

How Does Private Language Bear on the Cartesian Theory of Mind?

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The Cartesian meditations on first philosophy intended to demonstrate the existence of God. Wittgenstein's private language argument is regarded as an attack on Cartesian dualism through the investigation of "private language" by a paradigm of sensation. This article explores how the "private language argument" bears on the Cartesian theory of mind. The mind and the body are not distinct and independent. Instead, the mind should be elucidated as the root of the body.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, the nature of sensation, nothingness

What Is the Cartesian Theory of Mind?

Cartesian theory of mind is a typical dualism. Descartes believes that the body prevents the mind from approaching the reality. However, Wittgenstein endorses that the mind finds expressions in the body, and the expressions of the mind are not external to the body (Dilman, 1998). The inner/outer structure of human nature derived from Cartesian dualism is a misconception in Wittgenstein's view. Because the "inner" is an illusion, "the whole complex of ideas alluded to by this word is like a painted curtain drawn in front of the scene of the actual use of the word" (Hacker, 2018, p. 137). There is a view that the label "anti-Cartesian" is potentially misleading, as Wittgenstein's purpose is to undermine all the "isms" (Baker, 1998). And "it is to dig down to the deepest presuppositions of the debate, presuppositions shared by both sides and to challenge these" (Hacker, 2018, p. 125). The following discussion explores how the private language argument reconciles the mind and the body.

Bearing this general picture in mind, we will discuss the Cartesian meditations on the mind and the body.

Cartesian Demonstration of the Existence of the Mind

Descartes, in his meditations, intends to pick out the inevitable truth¹. Through the skeptical methodology, the starting point of his meditation is following:

Certainly in this² regarding the first knowledge there is nothing that assures me of its truth, excepting the clear and

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¹ Although the theory of modality was developed after Descartes' time, we can see that Descartes purports to use the method of doubt to rule out uncertain thoughts in the mind and to make certain things manifest. The aim of Descartes' meditations is knowledge with complete certainty rather than some possible things. A fact which is inevitable, in the Cartesian view, means that it is doubtless and impossible to be false.

² "This" refers to the previous statement that "I am certain that I am a thing which thinks".

distinct perception of that which I state, which would not indeed suffice to convince me that what I say is true if it could ever happen that a thing which I conceived so clearly and distinctly could be false. Accordingly, I can already establish as a general rule that all things I perceive clearly and distinctly are true. (Descartes, 1911, pp. 1-13)

Descartes' platform of exploration is almost empty. Since there was nothing past the examination of the doubt, the tension between the skeptical assumption and the pursuit of certainty leads him to approach reliable truth. After a process of meditation, a definite conclusion is presented—I am, I exist, which is the conclusion of the “cogito” argument³ (Descartes, 1911). The next question is not “Who am I?” but “What am I?” These two questions both pertain to a person's identity and, here, mainly to his identity. Nevertheless, the distinct structures result in different answers. To answer “Who am I?” the response is “I am _”. A name or a composite whole is required to fulfil the open place. The question of “What am I?” activates a procedure of reflection and analysis of the properties of the “I”. Descartes skips the discussion of the attributes of sensations and directly reaches the predicate of his answer to the question of “What am I?”—I am a thing that thinks. The predicate that “a thing which thinks” is added to the first inevitable conclusion of his existence. The proposition that “he is a thing that thinks” is an absolute fact in Descartes' perspective.

In the second meditation, Descartes uses a piece of wax to unfold the different properties of the mind and the body. He experiments to make that piece of wax approach the fire. Appealing to our experience, the physical attributes of the wax—taste, odour, colour, figure and size—will change from the previous situation. Descartes tests it by striking it with a finger, and no sound is emitted, which contrasts the former property. This thought experiment reports that the physical properties of the wax are temporary, and the perception of its features is changing accordingly. However, an absolute fact about the wax being kept the same as before it was exposed to fire is that it is inclined to be recognized as the same⁴, which means the fire does not change the identity of the wax. People do not perceive wax only by viewing it as a bundle of physical properties when our senses capture a tangible property. Then, the physical information will be processed by the faculty of imagination, concluding that the sameness of that wax is not derived from its physical appearance. Descartes renders it as a new knowledge that the mind is penetrating the appearance to recognize the identity of that wax. The extent of certainty of this knowledge captured by the mind is greater than the physical properties through our senses. The identity of the wax becomes a sufficient condition for his finding of the mind. Descartes says, “...I see clearly that nothing is easier to know than my mind” (Descartes, 1911, p. 11).

An argument drawn from his process of meditations is that even if the physical properties of the wax are changed, it is still recognized as the same wax by the mind or body, which would imply the identity of the mind or body; and indeed, he can perceive the identity of the wax; therefore, there will be the identity of the mind or

³ “I think; therefore, I am”.

⁴ What if some people say the fire makes the wax a new one? As there is no other material, this wax is the same as the previous one. The identity problem is complex. To answer this question clearly, we can divide the objects into three kinds: mathematical, physical, and mental states or processes in a fixed period. Mathematical objects, such as numbers, have a relatively specific identity. A number n in the physical world can repeat in many situations, while in the pure mathematical sense, that number n has a unique position in the series of numbers. The identity of the point is ambiguous since, for pure geometry, there is no limitation of space. Thus, we can say every point is the same or two points are different. People usually distinguish points in another part of a geometric figure by signifying them with letters. Regarding a physical object like a table or wax, some philosophers think they are concrete objects, and another view suggests that a physical object is a bundle of particles that are moving all the time. According to simplicity, wax is a concrete physical object. As the fire merely changes the physical properties of the wax but does not produce a second piece of wax; hence we recognize the wax keeping its identity from a physical perspective. Leibniz's law provides a conditional structure for the identification of an object by its property. In §258 of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein discusses the identity of mental states, which is a trick question.

the identity of the body. However, the body and the senses are changing all the time, which means the faculty of imagination and understanding are in flux with the change of body, while the mind is static⁵. It is easier to grasp a stable thing, so the mind is more accessible to capture than the body. To perceive a static substance is easier than to perceive a dynamic entity; thus, to perceive the identity of the mind is more accessible than the understanding of the body.

