

[Coulw4.001. Tr.:BJF. 31 August 90: 2nd edited version] Transcription conventions can be found on the last 2-3 pages of each transcript.

Please note: This is an edited transcript of an informal seminar meeting. Please do not quote without permission of the parties involved.

JEFF COULTER
Department of Sociology
Boston University

WITTGENSTEIN AND ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Meeting 4: Thursday 5 February 87

TOPICS: Critique of Cartesian
mentalism; depth and surface grammar;
'understanding'; Sacks on
'understanding'; 'remembering';
conceptual innovation, the case of
"invisible light"; 'belief' vs.
'knowledge'; and others.

READING: (1) Hunter, J. F. M. (1985).
UNDERSTANDING WITTGENSTEIN. Edinburgh,
Scotland: Edinburgh University Press:
Chapter 24., "Depth Grammar". (2) Pitkin, H.
(1972). WITTGENSTEIN AND JUSTICE.
Berkeley, CA: University of California
Press: chapter 2., "Wittgenstein's Two
Visions of Language".

Jeff Coulter: I've been asking you to read the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS, but I'm not going to work through the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS in any systematic way. As you remember the idea was to get just a quick familiarization with the kinds of themes that Wittgenstein was addressing himself to there, but which are returned to with much more sophistication in the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS. So, in a sense to read the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS is to sort of prepare yourself for the treatment that is still

to come. There are many points that are simply refined in the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS that appear in the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS, there are some issues that are dropped, and there are some issues on which Wittgenstein more or less changes his mind. Particularly the analysis of some of the mental predicates is changed somewhat in the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, as also, of course, is the attitude toward the concept of a rule of language. So, that's why I'm not really going to talk much more about the BLUE AND BROWN BOOKS, but rather now start to get into the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS in the hopes that your having looked through this preliminary work will sort of prepare you, in a way, to read the PI [Tr: PI = PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS].

[Tr: omits - organizational matters]

The paragraph I was trying to find last week when we were talking about family resemblance concepts is paragraph 75. in the PI [Tr: PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS]. So, just to round that out I'll read it and then we'll carry on. I was looking for this one, it goes:

75. What does it mean to know what a game is? What does it mean, to know it and not be able to say it? Is this knowledge somehow equivalent to an unformulated definition? So that if it were formulated I should be able to recognize it as the expression of my knowledge? Isn't my knowledge, my concept of a game, completely expressed in the explanations that I could give? That is, in my describing examples of various kinds of game; shewing how all sorts of other games can be constructed on the analogy of these; saying that I should scarcely include this or this among games; and so on.

The point there if you'll remember was that in the TRACTATUS, and in the traditions from which Wittgenstein was emerging, the idea was that a word that could not be given a definition, whether ostensive or verbal, had no determinate sense, and therefore was a degenerate kind of concept or expression, something that one couldn't have confidence in insofar as one could never really say whether one knew what one meant or not. And here in this part of the PI, Wittgenstein is raising the

question of family resemblances, the analysis of concepts in terms of their family resemblances, or rather in terms of the family resemblances of instances that fall under the concepts in order to show that there are many perfectly usable meaningful concepts that cannot be given in this case a verbal definition. And there are other concepts that cannot be given an ostensive definition, and there are some concepts that cannot be given either. All of which is part and parcel of the whole argumentational package that is leading Wittgenstein to the claim that meaning consists in the orderly use of concepts or expressions, and not in either something like a logician's definition that might be formulated in terms of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, nor something of a mental accompaniment to the production of the word or phrase in question.

