THE GEOGRAPHY OF WITTGENSTEIN’S PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

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Preamble

Language may be commonly understood as a rational social phenomenon, a sphere of human action, wherein people make enunciations (verbal, written, gestures, symbolic mimetic, choreographic) and expect to be responded to. It is an intentional enunciation (done for a certain reason), where the producer intends and trusts that someone else, upon acquaintance with the enunciation(s) would respond or react in a certain way, either by forming beliefs or behaving in a certain way, because (s)he is able to infer a certain purpose in the enunciator's mind. In language therefore, ‘not only do the enunciator and the 'interlocutor' have reasons for thinking and acting as they do; they know something about each other, so each is in a position to replicate the other's reasons. Each one's replication of the other's reasons forms part of his own reason for thinking and acting as (s)he does; and each is in a position to replicate the other's replication of his own reasons.' ¹ The reason for this mutual replication is the belonging to a common world, a social group, a community of what Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life'. It is to such a group that it belongs to furnish public rules for language and thus also assert or deny that any individual is making sense by following the regularities common to the conventions of language use in it.

But contrary to this perspective, empiricists of the Augustinian bi-planar theory of meaning, Cartesians who exalt the absolute validity of first-person psychological propositions, solipsists and the Vienna-Circle neo-positivists like Russell, and Schlick, among others, opine that it is indeed possible for people to follow ‘private rules' with regard to such ‘immediate' cases²; and therefore, that it is even possible to have private language. And this they variously called ‘object-word', ‘ostentation', ‘protocol', ‘perfect' or


² Russell states for instance: When you are considering any sort of theory of knowledge, you are more or less tied to a certain unavoidable subjectivity, because you are not concerned simply with the question what is true of the world, but ‘What can I know of the world?' You always have to start and kind of argument from something which appears to you to be true; if it appears to you to be true, there is no more to be done. cf., Logic And Knowledge (p.179) for fuller context, see n.46.
‘ideal’ language.
It is in this regard that, Ludwig Wittgenstein, in the *Philosophical Investigation* [PI]\(^3\), raised the question of whether it is possible to have such a private language (which another person cannot understand) following from the fact that people can have ‘private' sensations or can follow rules privately. And his answer is that such a language is impossible. The arguments he advanced for holding this position would be our preoccupation in this article. We would therefore approach the issue by first tracing the locale of the argument. We support Wittgenstein in holding that publicity of rules argues for the validity of each domain of knowledge, particularly philosophy. Overzealous neopositivistic scientism is a mistake.

**The Geography of the Argument**

Wittgenstein’s criticism of Private Language (PL), is like a kaleidoscope, in that it touches on many philosophical issues. There appears to be many diverse opinions as to where in the PI, one can eminently locate the private language argument.\(^4\) But this difficulty which is a result of Wittgenstein's style, was acknowledged and anticipated by Wittgenstein himself when he asserted in the preface that:

> After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks;... (which are) as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings.\(^5\)

But despite this tortuous crisscrossing of paths and the scattering of bits of the arguments all over the Investigations, there is a general tendency to locate the argument within the general zone of §§243-265 of the PI; and sometimes even as early as §238. Still, it is a tendency that remains open to contestations. We must then embark on our exegesis of this argument, by first undertaking an analysis of the abundant analogies with which Wittgenstein sought to foreground the issues he wanted to deal with. Among some of these allusions are, private diary passages, (which is expressly directed against Schlick’s and Russell's claims for a private language), the beetle in the box analogy, which is of direct relevance for solipsism and the discourse on pain language, i.e., private ownership of sensations. Our task in this regard may not be any better than that of Wittgenstein, -- to try and understand this maze of paths, crisscrossing and

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\(^3\) Citations of the works of Wittgenstein are usually abbreviated, and the paragraph [$§$] numbers are quoted.