The central idea of Cartesian dualism is that the mind is different from the body⁶. The mind is independent of the body and vice versa. By the methodology of doubt, the above discussions manifest the existence of the mind, which is the antecedent of the distinction between the mind and body. The next step is to figure out why the body exists.

Cartesian Demonstration of the Existence of the Body

The existence of the body is also derived from the famous “Cogito”—I think therefore I am (Cogito Ergo Sum)⁷:

As a result of “I exist”, I am a thinking being. I possess a body that has the function of senses. Still, the mind is not dependent on that body, and the mind exists after the body perishes⁸; so, the mind (or i) and the body possessed by the mind are clearly and distinctly two different things. It is from the thought that “I exist” that Descartes grasps the assurance of the existence of the mind. His mind and body work together as a unity during his meditations. Nevertheless, as he suggested, the body is temporary; it is not the same as the mind, which is still there after the body is no more. This insight results in the distinction between knowledge from the body and mind. The body and mind produce different substances, so they are different kinds of substances.

After clarifying the distinction between the mind and the body, Descartes comes back to ordinary experience, telling us that the mind and the body cooperate as a whole. According to his principle of doubt, only the existence of the mind is not sufficient for the existence of the body. In other words, although the existence of the mind has been demonstrated, the existence of the body has not yet been established. Descartes, being a mathematician, interprets this idea in the case of geometry (Descartes, 1911, p. 26). The mere mind is inadequate to know all the material things, e.g., the distinction between chiliagon and other polygons; the fact is that we know this kind of knowledge, which is beyond the power of imagination of the mind, and the body is united with the mind. The distinction between these two mathematical objects by the mind needs the help of our faculty of vision. The company of the sense of body and the reasoning of mind enable us to distinguish chiliagon and polygons. If there is no help from the visual capacity of our eyes, it is impossible to accomplish this task, so the body exists.

The Dialectic Relationship Between the Mind and the Body

The individual can know his/her own mind. Since the knowledge of the identity of the wax, or generally the

⁵ Its stability is beyond the life of the body where the mind is located.

⁶ The following philosophers, including Wittgenstein, generalize this idea that people’s minds are different from the body. Descartes implicitly expresses this generalization in his meditations. However, he demonstrates the existence of the mind; according to the methodology of doubt, the existence of the body is still doubted.

⁷ Since a difference expresses a relationship between two things—concrete objects or abstract entities when we acknowledge a difference, it is necessary to accept the existence of two parties. The body and the mind of a person are a composite whole. Thus, the difference between them logically implies their combination. However, this is not a Cartesian way. The wax’s identity shows the mind’s existence, and there is a further conclusion. Then, Descartes demonstrates the existence of the body. When he discovers these two substances, he concludes that the mind differs from the body.

⁸ Wittgenstein expresses a similar idea in §23 of *Philosophy of Psychology*: ...the soul can exist when the body has disintegrated.

identity of corporeal things, is ranked higher than the knowledge of physical properties, the mind plays a more crucial role in his epistemology than senses and imagination. Returning to the definition of the mind, apart from the faculty of senses and imagination, is the faculty by which people can recognize the identity of the corporeal things. On the one hand, the mind has different properties from the body: The body is divisible, but the mind is unified. On the other hand, the mind and body are a composite whole. A behavior, at least a movement of a nerve or organ, is necessary for a sensation. According to Cartesian dualism, the cooperation between two substances of a human being does not exclude their independence. However, this does not deny that psychological phenomena, like non-conceptual perception, are beyond the representation of behavior.

After the demonstration of the distinction between the mind and the body, Descartes is in a position to think about their connections, for example, how these two substances can be a composite whole. In the Cartesian context, a person's identity means that the flowing content of consciousness attaches to the individual mind. The mind and the body have their unique essences and functions. The mind is a thinking but unextended thing since it is hard to designate a space belonging to the mind. The starting point is "I exist", which presumes the ontology of the mind.

In contrast, the body is an unthinking and extended thing. For a living being, the mind and the body are cooperating. However, the mind can exist when the body has disintegrated.

In the meditations on the relationship between the mind and the body, Descartes introduces a substance called "Nature"⁹. Descartes learns from nature that the mind and the body are a unity—"Nature teaches me that by the sensation of pain, that I am intermingled with the body as one whole" (Descartes, 1911, pp. 1-29). The movement of the body—behavior¹⁰—is triggered by the mind. Wittgenstein agrees with the connection between the mind and the body since he thinks that a corresponding behavior will express a sensation. The problem is whether the same behavior always represents the same sensation. The answer is that the connection between a sensation and behavior is not symmetric. People can express painful feelings by crying "Ouch!" or closing their eyes with a frown, but not vice versa. However, it is doubtless that a sensation relates to behavior even if there is no rule for this kind of connection. The confusion about this connection makes philosophers think Wittgenstein holds the behaviorist account of language (Luckhardt, 1983). However, Wittgenstein refused to acknowledge that he was a behaviorist.