Now, so far, we've been talking mostly about Wittgenstein's philosophy of language vis-a-vis the traditions of formal logic of language, and especially the TRACTATUS, and yet there is also in the TRACTATUS and elsewhere a tradition of thought that Wittgenstein is also seeking to combat which goes more or less as follows: that the meaning of a concept, or phrase, or expression is that which goes on, is that which occurs in the head or mind of he who is either speaking or hearing the expression. And proper communication takes place when both speaker and hearer have the same mental accompaniment to the physical act of speech, and it's physical, acoustic perception. And this doctrine, of course, is one that you can find perhaps most clearly expressed in the writings of John Locke, but it's there in lots of traditions, including the tradition that culminated in the TRACTATUS, which sees meaning as ultimately having some relationship to psychology. The problem of meaning is in some sense a problem of psychology, and that it is the proper job of psychologists to assist us in clarifying what it is to mean something, or how it is possible that something has a meaning, and how it is possible to understand the meaning of something, where these are supposedly functions of the mind. And it is, of course, in attacking THAT idea in favor of a conception of meaning as use in practices, it is in the course of attacking that idea that Wittgenstein gets into the themes and preoccupations that later become central to his thought, namely, philosophical psychology, and in particular the onslaught against Descartes, and all of the Cartesian conceptions of the nature of the human agent as bifurcated into mind and

body, and all of the accompanying distinctions that follow from that kind picture of the nature of the human agent. But it's from this sort of point, the question of meaning, that Wittgenstein branches into a set of considerations that ramify and relate together in all sorts of ways that leads him into the philosophy of psychology, leads him into particularly the critique of Cartesianism.

In the Hunter piece, that I passed around to you, you can see that one major thrust of logical grammatical or depth grammatical inquiry is an attempt to dispel linguistic or conceptual illusions, and these linguistic or conceptual illusions are primarily, though not always, not in every case, but primarily the result of making what Wittgenstein refers to as "grammatical misassimilations" - he also uses the expression "grammatical disanalogies" - which involve treating similarities in surface grammar as keys to the conceptual structure of a particular notion that you may have an interest in. Where, say, two or more concepts can appear to have a similar role in the surface grammar of a sentence or utterance, it may lead one very easily to assimilate them into the same, say, logical category, or semantic domain. Whereas by employing the method of Ubersicht, or surview, of lots and lots of different kinds of uses in different sentence frames, or utterance frames in different circumstances, one may be able to see that one's initial assumptions based upon surface grammatical similarities are not founded. So, we have the classic kind of grammatical misassimilation of the present continuous tense verbs to verbs of activity: 'remembering', 'understanding', 'intending', where their appearance in the surface grammar can be very similar to the occurrence in surface grammar of expressions like: 'walking', 'spitting', 'hitting', 'talking'. And where one might think on the basis of what Wittgenstein calls being nourished on a one-sided diet of examples, having too few examples of surface grammar, one might jump to the conclusion that what one is dealing with is a coherent class of 'course of action' verbs. Whereas, of course, Wittgenstein analyzes 'remembering', 'understanding', 'intending', and various other kinds of 'i-n-g' verbs as being quite other than 'course of action' verbs. And that can only be determined by trying out the combinatorial tolerances of these verbs in different surface structures, in different surface grammatical forms.

So, for example, it is true that one can say something like: "understanding him was difficult", which has a surface grammatical similarity to something like: "listening to him was difficult", "speaking to him was difficult", "looking at him was difficult", "hitting him was difficult". "Understanding him was difficult" can seem to be in such a surface grammar, if it's considered in isolation from a context of course, it can give you a sense that what is being spoken of is a course of action performed by an agent. And, of course, if you think of it that way then the next question is: where is this course of action taking place? - since it doesn't seem as if understanding, if it is a course of action, is one that is anything like as physically available as: 'hitting', 'spitting', and the rest of it. And so the natural candidate for the postulation of this mental activity, this mental course of action, is the mind - or rather() - the natural candidate for this course of activity is in the mental domain or mind.

Ok, then, so, how then to break the spell of this misassimilation of grammar? It requires us, as Hunter points out correctly, not to re-construct an ideal language, but rather to gather together lots of other cases of surface grammar - so, in a sense, depth grammar, depth grammatical insights are arrived at by ramifying the cases of surface grammar. And that, of course, is a very significant difference from what deep grammar means in Leibniz and in Chomsky, for example, to use some contrasting examples. So, with respect to understanding, 'understanding him was difficult', and the way in which it might lead us to think, similar sorts of expressions, might lead us to think that understanding is a designator for a course of action. We now have to try out some other kinds of frames and see what the other combinatorial tolerances are for the concept of understanding, and this is one of the key things that Wittgenstein tries to do in those sections of the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS that deal with that particular concept. And he treats other concepts, of course, also.