\(^4\) Many authors advert to this: John Cook thinks for instance that the ‘diary passages’ contain the argument, whereas J.V. Canfield discusses it within the ambience of §258, and notes that §288 is a commentary on §258. Schulte also writes that; “Kripke for instance also argues in Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language that the private language problem is actually settled in what is presented and quoted here (§259), and that what comes after §243 is argumentative and of relatively little significance. He is right that the ideas expressed before 243 are useful when considering the private language argument. But he makes the same mistake as many other interpreters in thinking that there is just one, or just one unique, problem involved here. In reality, the private language problem described in 243 represents a whole complex of additional questions. Subsequent, as well as preceding sections pertain to the formulation and solution of these problems. cf., Schulte, J., *Wittgenstein: An Introduction*, Brenner, W., & Holley, J., transl. NY, State University Of new York Pres, 1992; p. 143 notes.

\(^5\) Wittgenstein, L., PI, p.ix
overlapping each other in a dialectical manner.

But first, it is expedient to address the preliminary issue of whether the argument is merely and directly a logical conclusion of what Wittgenstein says elsewhere about rules being a public matter, or whether it is a conclusion from his submission that directly experiencing the sensations of another person is not a necessary condition for understanding what sensation the person has. In other words, whether the argument has more to do with rule following or sensation language. Evidently Wittgenstein uses the metaphors of the 'private diary', 'pain language', 'beetle in the box', etc. to bring out facets of relevance in this context. And some authors are given to emphasizing one over the other. For instance John Cook is of the opinion that ‘Wittgenstein contends that the philosophical notion of a private language is confused, because it involves mistaken notions of what language is and of the privacy of sensations;’ whereas Saul Kripke in his book *On Rules and Private Language* emphasizes the connection between following a rule and knowing a language. He thinks that Wittgenstein's private language argument has less to do with the privacy of sensations than it does with what it is to follow a rule. Our submission in this regard would be that both issues [sensation privacy and rules] are of equal importance in understanding the argument, for indeed the argument appears as corollary to Wittgenstein's elucidation on them. But for clarity, we would present the argument in the following way: first, under the format of the Private Language Diary and the Beetle in the Box metaphors (i.e., linking the issues about rules with those of ‘sensation language game'). And then we shall try to see what perspectives they furnish us as the case for publicity of language. Some of these perspectives we would consider under: The affirmation from Rules and Games, the Impossibility of Keeping a “Private Language Diary”, the Wrongness of Following Private Ostensive Definitions, The affirmation of the Indispensability Of Criteria and Verifiability and The Case Of Genitive Equivocation. But of course these ‘options for publicity' are all different facets of the one organically connected whole, and discourse of one implies tangential reference to the other(s).

**The Argument Proper**

The discussion itself on “private language” (of §243) is preceded in §§199 and 202 where Wittgenstein, addressing himself to rules states that:

> It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood and so on. To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are customs (uses, institutions). To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique. ...'obeying a rule' is a practice.

Wittgenstein's fundamental premise here is that understanding is something we do, an ability we

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exercise, a technique we employ, a practical capacity recognised and measured by outward criteria (rules) which people engage in; how they get about such activities, how they behave in observable manner. So it is not something private. It involves rules in the public domain. Understanding therefore as Grayling elaborates, “... consists in knowing the expression's use across the variety of language games in which it occurs. Knowing its use is having an ability: the ability to follow the rules for its use in those different language games”.7

The private language argument is eminently a consequence or sequel to the above submission that the use of expressions implicates rules as common, public 'techniques of application'.8 It is then an inveigle against, and a rejection of the idea of ultimacy of only private sensations as the criterion of certainty; i.e. the subtle distillations of Descartes-inspired radical empiricism and solipsism which finds fuller expression in the phenomenalist neo-positivists and early Wittgenstein and Russell. For according to this view the fact that we can sometimes be mistaken with regard to the sensation of another person, which are in any case directly accessible to him, constitute the grounds to propose that first person statements are the paradigm for logically perfect language; that the language of ostentation best serves the need of new science and renders redundant and superfluous all other 'metaphysical' languages.

