, whereas the characteristics of those which occur while he is asleep (his dream images) as well as a minority of those which occur while he is awake (his mental images) are determined in a way that does not involve muscular or sensory stimulation by the voluntary or involuntary action of the individual himself.
6. An experience is a process of a kind such that experiences whose characteristics are primarily determined by sensory stimulation (sensory experiences or sensations) are subject to a measure of control by the individual whose experiences they are, either as in the case of the visual, olfactory, gustatory and tactile sensations involved in watching, savouring and feeling, by movements of the sense organs in relation to the source of stimulation, or as in the case of the auditory sensations involved in selective listening, in a way that does not or need not, involve any bodily movement.
7. An experience is a process such that the occurrence of a sensory experience is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of any interpretation that the individual makes of what is the case in his stimulus environment.
8. An experience is a process such that the occurrence of a sensory experience is both a causally necessary and, when combined with an appropriate interpretation of the current state of the individual's stimulus environment, a causally sufficient condition of the individual's being pleased, distressed, excited, depressed, worried or relieved by any occurrence in his stimulus environment. If, as Titchener has argued (15) the occurrence of a thought invariably involves some kind of sensory experience or mental image which carries the sense or meaning of the thought in question, it would follow that the occurrence of an experience is a causally necessary condition of the occurrence of any emotional state.
9. An experience is a process such that the occurrence of a series of sensory experiences generated by the changes in sensory stimulation produced by the movements involved is a causally necessary condition for the performance by the individual in question of any voluntary or deliberate action.
10. An experience is a process such that the occurrence of an experience, combined with an appropriate interpretation of what is occurring, is a causally necessary, but not a causally sufficient condition of the individual's giving a first hand account or description of what is or was going on either in his stimulus environment or within the experience itself, both at the time and on subsequent recall.
11. An experience is a process such that the occurrence of an experience can be reported and to a limited extent described by the individual whose experience it is, but whose characteristics can only be differentiated from those of other experiences in terms of the similarities and differences between the experience in question and those experiences that are characteristic either of the presence of some publicly observable state of affairs in the individual's stimulus environment, or situation in which the individual is disposed to behave in some publicly specifiable way.

Objections to the alleged privacy of mental processes

I have been assuming in this and in the preceding lecture that except in so far as mental activities sometimes involve publicly observable self stimulation or movements of the receptor organs in relation to

the environment, all mental processes are covert in the sense of being invisible to an external observer and private in the sense of being witnessed or observed by their owner and by him alone. I now want to present both a positive argument in support of this view of the nature of mental processes and a discussion of two arguments which have been put forward in support of a different interpretation.

We have already seen in previous lectures how Ryle's dispositional theory as applied to the analysis of mental state concepts enables us to explain the fact that the existence of a mental state cannot be detected by an external observer by an immediate inspection of his publicly observable behaviour and outward demeanour (unless you happen to catch him in the act of giving his opinion or expressing his wishes) without supposing that a being in a mental state consists in any kind of private internal state of the individual concerned. The situation in the case of mental processes is very different. For a process, as we have seen is by definition something of which it makes sense to say that there is something going on throughout its period of operation and this, as I have argued elsewhere, implies that "a process is something that is subject to continuous change and movement during the period of its operation" (9e, p. 109). Now since it is perfectly possible for someone who is completely immobile to be continuously watching, listening, feeling pains, itches, throbs and twinges, thinking, picturing things in his mind's eye or dreaming throughout this period of total immobility, it is clear that the continuous change or movement involved in these processes does not consist in such a case in any change or movement in his limbs or any externally observable part of his anatomy and must therefore, consist in changes or movement inside him not detectable by gross observation from outside.

Furthermore, although many of the changes in his experience which the introspecting subject reports, such as the fluctuations of ambiguous figures which we discussed in the last lecture, are associated with, if they do not entirely consist in changes in the way the stimulus is interpreted and hence in the verbal and behavioural dispositions it elicits, there are other changes which the subject reports which do not involve any change in the way he interprets what is going on and hence in his verbal or behavioural dispositions. A throbbing sensation for example, is subject to continuous rhythmic changes in intensity; but these changes do not involve any change in the way the experience is interpreted.

It follows from this that the continuous changes which an introspecting subject report cannot be accounted for solely as changes in the way he is disposed to talk and behave. Moreover once we recognise with Wundt (17) that the process which the introspective observer is describing is the same process as that to which he responds when he describes what is going on in his environment as it impinges on his sense organs and, as is implied by the topic neutrality of these descriptions, that he can only describe these experiences in terms of the environmental features he has learned to identify by means of these changes, this otherwise mysterious ability to observe and describe changes going on inside him which only he observes becomes much more readily intelligible. For as I suggested to Smart in correspondence some years ago: "Psychologically speaking, the change from talking about the environment to talking about one's state of consciousness is simply a matter of inhibiting descriptive reactions not justified by appearances alone, and of disinhibiting descriptive reactions which are normally inhibital because the individual has learned that they are unlikely to provide a reliable guide to the state of the environment in the prevailing circumstances." (14, p. 154).