"Nature" is not a satisfactory answer to fulfill the gap between the mind and the body, which is the problem that the private language argument purports to dissolve. In a nutshell, Cartesian dualism claims that the mind and the body are two independent substances working together as a composite whole. This dialectic relationship leads to a gap—a problem that is the focus of Wittgenstein's work. The Cartesian divides an individual's world into the inner and outer parts. If the gap between the two parts of the world is not dissolved, we cannot understand the inner world of others. For example, it is impossible to understand the meaning of the word "pain" spoken by others. The fact is that when a child says, "I am in pain", we can know what this sentence means. The next section will show the private language argument, which manifests Wittgenstein's thinking on this question in *Philosophical Investigations*.

⁹ This may refer to the object of current scientific research.

¹⁰ According to Blackburn, philosophically, the doctrine of behaviorism is that mental states are logical constructions out of dispositions to behavior. In other words, describing the mental aspects of a person is a shorthand for describing the various dispositions to behavior that the person possesses.

What Is the Private Language in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations?

Wittgenstein proposes his hypothesis of a private language in §243 of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

But is it also conceivable that there be a language in which a person could write down or give voice to his inner experiences, feelings, moods, and so on—for his own use?—Well, can't we do so in our ordinary language?—But that is now what I mean. The words of this language refer to what only the speaker can know about his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language. (2009, §243)

Gordon Baker (1998) takes this to be Wittgenstein's formulation of his hypothesis of a "private" language. The "private" means that this hypothetical language is logically private. It is not the case that the speaker of a private language hides the meaning of his words; instead, the private language is a system of symbols that is inaccessible to people except the speaker. According to Wittgenstein's idea, the meaning of a word is the referent of that word, which is an object. Along with the dualist distinction between the inner and the outer world, the meaning of a word speaking of an object in the external world refers to a physical entity in the public space.

In contrast, the meaning of a word referring to a sensation such as pain is more complicated. The private language is inaccessible, which means other people cannot know the object referred to by the speaker's word. The imagination of the private language is manifested in the records of the immediate private experiences of the speaker. The inaccessibility of the private language should be analyzed in two aspects: One is the inaccessibility of the symbol, and the other is the inaccessibility of the private sensation signified by the sign. To the previous discussion, what is inaccessible is the inner object, the sensation, rather than the symbol. From a metaphysical perspective, pain could be understood as a type-pain or a token-pain. The symbol refers to the type of pain, but the token pain is the immediate experience when that pain happens and is only known by the subject. As in the diary case (Wittgenstein, 2009, §258), although the speaker can invent a symbol or give a new explanation for the sign that is drawn from a common language, this route of thinking misses the target of Wittgenstein's purpose to talk about the private language. Wittgenstein's concern is whether the familiar words of sensation can capture the nature of the private sensation. When we hear someone else speaking of "pain", do we know what this word means? So, the "private" means the inaccessibility of the meaning of words for expressing sensations. In other words, merely using the word "pain" is not enough to attend to that inner object referred to by the speaker. The privacy of a sensation, as an internal object, relates to the grammatical exploration of the essence of sensations. In order to assess Wittgenstein's argument and its bearing on dualism, we need to discuss the nature of sensation.

Now we ask how the private language bears on the Cartesian theory of the mind. A relatively complete sketch of the Cartesian dualism is shown in the first section, and here, we follow the previous idea of the mind and the body.

Wittgenstein makes a thought experiment in §258 pertain to a record of private sensation that is a direct experience.

I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a particular sensation. To this end, I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation.—I first want to observe that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated.—But all the same, I can give one to myself as kind of ostensive definition! (2009, §258)

As the ostensive definition is unique to the token-sensations, while the diary can only record the type-sensation without the help of correct memory, the diary of a sensation is ultimately infeasible. The meaning of the sign relies on the connection between the sign and the type-sensation:

A definition serves to lay down the meaning of a sign, doesn't it?—Well, that is done precisely by concentrating my attention, for in this way, I commit to memory the connection between the sign and the sensation.—But “I commit it to memory” can only mean that this process brings it about that I remember the link correctly in the future. But in the present case, I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say that whatever will seem correct to me is correct. And that only means that here we can't talk about “correct”. (2009, §258)

Wittgenstein imagines a hypothetical procedure of the inner ostensive definition by concentrating on the immediate sensation and then capturing that as a sample in the memory. The ostension is conducted by personal attention rather than a pointing gesture of an index finger. The next time when a sensation happens in the future, the subject will receive another sample of the sensation. So, the question is whether we can compare these two samples of sensations and whether they are the same. If the comparison is possible, it needs to rely on the correct memory of the connection between the sign and the sensation. A criterion of correctness is essential to judge the correctness of the memory. Suppose the speaker of that private language could hold the two objects of the memory of sensations. There is a criterion for the accuracy of the memories; say, the memory is correct iff *if the result of the comparison between these memories meets the conditions confined in the *, the private language would be established.

However, Wittgenstein's speculation suggests the absence of the required criterion. Speculation is conducted in §265 where Wittgenstein uses an analogy to express why the standard for the correctness of memory of the connection between the sign “S” and that immediate sensation is impossible. This paragraph describes the idea that an independent authority is necessary for objective justification. The objective standard is not in the mind of the speaker of the private language. This presumption results in the consequence of checking one memory by appealing to another memory. One memory relative to another is in the physical realm. As the memory playing the role of authority is not independent of the mind, which leads to subjective authority is not reliable or convincing. To be specific, even if two memories match each other, it does not exclude the situation of missing the right departure point of the train (2009, §265). As the first memory is not objective, and even the second memory matches up to the first one, it is possible for the passenger to miss the train if the first is incorrect.