The Diary of Experience:[§§258; 243]

Wittgenstein borrowed the analogy of the Diary Passages from Moritz Schlick and criticizes it in §243 of the PI, where he outlines the crust of the argument on Private language thus:

A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame and punish himself; he can ask himself a question and answer it. We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves. . . .

But could we also imagine language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences - his feelings, moods, and the rest - for his private use? --- Well, can't we do so in our ordinary language? - But that is not what I mean. The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only

7 Grayling, A.C., *Wittgenstein*; New York, Oxford University Press, 1988; p.83. For clarifications on ‘games’ concept, Huber, C., gives good résumé: “What is a language game?” The term ‘language game’ is central for philosophy after Wittgenstein, but it is not part of a theory, and is not an explanation of language, rather, it is an analogy – i.e., a comparison of various uses of language with all that we call ‘game’, especially with the game of chess. The term ‘language game’ refers both to the totality of language, and to the single ‘games’ or typical uses of language: as in the game of chess, the pieces (king, castle) are defined by the conventions that regulate the modes of moving them, thus also is the meaning of a linguistic expression determined by the way in which human beings use them, i.e., through the rules according to which it is used in certain typical situations and thus in different ‘language games’. As people have different games, very different among themselves, all of which, though having a certain “family resemblance”, do not have a single common essence; this is also how we use language in various ways, without these uses having any common essence, as for example: describing or even ‘painting’ facts. cf., Huber C., *Critica Del Sapere*, Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1991; §12.322-3.

8 Of course the insistence on rules or agreements in definition of terms should not be conceived of as subjectivism, because agreement means also confirming or reaffirming definite ‘forms of life’ – facts! Human agreement must not be seen as determining truth or falsehood e.g. – that blood is red is a fact that does not depend on human personalistic conceptions!
be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language.
The first three lines of this entire proposition speak of, and establish actions that follow rules and public procedure appropriated by a 'private' individual. But this appropriation results in soliloquy, since they “accompanied their activities by talking to themselves.”

Here Wittgenstein makes the important distinction between the soliloquist and the private linguist. And in this distinction, his target is not the soliloquist, because the soliloquist belongs to a public world - hence he is a person who vocally expresses his 'inner' experience in a way he deems fit, and which may be 'unconventional', but remains capable of being 'translated' by another 'explorer'. In as much as the soliloquist can be understood, he belongs to a public world. But the private language of the private linguist (as the second part of §243 states), is necessarily private; i.e. unintelligible to others, and so inaccessible for public evaluation/verification. The soliloquist could be said to share with the private linguist the fact that their languages are not meant i.e. intended for communication. However, the soliloquist's language is rather meant for monologue. It only happens to be heard and made sense of, by a casual listener; and is understood by him because of the fact that it follows the rules. So, it is clear that the soliloquist, the socially isolated individual (a Robinson Crusoe) differs essentially from the private linguist because the later is deemed to be capable of 'evolving his private rules'. His private language which Wittgenstein negates, is 'necessarily private' - i.e. necessarily spoken by only one person, and not merely 'contingently' so as Ayer would argue.9

The Private Diary Metaphor

Wittgenstein follows this distinction up in the private diary metaphor which exposes in greater detail the internal inconsistency that renders this argument also relevant for psychological issues - sensations and solipsistic maneuvers.

Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. I will remark first of all that

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9 Ayer, A.J., in his article "Private Languages" thinks that Wittgenstein is too restrictive in applying 'private language' to only the language intelligible to just one single person. In this regard he writes: In a quite ordinary sense, it is quite obvious that there can be private languages. There can be, because there are. A language may be said to be private when it is devised to enable a limited number of persons to communicate with one another in a way not intelligible to anyone outside the group.... Such languages are not strictly private, in the sense that only one person uses and understands them, but there may very well be languages that are.... It is, however, possible that a very secretive diarist may not be satisfied with putting familiar words into an unfamiliar notation, but may prefer to invent new words: the two processes are in any case not sharply distinct. If he carries his invention far enough he can properly be said to be employing a private language. For all I know, this has actually been done.... if I am right, then, there is a use for the expression “private language” which clearly allow it to have application. But this is not the use which philosophers have commonly given it. What philosophers usually seem to have in mind when they speak of private language is one that is, in their view, necessarily private, in as much as it is used by some particular person to refer to his own private experiences. cf. Private Language in Martinich, A.P., (1985), p.453. As it is, Ayer would have no case (really) with Wittgenstein, because he simply understands private language differently.
a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. But still I can give myself a kind of
But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my
attention on the sensation and so, for that is all it seems to be! A definition surely
serves to establish the meaning of a sign. Well, that is done precisely by the
concentrating of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion
between the sign and the sensation. But "I impress is on myself" can only mean:
this process brings it about that I remember the connexion right in the future. But
in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say:
whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we
can't talk about 'right'.

This seems to demonstrate the dove-tailing of issues about rules and sensation language. And the
implications of this also refer closely to the principle of the ‘third person position’ – in order to satisfy
demands for validity especially in communication. The private diary case may thus be seen as a
conceptual equivalent of the neo-positivist ostensive definition. It provides a link for the exposition of
the ‘Beetle in the Box’ metaphor which Wittgenstein also employed to substantiate his argument against
the private linguist.

*The Beetle in the Box Analogy*

In the PI, this analogy is expressed thus:

If I say of myself that it is only from my own case that I know what the word
"pain" means - must I not say the same of other people too? And how can I
generalize the one case so irresponsibly?
Now someone tells me that he knows what pain is only from his own case!
Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a 'beetle'. No one can
look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by
looking at his beetle. Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have
something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly
changing. But suppose the word "beetle" had a use in these people's language? If
so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place
in the language-game at all; not even as a something; for the box might even be
empty. No, one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out,
whatever it is. That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of
sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of
consideration as irrelevant.

In this analogy of the beetle in the box, Wittgenstein likens the beetle to consciousness of pain which
everyone has. But here the 'separateness' of the beetle', readily reveals to us that the word 'have' (for the
two things) cannot but belong to two different language games.

In holding this position, and by creating this metaphor, Wittgenstein well recognizes the ordinary
intransferability of sensations. In other words, for him, the fact that sensations are private is a platitude

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10 PI, §258.
11 PI, §293.
which coincides with ostentation. This is why he says that what the solipsist says is correct, only it
cannot be said. It does not belong to 'our language game', to our way of saying things! Thus ostentation
in sensation language, may not be the vehicle of any new knowledge as such, hence it doesn't say
anything, but is rather a repetition tautology, either for emphasis and attention, where in the first
instance the interlocutors did not pay attention, didn’t quite ‘pick up’ the information or procedure. For
him expressly, to make ostentation ‘has a function, as a grammatical proposition either to explain the use
of an expression to the uninformed, or to remind someone who has misused the word, of its correct
application.’

Here, what applies to the metaphor of the beetle in the box, also goes for pain language as the paradigm
of sensation expressions. For in this regard, Wittgenstein insists that not all 'feelings' and their
expression enter into language in the same way, since in the case of pain, its language and its ‘behavior’
coincide. Huber elaborates this when he says;

> The psychological concept of “pain” for example is one but asymmetrical: its
> grammar for the first person present indicative (“I feel pain”) is different from
> that of the other forms (“he feels pain”), and (“I was feeling pain”). In the first
case, the grammar is similar to that of the expression (“Ahi”, “aua”): there are no
criteria, but it does not make sense to say “I am certain that I am feeling pain” or
“I am doubtful of it”. Rather it is possible to tell a lie and pretend. In the other
cases there are criteria and possibility of error, doubts and certainty.