The incorrigibility of introspective reports

A possible objection to this account of introspection is that it does not account for the alleged incorrigibility of introspective reports. For no one would wish to claim that the descriptions of the individual's current sensory environment from which, according to this theory, introspective reports are derived, are in any sense incorrigible.

There are a number of points which need to be made in answer to this objection. The first involves drawing a distinction between incorrigibility and infallibility. To say that a statement is incorrigible means literally that it cannot be corrected. It does not mean or need to mean that it is infallible in the sense that the speaker cannot be mistaken in asserting it, though he may be lying. Introspective reports, as I have described them, are certainly incorrigible in the sense that no one but the speaker can observe the experiences which they describe and whose occurrence they report. Consequently, no one apart from the speaker has any direct evidence on which to judge the accuracy of such descriptions and to that extent they are immune to correction by any one apart from the speaker himself. What we cannot say however, as Ayer (1) has argued is that introspective reports are incorrigible in the sense that they are not subject to correction by their owner

should he decide that his initial description even when given in good faith was inaccurate, if not wholly wrong. It may even be argued that there are occasions on which an outsider might be able to correct somebody else's introspective report. For example a psychologist who knows that the colour that after images seem to have is invariably of the contrasting hue to that of the light source which produced it, would be in a position to correct the description of a subject who described his after image as being of some other hue. Admittedly if the subject refused to accept the correction and could be shown to have no defect either in his colour vision nor in his knowledge of our ordinary colour vocabulary, the psychologist might be forced to accept the subject's statement as a falsification of what he had hitherto taken on the basis of previous introspective evidence to be a law of nature. Nevertheless this example is surely sufficient to show that the incorrigibility of introspective reports is an incorrigibility of a rather limited kind, which falls far short of the kind of infallibility which I have argued, applies in the case of our knowledge of our own beliefs.

It may be argued that this kind of very limited corrigibility applies only in fringe cases where the difference between the original and corrected description is marginal and that in a clear case, as for example where a man feels an acute pain sensation, there can be no such possibility of his being mistaken and subsequently correcting his statement. In such a case however, there are a number of considerations to be taken into account. For one thing it is just about equally difficult to allow the possibility of error and subsequent correction in a clear case of the perception of a relatively large material object like a table in one's immediate vicinity. Here as in the pain in case, one feels like saying 'If that isn't going to count as a case of looking at and feeling a table (or feeling a pain) then I don't know how the word 'table' ('pain') is being used'.

Then there is also the point that Feyerabend (3) makes in this connection that the statement 'that is a table' commits the speaker to many more predictions as to how things are going to turn out and is thus more vulnerable to falsification, than an introspective report like 'I feel a pain' which is relatively invulnerable owing to the much lower predictive content that goes with its topic neutrality.

Finally there is the point which is raised by the distinction which I drew in the last lecture between the experiential process which the introspective report is aiming to describe and the interpretation of that experience in terms of which the experience is described. Clearly if as I argued the interpretation is an incipient belief and if as I have also argued (9c) our knowledge of our own beliefs is infallible, it would seem to follow that our knowledge that that is how we are currently interpreting a particular experience is likewise infallible, even if the appropriateness of that interpretation as a description of the experience in question may well be in doubt.

The verbal expression of pain replaces crying

Despite the fact that mental process and mental activity concepts do not lend themselves very readily to such an interpretation there have been three notable attempts to provide a dispositional account of various concepts in this group, namely Wittgenstein's suggestion following on from his private language argument to the effect that "the verbal expression of pain replaces crying" (16 p.89), Malcolm's (6b) theory of dreaming according to which 'dreaming' or to be precise 'having dreamt' consists in a disposition to tell tall stories on waking from sleep and Ryle's (13) 'mongrel categorical' theory of 'heed concepts'. Wittgenstein's view, if indeed it was ever intended to be taken seriously, may be viewed as an attempt to account for the semantic function of pain-reports in the light of the conclusion which some philosophers e.g. Kenny (5) have drawn from the private language argument, namely that because a private language whose constituent words are given their meaning by an act of private ostensive definition could not be explained to or understood by another person, it follows that words referring to private experiences cannot occur in any natural language that is used for purposes of interpersonal communication and that words like 'pain' which have [been] traditionally construed as referring to such experiences must therefore have been misconstrued. I have argued elsewhere (9d) that, provided the meaning of such words can be taught by pointing to the standard publicly observable concomitants of such experiences, there is no reason in terms of the private language argument why a natural language should not contain words, like our bodily sensation words, which refer to the private experiences of the individual. If this is correct there is no reason why the private language argument should force us to reconsider the traditional interpretation of pain reports as referring to such private experiences.