On the other hand, the mismatch does not suggest that the subject remembers the wrong time point for the train's departure. Similarly, a memory of the sensation is not an objective authority, so it is senseless to check one memory by appealing to another. If we can fit one memory with another, then the other way around may also be of credence, which means if the first memory could be the standard of the second memory, then the second could be the criterion of the first one as well. Both two memories lack reliability. No criterion is fixed here. The Cartesian gap raises the request for the objective standard.

The private language argument is proposed by the need for an objective criterion. If private language can provide an objective standard, the Cartesian gap stand still.

Wittgenstein researches the nature of a sensation by the debate between the narrator and interlocutor in §304 for seeking this criterion:

“But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior with pain and pain-behavior without pain.”—Admit it? What more enormous difference could there be?—“And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a Nothing.”—Not at all. It's not a Something, but not a Nothing either! The outcome was only that a Nothing would render the same service as a Something about which nothing could be said. We've only rejected the grammar, which tends to force itself on us here. (2009, §304)

The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way and still serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or whatever.

The essence of a sensation could be categorized in a spectrum. One side is that a sensation is neither a Something nor a Nothing. The middle part represents a sensation is a Something or a Nothing. And the end suggests a sensation is a Something and a Nothing. The capital letters signify these two words' conceptual meaning for expressing a sensation's essence. The following picture intends to show the spectrum of the nature of a sensation:

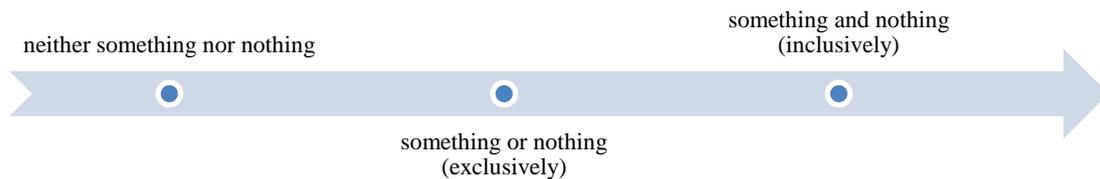


Figure 1. A Spectrum of the Essence of Sensations.

In terms of “Something”, there is a structure of connections to interpret its sense. A sensation, such as pain, is an inner object within the mind. This internal object is expressed by the word “pain” in language. When a subject has this feeling, the subject can use “pain” to refer to this sensation. Along this line of thought, the sensations can be expressed by the grammatical structure of “object and designation”¹¹. The sensation may also be expressed by the body with pain behavior to show that the subject feels pain. A pain-behavior is not a description of that pain (Wittgenstein, 2009, §244). The name of a sensation could be a description (§256). To prove a sensation is not a private object, Roger Teichmann (2017) accepts McDowell’s view that a sensation is an object (or concept-involving awareness). As Wittgenstein’s semantics of pain is closely related to the pain-behavior, there is a view that he proposes a behaviorist account of language. Thus, he is a behaviorist (§304, §307). The fundamental understanding of behavior is that “pain” is an entity. As for Wittgenstein’s genuine attitude towards behaviorism, it is associated with his purpose of *Philosophical Investigations*. He provides a behavioristic account of language, revealing the connection between sensation and the corresponding behavior to deny private language.

The absence of the criteria reported by the private language argument leads us to the exploration of the essence of a sensation. As we mentioned before, a sensation includes the token-part and the type-part. A behaviour can express the type-part, while the token-part needs to be divided into two components—something and nothing—again. Some elements, such as a degree of pain, will manifest through behavior so that there is always a part of that pain that only belongs to the speaker, signified as “Nothing” in §304. To determine a sensation’s authentic essence, we intend to pick its position in the spectrum.

The Essence of a Sensation—Something or Nothing?

Wittgenstein’s interest in the essence of a sensation is in the linguistic aspect, which is unfolded by McDowell’s interpretation. The exploration of the nature of a sensation targets the gap in Cartesian dualism.

¹¹ The discussion of the “beetle in the box” (§293) is a counter-argument to this idea. It implies that the problem of grammar prevents people from knowing the reality of a sensation.

In §304, Wittgenstein expresses that a sensation is not a Something, but not a Nothing either¹², “something” and “Nothing”, whose first letters are written in capital letters to show the specific reference of a sensation. Wittgenstein grants these two words new meanings. Ordinarily, a thing is either something or nothing. From the logic perspective, saying an item is neither something nor nothing seems like a paradox. The second paragraph states that language aims to convey thoughts and sensations, which is the function of language. The root of the paradox is in the first paragraph of §304. This paradox points out the limits of language, so Wittgenstein intends to solve the problem by investigating grammar. If the grammatical problem could be solved, the paradox would be dissolved.

Kantian Insight of the Essence of a Sensation

McDowell proposes the Kantian insight of Wittgenstein’s “Something” and “Nothing” (1989). Stern (2010) clearly sketches McDowell’s understanding of Wittgenstein. The private language argument is regarded as a development of the Kantian insight, i.e., no unconceptualized experience exists¹³. In other words, the mind conceptualizes all kinds of experiences automatically. So, the sensations, as a kind of experience, are conceptualized.

Along with this conclusion, it is impossible to figure out a non-conceptualized experience, say, the structure of conception must capture every sensation. As a notion is a public thing, the private language is impossible, which is Wittgenstein’s purpose in this construction of the argument. McDowell has the interpretation of the essence of the sensation about “Something” and “Nothing”. “Something” is an object of concept involving awareness. And “Nothing” means a pre-conception existence that is supposed to be the foundation of conceptions. “Nothing” is prior to “Something”. According to this apprehension, one side of the spectrum—a sensation is neither a something nor a nothing—can be paraphrased as that a sensation is neither an object (or concept-involving awareness) nor a pre-conceptual existence that is the foundation of the former. A sensation is not a conceptualized object or experience; it cannot be a foundation of conception either. This is McDowell’s paraphrase of Wittgenstein’s view.