And this is precisely because whereas other 'sensation' expressions seem to be mediatory, pain language
is equal to 'pain behavior', i.e., pain has a great 'immediacy' in its expression that its role in the game
defies 'further' external criteria like other sensations: so that those who anchor Private Language
expression on such immediate sensations as the 'objects' 'contents', 'sense-data,' which the ostentations
deal with, must realize that the genitive inflection used with regard to pain does not include it as
equivalent to physical possessions.

An important note subsequent upon this is that, pain language and pain behavior are always learnt and
transmitted culturally. Often too, they remain on the threshold of complex cultural symbols (e.g. boys
are taught never to cry - because it is feminine behavior). In other words, the 'full' meaning of sensation
expressions could be better seen within the broad framework of 'pre-linguistic' reactions which as
linguistic practice displays a great deal of complexity as it evolves and develops.

This fact that the sensation language is learned and taught, could be seen as a deeply structuralist

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p.141.
13 Huber, C., *E Questo Tutti chiamano "Dio" : Analisi del Linguaggio Cristiano*; Roma, Editrice Pontificia Universita
Gregoriana, 1993; pp.35-6. (Translation from the Italian mine).
interpretation or awareness that a sign cannot have referentiality or things have meaning without our relating them to other things which exist in a 'public sphere' - a public world that guarantees continued access to itself. Thus if someone proceeded from his individual sensation to say 'I have a private language'; it would either be metaphorical or downright solipsism.

a. It implies a rejection of the Augustinian 'bi-planar' theory of meaning whereby concepts/words are matched to objects; every word has a meaning correlated to the word; an object for which the word stands. Of such a notion Augustine had written:

> When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shewn by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tome of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires.\(^\text{15}\)

But for Wittgenstein, this is a rather simplistic explanation. It does not give the entire picture. But meaning is rather broader; being the understanding of circumstances and correct interpretation. It does not consist in an internal laying hold of relations or references between concepts and objects, going through an inner mental process or internal states involving mental representation of rules or of 'grasping' the sense data lying before one's mind'. (For this would be a picture image - the position in the TLP which he seeks to distance himself from.) Understanding is like a capacity to use rules - applied to different language games - it is learnt and therefore is not an act, state or process: And this is how Wittgenstein explains it;

> ... when A gives an order B has to write down series of signs according to a certain formation rule... - how does he get to understand this notation? - first of all series of numbers will be written down for him and he will be required to copy them (...) and here already there is a normal and an abnormal learner's reaction. - At first perhaps we guide his hand in writing out the series 0 to 9; but then the possibility of getting him to understand will depend on his going on to write it down independently. - And here we can imagine, e.g., that he does copy the figures independently but not in the right order: he writes sometimes one sometimes another at random. And then communication stops at that point. ...Or he makes a systematic mistake; ... Here we shall almost be tempted to say that he has understood wrong. ... Or perhaps one accepts his way of copying and tries to teach him ours as an offshoot, a variant of his. - And here too our pupils capacity to learn may come to an end.

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\(^{15}\) Wittgenstein, L., PI §1.
If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.\(^{16}\)

b. It also implies a rejection of the overly Cartesian-mediated empiricist view of the Vienna Circle that meaning is grounded in sensory experience, and a setting up of associations between the word and some object or experience; in having a repeated experience or rummaging through the same mental process all over again each time (as Wittgenstein himself held in the picture theory of the TLP where he maintained that language as a 'normative' activity ought to follow a calculus model of inexorable correctness independent of the language user).

**Lessons from the Metaphors: Publicity of Language as Principle of Legitimation**

**a. Against Solipsism**

Having outlined the arguments, one could now draw out the consequence that, as Wittgenstein boldly claims, there may not be any grounds for any phenomenology which collapses the divide between the 'external' and the 'internal', and focuses validity for knowledge on the intentionality of the transcendent ego. This follows from the fact that Wittgenstein stipulates in the arguments that there is need for a third-person stand point, a public world for reference and correction, since no one may gain insight or certify the essence or validity of knowledge by investigating only his own private mental process.