There is moreover, a fundamental objection to Wittgenstein's suggestion, if this is to be interpreted as meaning that the sentence 'I feel pain' is nothing more than a complicated way of crying or groaning, which does not express a proposition about the current mental life of the speaker. For what are we to say about

the case where James hears John say 'I feel a pain in my chest' and thereupon draws the conclusion 'John feels a pain in his chest'? On Wittgenstein's view all he could mean by this is what is expressed by 'John is inclined to exhibit pain-in-chest expressing behaviour'. This however, means that the sentence 'John feels a pain in his chest' said by James expresses quite a different proposition from the proposition 'I feel a pain in my chest' said by John. For even if we allow that 'I feel a pain in my chest' expresses a proposition which Wittgenstein's view, thus interpreted, does not allow, it is clear that the sentence 'I am inclined to exhibit pain-in-chest expressing behaviour' does not come anywhere near saying the same thing that is said by 'I feel a pain in my chest'. As I see it, while it is perfectly true that a sentence like 'I feel a pain in my chest' often functions as a verbal substitute for groaning or crying, this does not prevent it from also expressing a proposition, any more than the fact that my wife uses the sentence 'I haven't got any cigarettes' as a way of asking me to buy her some, makes her sentence any the less a statement of which it makes perfect sense to ask whether it is true or false.

If you regard the sentence 'I feel a pain in my chest' said by John either as not expressing a proposition or as expressing a different proposition from that expressed by 'John feels a pain in his chest', it is possible to argue, as Malcolm has done (6a), that 'I have a pain in my chest' is neither true nor false, since the question of its truth or falsity arguably does not arise for the speaker in such a case. If however, you are prepared to recognise, as Malcolm is not, that the sentence 'I feel a pain in my chest' uttered by John, not only expresses a proposition, but expresses exactly the same proposition as is expressed by the sentence 'John feels a pain in his chest' uttered by James on the same occasion, then it becomes obvious that the question whether this proposition is true or false does arise - for James, if not for John.

Malcolm on Dreaming

Malcolm's reason for denying that the sentence 'I feel a pain in my chest' uttered by John expresses the same proposition as the sentence 'John feels a pain in his chest' uttered on the same occasion by James, is that he subscribes to an extreme view of the so-called verification principle according to which the meaning of a statement is its method of verification from which follows that if two statements are verified in different ways they necessarily have different meanings and therefore express different propositions. Consequently since the way John verifies his statement 'I have a pain in my chest', in so far as he can be said to verify it at all (according to Malcolm the question of the truth or falsity of the statement does not arise for John), is quite different from the way James verifies his statement 'John has a pain in his chest', the two sentences express two quite different propositions. Since I do not accept the verification principle, either as a criterion of meaningfulness nor as a criterion of difference in meaning, and since my view of propositions stated in Lecture 2 would treat the sentence 'I have a pain in my chest' uttered by John as expressing the same proposition as 'John has a pain in his chest' uttered by James on the same occasion, I cannot go along with Malcolm here.

For the same reason I cannot accept Malcolm's account of the concept of 'dreaming' which as Putnam (10) has pointed out is based entirely on this same rigid and as I see it, wholly inappropriate application of the verification principle. Since Malcolm's theory has been examined in detail in a recent report submitted to this department (8), I cannot do better than refer you to that piece of work for a more detailed exposition and critique of Malcolm's position in this matter.

Ryle's mongrel categorical theory of mental activity words

In discussing Ryle's mongrel categorical theory of what he calls 'heed concepts' (13, pp. 135-149) I likewise cannot do better than refer you to my own discussion of this theory in my paper 'The concept of heed' published in 1954 (9a). Briefly stated, Ryle's view is that when we use a mental activity verb like 'paying attention' or 'concentrating' we are not referring to any kind of internal mental activity. We are saying that the individual in question is performing some other publicly observable activity to which he is paying attention or on which he is concentrating in a particular way, with or from some kind of disposition which can be less misleadingly expressed by an adverb or adverbial phrase such as 'attentively' or 'with concentration'. The objection to Ryle's theory which I put forward in my paper is that there are many cases where what the individual pays attention to or concentrates upon is not something else that he is doing, but some object or state of affairs in his sensory environment or a private sensory experience such as a pain. I also pointed out that even in the case where we do speak of someone paying attention to what he is doing in a publicly observable way, to say that he is paying attention to what he is doing does not entail his doing it

correctly. No doubt he is more likely to get it right if he pays attention to what he is doing, than if he pays little or no attention; but this is a purely contingent matter. In order to succeed he must pay attention to the correct features of the sensory feedback from his movements as they develop and make the appropriate corrections in the light of these sensory experiences. In other words we can only account adequately for the logic of heed concepts in terms of a theory of mental activity such as I have presented in this and the previous lecture in which mental activity is construed in terms of publicly observable self-stimulating and receptor movements and an intra-psychic or intra-neutral filtering process which regulates the private experience of the individual concerned.

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