McDowell disagrees with Wittgenstein, for he thinks that a sensation is a something that must be possible to be put under the proper concept, which puts the essence of a sensation in the middle part of the spectrum. Stern claims that Wittgenstein’s treatment of reference to the objects of inner experience, or their subject, does not help us better understand how they fit into the space of reason. But to provide a dissolution of those concepts to help us see that they will not do the work we demand when we attempt to formulate a theory of the object, or subject, of pre-linguistic awareness (Stern, 2010, p. 179). Wittgenstein’s view of the essence of a sensation can be formulated into a conditional: If a sensation is a something, we will not pick out a subject that fills the open place occupied by the sensation, say, nothing would play the role of the subject. In the clarification of this view,

¹² “Something” means the object that can be put under a concept, designation, or classification, and “nothing” refers to the objects that a word cannot conceptualize. This point is associated with Wittgenstein’s discussion about “saying and showing” in *Tractatus*. The distinction between showing and saying reveals two levels of facts. What can be shown cannot be said (4.1212). Sentences can display the objects, but the relationships among objects that can only be shown are unsayable. 3.1431 The essence of a propositional sign is very clearly seen if we imagine one composed of spatial objects instead of written signs. Regarding the proposition that “the cat is on the mat”, if the letter “C” signifies the cat, and “M” signifies the mat, the spatial relationship between them is represented as: C, M. This sign is to say that object C is atop object M, showing how object C and object M are related if the proposition is true. Apart from the symbols for two objects, there is no additional symbol, that is to say, the spatial relationship of “... is on...” So, the objects and their relationships are at different levels; in other words, ‘the cat is on the mat’ is not an austere landscape. Both the cat and mat stand by themselves. Their association needs to be shown by the spatial combination of these two objects. If there is no cat, the mat would be on the floor by itself, and similarly, the cat could be there without the appearance of the mat. But if the cat runs to seek a mouse for lunch when a dog draws the carpet outside the room, then the relation of cat-on-mat disappears. Relationships are never objects.

¹³ The private token-sensation.

McDowell develops a Kantian insight of “Something” and “Nothing”, and standing in front of a more precise picture, he proposes the objection.

Intuitionistic View of Dualism

The problem of dualism arises from the requirement of a pre-conceptual¹⁴—intuition in dualism. McDowell points out that Wilfrid Sellars, Donald Davidson, and Richard Rorty revealed the dualist mistake in modern philosophy. Such a dualist error is due to the pre-conceptual given or intuitions having no explicit place in the space of reason¹⁵. Similarly, in Cartesian dualism, the intuition that has not been conceptualized is the content of the consciousness, and the conceptual structures are merely the comments of intuitions. Suppose we embed intuition into the private language argument to take the place of the criterion of the correct application of the word, and the speaker of a private language relies more on intuitions. However, intuitions are not competent to be the foundation of justification. The private language has no justification. In comparison to Wittgenstein, McDowell moves the nature of a sensation to the middle part of the spectrum.

From the above spectrum, we can see that something is conceptualized as nothing;¹⁶ it is essential to explain how to embed the spectrum into a conceptual system. Sellars claims that the content received by intuitions is separated from that of reasoning. The grounds for reasoning should be in the space of reasons. This point may be easier to apply to the “outer” experience, but Wittgenstein concerns the “inner” experience. To solve the problem, Rorty analyzes the knowledge in the first sense and knowledge in the second sense (McDowell, 1989). Knowledge in the first sense is the direct acquaintance with a feeling, and knowledge in the second sense is the description of that feeling by language¹⁷. As for a sensation of pain, the immediate feeling of that pain is the knowledge in the first sense (or the token-sensation) that triggers or is manifested by a pain-behavior¹⁸. Rorty also points out Wittgenstein’s mistake is locating the second sense of knowledge over the first sense of knowledge. For instance, Wittgenstein puts descriptive knowledge, in the second sense, over the immediate feeling. In an infant without language, the feeling of non-conceptual pain is a causal antecedent of the ability to have a conceptual pain episode. Still, this feeling is not a continuous ground for a conceptual structure that involves pain. To explain the relationship between non-linguistic feelings and concepts involving awareness, Rorty takes Charles Taylor’s concept of “subjects of significance”, which means that agents are beings for whom things matter (Taylor, 1985). He thinks pain as a sensation is an objective entity (or type-pain) not attributed to an agent. This thought is analogous to Wittgenstein’s private language argument but is opposite to Cartesian privacy. When someone says, “I am in pain”, from Rorty’s view, this means “I have an object of sensation that is pain”. Two kinds of knowledge of pain, namely, the foundations and causal antecedents, are different. The foundations need to be continuous in the framework of conception in a linguistic system. At the same time, pain is not a continuous existence, so the direct acquaintance of pain is a non-conceptual object.

If the starting point of the conceptual system is not intuition, it begins from the space of reason. Regarding how pain is the subject of significance, McDowell uses the concept of “something” and “nothing” to answer this

¹⁴ Concept called “the myth of the given” by Wilfrid Sellars.

¹⁵ Notably, this error is the variant of the gap problem in the Cartesian dualism.

¹⁶ The process of conceptualizing is a part of the reasoning.

¹⁷ Following this line, the conclusion of a series inference could be the third sense of knowledge.