The arguments also specify Wittgenstein's contention that solipsism is indefensible as a philosophical position. Because the solipsist has to furnish grounds for his argument in a public sphere which he a priori negates; and in language that has been formulated in a public common forum, a communality of usages rules and games. (As one might be inclined to ask: And how would a solipsist tell us 'openly' or publicly what to believe?)

**b. Rules and Games**

Within the immediate background of the PI, the issue of Rule Following is at the base of the private language argument and constitutes its argumentative strategy. The arguments thus expressed, foreground the fact that thought presumes grammatical rules of language, but not in an originating manner, rather as a contemporaneous faculty. In this view, Wittgenstein's thesis is only a consequence of his earlier submission that rules are a public matter; and whereas one can follow a rule privately, private rules are indeed essentially 'tautological' and ridiculous. Wittgenstein first establishes his conviction in this

\(^{16}\) PI, §§143-242.
matter, and as-it-were, the private language argument becomes a logical consequence of it.\textsuperscript{17} That is to say, because of the elements of publicity and culture in Rule-following as a given premise, private language is held to be untenable. In other words, any claims for private language would need to provide its 'rigorously independent' grammatical rules.\textsuperscript{18}

The discourse on rule-following pervades all of the Investigations (but the major capsules that deal with it are to found from §§85, 143-242, and is correlated to games and meaning. Explanation of meaning is a direct reference/understanding of the rules for the correct use of the expression in a specific context, in a determined language game. Thus the mastery of (the use of) language consists in being able to employ its various expressions in the many different contexts (knowledge games in which they belong). Understanding here then is a "mastery of a technique", of meaningfully employing the words of a language. And the technique consists in following the rules for the use of expressions in a specific language game.

\textit{According with the Rule and Rule Following}

Likewise, rule following is not following neural goings-on, or phonetic reading rules and matching written texts with mere sounds; for this would be merely surface or superficial grammar. (Indeed Wittgenstein supposes that this is the mistake of the calculus model which presumes the possibility of having unitary accounts or private following of rules in the 'inner mental process', and justifying such accounts by their private 'feeling' of being guided by a rule. Such private feeling of being guided by a rule is not a sure guarantee of a rule being followed). To be sure, the matching of words with concepts is an exercise in (surface) grammar which may 'accord' with the rule, but it is not rule following. Rule following has to take into account also depth grammar of ordinary language and hence, is much more subtle.\textsuperscript{19} Following a rule is to realize, actualize proper meaning in the context of use (equivalent with engaging in depth grammar) Proper rule following takes place then, when the elements of superficial grammar are matched correctly and are then meaningfully applied in a specific context of communication, in the sense that it leads to successful interpretation and understanding. The specification of context in this regard also takes care of the arc of time; i.e. that the meaning of an expression is, as it is understood - spread out over time. And Wittgenstein expresses this when he writes:

Of course, if the meaning is the use we make of the word, it makes no sense to

\textsuperscript{17} But of course one can put it the other way round and say: he elaborates this thesis in view of, or as the basis for his subsequent arguments against the possibility of private language.

\textsuperscript{18} This seems to be the position of Kripke who thinks that Wittgenstein’s argument has to do more with rule following that with privacy of sensations and outlines the argument in terms of mathematical rule and talk of inner sensation.