¹⁸ There is a possible objection that someone is courageous and strong so that this person can hide the pain-behavior, avoiding being observed by surrounding people. Descartes’ research of the interconnection between mind and body makes these two substances a composite whole. The manifestation of pain by an organ of the body cannot be hidden, which is part of human nature in Cartesian words or form of life by Wittgenstein.

question. McDowell develops Wittgenstein's view of sensation, i.e., a sensation is a "something" that is an object of concept-involving awareness. A "nothing" is a pre-conceptual *this* for grounding the conceptual system of reason and language. A sensation such as pain comes to consciousness as a "nothing" when it just happens and then becomes a "something" when it is conceptualized, which puts Wittgenstein's claim "it is not a Something, but not a Nothing either!" (Wittgenstein, 2009) from one side to the middle part of the spectrum. The conceptualized pain attaches to the subject of significance. "Nothing" is the starting point for a conceptual scheme.¹⁹ A sensation will become "something", which means that a sensation must be a classified object.

In terms of the question of why a sensation needs to be classified, Strawson provides a subtle but vague interpretation of the necessity of classification for a sensation—a sensation is an object in a minimal particular/general or subject/predicate structure, which is associated with another element that expresses a classification of them (McDowell, 1989). He thinks that a sensation as intuition in the Kantian sense will be brought under a concept becoming "something". Afterward, the sensation will fade away rather than like a concept fixed in the framework of conception. This is a temporal comprehension of a sensation and its linguistic representation, in which the conceptual episode of awareness of pain is a starting point in the space of reason. In McDowell's framework, the conceptual system plays a similar role to the behaviorist account of Wittgenstein's view. Similarly, the criterion in the private language argument also has new variants.

Two Paraphrases of the Private Language Argument

The private language argument can be paraphrased into two opinions: One is about the first-person authority, and another is called "community interpretation". These two opinions propose two interpretations of the criterion in the original argument. The first-person authority suggests that a person who knows the sensation, such as the pain of himself or herself, is the only person with the authority to grant the word's meaning. If I am in pain, I do not need to resort to other people's agreement to the fact that I am in pain. I have the authority of the meaning of words applied to describe and signify own feeling, while the problem is that supposing my friend tells me that he is in pain, at this moment, I implicitly presume that he had the same feeling when I was in pain. Although I lack adequate evidence and rational justification to demonstrate my belief, the strength of that belief is strong. Otherwise, the sympathy is impossible. I should acknowledge that the first-person authority relies on subjective intuition. One thread is that I do not need to ask for the agreement of other people for my feelings, and another is that it seems complicated to let other people repeat my own immediate experience. The first-person authority is intimately associated with the token-sensation.

The interpretation of community shows another route to investigate the criterion in the private language argument. Consider our ordinary experience, a taste of delicious food, bringing pleasure to people, while the toothache brings pain. The consensus of some feelings provides indirect evidence that people at least have the same opinion on sensations, no matter what language they use. The community interpretation teaches that the view of a sensation in social practice justifies using the words of sensation to describe that sensation. In a community, the standard view plays a role as the criterion for the correct use of language, which is similar to rational demonstration if there is a lack of strict reasoning.

Return to McDowell's criticism of Wittgenstein's mistake. Wittgenstein pays too much attention to language when describing sensations. An immediate sensation is knowledge in the first sense, and the language is used to

¹⁹ This answer merely changes the expressions of the concept in the previous view. For example, change "intuition" to "Nothing"—the pre-conceptual *this*. A starting point is necessary for a conceptual system.

express this sensation. The contrast between the first-person authority and the “community interpretation” shows that some part of a sensation can be described, and other elements cannot be conceptualized. A sensation has a public component—the type—sensation and the private part—the token-sensation. McDowell points out that introducing community is to dismantle a “super-factual” conception of one’s unique relation to one’s inner life (McDowell, 1989). People have the same form of life, so we can understand each other’s feelings to a considerable extent. An immediate sensation is a part of reality, even if it is an inner object, and words such as “pain” are a concept for referring to that object in reality. So, it is the reality that grants the meaning of the concept in a conceptual system. The community interpretation of language presumes that language is enough to match reality. Therefore, a community of linguistic users can provide a criterion for the justification of the use of language. The reason why a language is understandable in a community is the use of language following a shared rule.

Wittgenstein talks about the rule—following of language in §217 of *Philosophical Investigations*:

“How am I able to follow a rule?”—If this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my acting in this way in complying with the rule.

Once I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: “This is simply what I do.” (2009, §217)

The “bedrock” in community interpretation is “social practice” or use of language. Compared to intuition, the use of language is just what we do when we use a word to express the reality.²⁰ This application of language is not wholly independent, since our use of words is intermingled and limited by other people’s use. This kind of interconnection makes it possible for us to understand each other and justify the use of language by others.

The Pre-conceptual This and “Object and Designation” Structure

According to Cartesian dualism, a human is composed of mind and body. The mind, in dualism, occupies a more critical position than the body. The distinction causes the difference between realms of knowledge. Frege (1956) believes that the world includes three realms: the physical and psychological realms, as well as the realm of thought. We can apply the mind in Cartesian dualism to his categories of the psychological realm and the realm of thought. And our body is the interface between the physical world and the mind. People use language made up of concepts in the form of a conceptual system to express their thoughts. The conceptualizing process can be understood from a metaphysical perspective and at the empirical level. For the former, we appeal to the view of Kant in his *The Critique of the Pure Reason* (CPR). For the latter, Jean Mater Mandler’s research in *The Foundations of Mind: Origins of Conceptual Thought* is helpful since their insights on the pre-conceptual content are consistent with Cartesian dualism. This consistency is crucial in clarifying the boundary between conceptual and non-conceptual content. Mandler (2004, p. vii) believes that “infants appear conceptual beings from the start, without going through an extensive sensorimotor period lacking any conceptual thought”. As for the non-conceptual experience, Corijn van Mazijk (2014) defends McDowell’s reading of Kant’s account of non-conceptual content.

The experience automatically becomes conceptualized as it happens. According to Mazijk, McDowell does not make it clear whether the content of a perception differs from the content of a concept (2014). Mandler discovered that language is mapped onto concepts rather than perception regarding the language acquisition of children between 2-3 years old. Generally, in children’s language acquisition, learning names for objects might

²⁰ Kant calls it a “thing-itself” that we can know from our perspective, while its essence is ultimately unknowable.

be possible based on associative learning without having to call on the meaning of the objects in question. On the other hand, perception accompanied by ostension is not enough for a word expressing a sensation since, as Frege pointed out, a word of a name has sense and reference. His famous example is that the evening star (Hesperus) is the morning star (Phosphorus), and this suggests the words have the same reference but different meanings (Kemp, 2018). Supposing a sensation * is the referent of an ostensive definition, people may use “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” to pick it out. The problem in children’s language acquisition is the overextension of words’ meanings. In other words, a child who holds a word cannot precisely designate the referent of that word among many objects.

Mandler thinks the reason for overextension is that the child inadequately understands the meaning of that word. The levels of words can interpret this problem. The uncertainty about a word’s extension is due to the unclarity of its categories and sub-categories.

The language acquisition of children reports that the pre-conceptual part of the mind will be conceptualized. As for the nature of a sensation, a nothing will become a something. “Something” in the language is expressed by the structure of “object and designation”.

The structure of “object and designation” is an outcome of Cartesian dualism, which is a projection of the reality of dualism in the conceptual system. It seems that Descartes has two presumptions: One is that the language corresponds to reality, and another is that the thought corresponds to the world. Objects referred to by designations in language are in the world²¹.

§293 is an excellent example to respond to these two stretches of dualism. In §293, Wittgenstein points out the distortion of the grammatical structure of the description of a sensation. This structure is like the scaffolding for us to understand the meaning of the description of that sensation. But when we use this grammatical structure to describe the sensation, it is essential to remember that the description is not equivalent to the sensation. Wittgenstein expresses this as: “If we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and name,’ the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant” (2009, §293).

When the sensation is like the physical objects that are independent of us and out of us, it will be suitable to describe it by this structure. As the sensation belongs to the mind, it should not be recognized when approaching an independent physical object.

Wittgenstein rethinks the legitimacy of this general grammatical structure and deals with it specifically by exploring the connection between sensation and sign in language. Wittgenstein applies a strategy of *reductio ad absurdum* to attack the existence of the private language. This structure is consistent with the private language because the private language is the consequence of the distinction between the mind and body. But Wittgenstein disagrees that private language exists, so the difference between the mind and the body is unreal. Wittgenstein dissolves the ontology of the private language in the diary case (2009, §258) of a sensation such as the ostensive definition of pain. It explores the meaning of words and the criterion for the correctness of memory or the proper application of the sign.

The diary case reveals two connections. The first connection is between the sensation and the sign “S” used by the subject. The second connection is between the first application of the sign and the following applications of it. Regarding the primary connection, the subject uses attention to grant an ostensive definition of the sensation

²¹ As a human being is also a part of the world, who cannot exist without any dependence on other parts of the world, thus when we speak of the knowledge of the world, it refers to the relation between a part of the world to other parts of the world. In this sense, epistemology deals with a reflexive structure of knowledge.

when it happens and signifies this mental state as “S”. However, the second connection is more complicated. It requires not only the precise memory of the sensation but also an objective authority to judge the correctness of memory. Wittgenstein does not believe such subtle comparisons between memories can be made, and there is no criterion for this purpose. The diary case suggests the limit of the natural language. The behavior can extend our language’s capacity to express a word’s meaning. Although in the account of the connection between pain and pain-behavior, he shows an inclination toward behaviorism, Wittgenstein rejects that he is a behaviorist in §§307-308 since the behavior of the body is a phenomenon rather than the essence of the sensation.

Does the Private Language Argument Bear on the Cartesian Theory of Mind?

From the previous discussion, we can approach to this question in three aspects: The first is how do Descartes and Wittgenstein consider the distinction between the mind and the body; the second is their insights into the essence of the sensations; and the third is their attitudes towards behaviorism, which is an essential part of Wittgenstein’s semantics. These three aspects are entangled with each other.

The Distinction Between the Mind and the Body

To apprehend the private language argument, one way is that Wittgenstein does not think there is a private language, and another way is that Wittgenstein intends to say that by Cartesian dualism, there is no private language. The complete denial of the private language goes astray from our intuition, as shown by the above discussion of the nature of a sensation. The second understanding that denying the private language is a consequence of Cartesian dualism is closer to our ordinary experience, which means that in terms of personal sensations, some parts can be accessible by others. At the same time, the rest is private to the subject.

In the second way, we presume that Wittgenstein could hold a different view from Descartes that the mind is the root of the body.²² The Cartesian dualism agrees that the combination between the mind and the body, like the left hand and right hand, interdigitates with each other. The new view may be better off than the Cartesian dualism in the explanation of unity. If the mind is the root of the body, the pain-behavior is the mind expressing itself directly rather than that pain causes the pain-behavior. The question is not whether we can know other people’s pain but to what extent we can know the pain of others. The Kantian insight that a sensation is something relies on the structure of “object and designation”, a consequence of Cartesian dualism. While that a sensation is a nothing and a something, which means that we can know part of others’ pain, but the specific extent of that pain is inaccessible, can dissolve the gap between the mind and the body. The introduced view makes us reach another side of the given spectrum.