\textsuperscript{19} P1§185-242.
speak of such 'fitting.' But we understand the meaning of a word when we hear or say it; we grasp it in a flash, and what we grasp in this way is surely something different from the 'use' which is extended in time! 20

“Accord with the rule” and “following a rule” are as interdependent as two related aspects of a single practice. It is the community standards that establish the syntactical grammatical rules for “accordance”.21 But it is the individuals who use the language and in the specific context (the logic of linguistic activity) in which those who use it follow the rules to arrive at proper meaning. Understanding a language is then an array of performance capacities for correctly employing (encoding) and interpreting (decoding) symbols in particular contexts of communication. It is in this perspective that language becomes for Wittgenstein, a sphere of action, and not a sphere for the primacy of thought and the application of rules as calculi: in naming one's private/ideal sense-impression (ideas, sense data), in overt linguistic activities of ostentation and atomic enunciations. In this consists Wittgenstein's revolution in the Private Language discourse, and the grounds for his defense of publicity as a given for language).

c. The Indispensability of Verifiability and Criterion

This requirement is linked to ostentation. Ostentation is an activity designed to 'clear up misunderstandings and clarify meaning'. Now clarification would not (make sense in private cases) have sense if there were no rules or criteria for verifiability.

In the Blue Book, Wittgenstein gives us an analogy for understanding his idea of criteria. Its interesting high point is that it establishes the framework for ‘hypothesis’. He states:

Let us introduce two antithetical terms in order to avoid certain elementary confusions: To the Question "How do you know that so-and-so is the case?", we sometimes answer by giving 'criteria' and sometimes by giving 'symptoms'. If medical science calls angina an inflammation caused by a particular bacillus, and we ask in a particular case "why do you say this man has got angina?" then the answer, "I have found the bacillus so-and-so in his blood" gives us the criterion, or what we may call the defining criterion of angina. If on the other hand the answer was, "His throat is inflamed", this might give us a symptom of angina. I call "symptom" a phenomenon of which experience has taught us that it coincided, in some way or other, with the phenomenon which is our defining criterion. Then to say "A man has angina if this bacillus is found in him" is a tautology or it is a loose way of stating the definition of "angina". But to say, "A man has angina whenever he has inflamed throat" is to make a hypothesis.22

This rather long citation may serve to put in broad relief the issue of the principle of publicity which has

20 PI, §138 Time as moment of meaning would be understood and designated as kairos. It is such moments of meaning that make kronos (residual successivity) meaningful.
21 For communication this implies that the culture determines the individual modes of the reception of massages – explaining why some films may for instance ‘sell’ in some places and woefully ‘fail’ or ‘flop’ in some other cultural areas.
its corollaries as observability, repeated access and regularity – all of which are warmly debated in both philosophy and the physical sciences. For in philosophy it is linked to the problem of solipsism, and in the sciences it implicates criterion as the groundwork for advancing scientific hypothesis, physical experiments, the setting of new theories to supplant established paradigms. But for our immediate interests, it is strongly linked to the issue of rules as publicly observable procedures in a known language game. Because, as Schulte makes clear, to talk of criterion and rules make sense only where it can be checked; We may speak of correct or incorrect only where there are criteria (that allow us at least in principle) to check the statements in question. Whenever one can be wrong, a public examination must be possible – even if I'm presenting my own 'public'. But neither criteria nor publicity nor any kind of intersubjective examination and confirmation are possible within the envisioned private language (already Russell hinted that this language abhors intersubjectivity and is not for communication) and that invariably argues against calling it ‘language’.

d. The Genitive Equivocation - Confusion of epistemic and physical possession

The issue of genitive equivocation is in direct correlation to the reference fallacy involved in the statement of private sensations. It raises such questions as: Can one have ‘private sensations’, or does one rather have sensations ‘privately’ – that is, alone? What does it mean to say ‘I have pain in my right leg’; ‘I know I have pain’, in the sense that I am experiencing it? But does it make sense to say ‘I have my pain?’ What is the sense of the possessive (i.e., the genitive in the ‘privacy of language’) statement on which the positivists rest their argument on the privacy of sensations?