Cartesian dualism claims a dialectic association between the mind and the body. On the one hand, it makes a clear distinction between the two substances. The mind determines the identity of a human being rather than the body. The existence of the mind is not limited by the physical body, which means when the body perishes, the mind can continue to exist. The knowledge of the mind is of absolute certainties, such as “I exist” that can pass his methodology of doubt as a piece of fundamental knowledge. So, the knowledge of the mind is prior to the knowledge conceived by the body. In Descartes’ argument, the demonstration of the mind comes before the existence of the body, and the existence of the body is based on the existence of the mind.

²² I borrow this thought from Indian philosophy, i.e. consciousness—only school in Indian Buddhism. A fundamental teaching of this school is that the whole world is “nothing but mind” or “nothing but mental manifestation”. This idea is very close to Panpsychism—mentality is fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world.

On the other hand, the mind and the body are a composite whole. The senses of the body collect empirical information and then report this information to the mind that is also easy to be deceived by the body since the body needs to protect itself. The body “pays more attention to” the situations that are intimately relevant to its health and safety. The crux of Cartesian dualism is that it relies on the “the myth of the given”²³. This myth does not have a clear explanation in the space of reason. Wittgenstein’s private language argument is to challenge this presupposition in Cartesian dualism. It is that gap triggers the investigations of sensations’ nature.

The Essence of the Sensations

Wittgenstein’s question on the private language resolves the gap of Cartesian meditations. Does Descartes ask whether the corporeal or external things exist or not? The other part of this question is about the ontology of the so-called inner sensations.

A problem for Wittgenstein is that whether a sensation is an object. People regard a sensation as an object because it happens in a limited period. As mentioned before, if Wittgenstein chooses that a sensation is a combination of a nothing and a something, it will fit the view of the mind as the root of the body. The basis of knowledge, in the Cartesian view, is the belief of the existence of God. However, Wittgenstein’s perspective on the root of language is all about human beings. He thinks that the meaning of words is determined by conventions²⁴. The use of language is the source of the grammar that determines the meaning of words.

There is not an abstract substance as the authority of judgement for the meaning of a word. A significant word must be comprehensible by other people. The use of language is a foundation for Wittgenstein that is as solid as the starting point of Descartes’ meditation—“I exist”.

But on the other hand, it is not easy to define this foundation in an ostensive way. We are unable to pick out an object that is “the use of language”. To interpret this, Wittgenstein appeals to the language—game in various situations, rules from our conventions to be followed, and cases of knowing an infinite series. If there is no private language, say, the monologue²⁵ is impossible. The speaker of a language is undoubtedly involved in a dialogue. If the narrator speaks to self, an interlocutor is still presumed. Language is adequate to map onto reality. Pursuing an objective criterion caused by the Cartesian dualist framework, in language-game as well as rule-following debate, becomes a barrier to approaching the meaning of words.

The dualism of the Cartesian theory of mind causes the non-conceptualism. Cartesian dualism relies on an abstract substance that is a pre-conceptual this, which cannot be brought under a category or classification. The pre-conceptual this connects the mind and the body into a unity, only if this pre-conceptual existence in the whole framework of dualism is the problem of the connection between the mind and the body dissolved. The distinction between the mind and the body projects into language; we get the structure of “object and designation” in the grammar, rejecting the behaviorist account of language.

The Attitudes Towards Behaviorism

The Cartesian meditations are all from his private viewpoint. Descartes’s isolated meditations trigger a general investigation of the relationship between the mind and the body. Wittgenstein pushes it into public and proposes a counterexample through the private language argument in a very subtle way. All the discussions on

²³ Cartesian dualism regards the knowledge of God as the cornerstone of other knowledge. It is God that combines the mind and the body. Another strand of the myth says a reasoning process begins with intuition.

²⁴ Other alternatives include first-person authority and the commitment to the community.

²⁵ Here is a tautology of Wittgenstein’s definition of the private language. We presume that a monologue is inaccessible to others.

the mind and the body refer to Descartes' own mind and body. However, it is not clear whether knowing other minds is possible. Or even whether there are other minds around us? Cartesian meditations are rooted in a private perspective. Wittgenstein's private language argument challenges Cartesian privacy. As the private language is impossible, Cartesian meditations are accessible to ordinary language. Thus, one mind is available to another. The private argument implies that we can know other minds. After all, we can only express thoughts of mind in ordinary language because we reach the other side of the spectrum, which suggests that other minds are partially accessible. The problem of other minds is a general question, and the Cartesian meditations are private to himself. Wittgenstein's resolution of the private language pushes the meditations into a public realm. If Wittgenstein is right, Cartesian meditations will be generalized. Regarding the connection between pain and the pain-behavior, a sensation is always connected with a behavior, even though different behaviors could express the same sensation.

Wittgenstein thinks that the importance of the ordinary language is in a fundamental status. However, Descartes renders ordinary language as a barrier to approaching reality—"...words often impede me, and I am almost deceived by the terms of ordinary language" (Descartes, 1911, p. 11). As the body needs to stay safe and healthy, when the faculty of the senses process information, sometimes reality may be distorted. For example, our eyes see a basketball is more significant than a star in the universe. But the mind will tell us that the star is bigger than the basketball.

Conclusion

According to Cartesian dualism, the mind and the body are two independent entities. Although this gap has several labels, such as "the myth of the given", intuition, and the pre-conceptual, these labels are variants of the same problem in different contexts or a framework of theories. Wittgenstein's private language argument suggests that as there is no criterion for the correctness of the meaning of a sign referring to a sensation, the private language is not real. This idea leads to the consequence that the gap in Cartesian dualism is eliminated.

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