Wittgenstein tried to find respond to these questions - in order to show how ridiculous it is to claim a private language on the basis of private sensations. Hacker, analysing Wittgenstein’s responses, distinguishes and categorizes the two sides of the equivocation involved as ‘epistemic privacy’ and ‘possession privacy’. Epistemic privacy refers to those things which only the subject in question can know, i.e. if only he can know it. By Possession privacy on the other hand he refers to the situation where in principle only one person can have the thing designated. In the light of this distinction, the position that the private linguist maintains is that there are things, which necessarily involve both in an inaccessible manner. But Wittgenstein in his critique maintains that we can encounter i.e., interpret meaningfully (the facts of epistemic privacy) by our commonalty of language - sameness of rules and capacity of analogy. That is, even though private possession is possible, possession is not out of an objective world. The way ‘I have my pen’, is to be understood, may not suit the way ‘I have pain’ may

be understood. There is an immediacy that renders sensation behavior in the case of ‘pain’ directly eloquent. Whereas the case of ‘pen’ is a ‘mediated’ declaration subsuming all knowledge. The problem of the private linguist is that it limits knowledge to epistemic privacy - this may be expressed thus;

The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have this or something else. The assumption would thus be possible - though unverifiable - that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another.25 It is well enough to state that ownership of experience is private and non transferable because it refers to something ‘uniquely mine,’ to state otherwise is to make a jump into a hypothesis which transcends all possible experience (which is limited to mine).

But how does the solipsist maintain that only ‘mine’ can exist - from what does this “mine” distinguish itself? How does it articulate its identity - under what background? As Wittgenstein says: “But surely what you want to do with the words ‘I am ...’ is to distinguish between yourself and other people."26 For this is also the dilemma of the private linguist. Because once(s)he can make an affirmation (s)he steps out into the public sphere which he denies (as an a priori moment). And it does not matter that affirmation may be about ‘himself’. For as Wittgenstein specifies (above), with the words “I am” - we recognise other people. We/our linguistic positions and utterances presume and foreground a public, the hearers - and I may not make meaning except in relation to them. The situation is as Canfield denotes, an internally deconstructionist one. For Wittgenstein does not here construct a hypothetical proposal for a private language and then impose an external, verificationist criterion of meaning on it - a criterion it cannot fulfill. Rather any theorist who attempts to conceive of a private language must himself or herself demand that the uses of this language be subject to verificationist conditions. The demand is not imposed from without on the basis of some assumed criterion of meaning; rather it is generated by the very metaphysical picture that lies behind the attempt to conceive of a private language. When the would-be private uses of words or signs are seen to fail to satisfy that demand, the idea of a private language internally deconstructs.27

Conclusion

In the foregoing, we have elaborated Wittgenstein’s argument against Private Language. We also saw the perspectives consequent upon this in the sphere of language proper; bearing in mind that a concern

25 PI, §272.
26 PI, §406.
for communication undergirded Wittgenstein’s private language critique - as he himself makes clear in the PI where he states:

If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.28

And here, the subtle reference to measurement applies to linguistic analysis which must find relevance in communication in a public world. And this is the purpose of language in the first place!

The essential point of this paper is not simply to trace the physical geography, or do an exegesis of the texts of the PI, but rather, in the end to foreground the thematic issues that generated Wittgenstein’s defense of the publicity of language. This is important, because there seems to still be a penchant for a preference for scientific language even where this seems superfluous, particularly in the humanities. In some humanities faculties, the methodologies of the social sciences, themselves borrowed from the physical sciences, are being proposed. Our project here is to undermine this preference, by showing that the origins of scientism in the neo-positivistic movement is fundamentally flawed; and a flawed theory cannot provide a valid logic for academic policies. Every language game, every domain of knowledge, must be allowed to provide its own rules. And we must retrieve philosophical enterprise from the solipsism of a single scientific language which validates itself by only looking inwards, instead of looking towards the horizon of community and public domain of communication.

Select Bibliography

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28 PI, §242.