In the case of understanding, of course, he notes that we draw distinctions in our language between 'trying to understand', which can indeed be a course of action, and can indeed, of course, also involve things passing through one's mind, with actually understanding, where 'actually understanding' and 'trying to understand' can now be seen to have a relationship very loosely analogous to 'traveling' and 'arriving', 'playing'

and 'winning' - very loosely, it isn't exact enough. Because Wittgenstein's analysis of understanding is not quite like Ryle's, where Ryle analyzes it into an 'achievement' category, or a 'success verb' as distinct from a 'process verb'. For Wittgenstein, understanding is construed as akin to an ability. So, my understanding you amounts to my being able to respond appropriately to you, my being able to paraphrase what you say, my being able to do a bunch of things that satisfy the criteria of understanding. So, that to understand the meaning of a word, now, is NOT to perform a mental action, is not to perform a mental operation, but to understand the meaning of a word IS to be able to use it properly, IS to be able to do things with it, to play certain language-games with it. It IS to have now a capacity that one might not have had before. In the case of 'suddenly understanding', where one one could say "he suddenly understood", which is the archetype, perhaps, of the case in which one might want to assimilate understanding to an ACT, for Wittgenstein it is a question suddenly to have acquired the ability. My saying that I suddenly understanding what a word means is a CLAIM to suddenly have acquired the ability. Now, here's where Wittgenstein makes a point that's similar to the kinds of points that we talked about last time - about "I intend to". Because, for Wittgenstein, to say "I understand" the utterance, the word, what you say, the argument, the book, etc., to say, in the first person present tense, to say "I understand x" is NOT to be describing some inner mental operation or act, but is to be CLAIMING to have acquired a new ability. And whether or not the claim is to be ratified or defeated hinges upon what one can subsequently do in the social world.

Now, someone may say: Let's suppose we have something like a mathematics examination. And the teacher writes a bunch of equations on the board, and suddenly - let's say it's just something as simple as an equation of addition, $2 + 2 =$ - and in one of the student's minds there 'pops' the number 4, but he never does anything, he never says anything. Just the number 4 pops into his mind. Now one might say there's a case in which the student's understanding consists in his having a mental image, a mental image of the number 4. It consists in there at least having been a mental occurrence. So there's at least some cases in which understanding consists in there being some mental occurrence going on. So how could you say that understanding is a matter of satisfying public criteria, is a matter of proper application, is a

matter of an ability, when in those kinds of cases it seems to be satisfied by some mental occurrence?

And here Wittgenstein notes the following, he says: what is it that makes the difference between the purely fortuitous occurrence of a number in someone's mind and that occurrence being a part of what constitutes the understanding of the equation, and the understanding of the right answer? Because it might easily be the case that the number 4 arising in one's mind, so to speak, as a mental image constitutes thinking of the number of one's house: "I live at number (4) Windsor Avenue". It might be any number of things. So the occurrence of a mental image in and of itself does not YET constitute understanding, where the understanding is at issue. What is it that makes 'the occurrence of the number 4' a case of 'understanding the answer' are the surroundings, are the contextual surroundings, of that occurrence. For example, that the student could now produce that as an answer and justify it in some way. That the student can, in fact, apply the rules governing the operations of arithmetic in such a way as to give us confidence that what we have here is not merely a fortuitous occurrence. Because, as we all know, it can happen that the right answer might just suddenly occur to someone, but they will not necessarily know it's the right answer, and they might just shout it out in the form of something that just occurred to them. Or they might simply guess the thing. They might be engaged in guessing. And they might still get the right answer. So getting the right answer, even getting the right answer, may still require, though it may be sufficient in certain circumstances, in the case of pedagogy it may still require supplementation by further contextual particulars for us to ratify the claim to understand.

And these are matters that Wittgenstein goes into in great detail over the question of the capacity of somebody to follow a number series. He gets us to imagine something like: the instructor puts something like that on the board [Tr: JC writes on the board: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10] and he asks the class to continue the series. And says: now what would we say if in some student's mind the number 12 occurred? Well one would have to know the basis on which this occurred in order for it to fulfill the criteria of it, in fact, being a principled continuation of the number series. So if the student came up with 12 and was then asked "how did you get there?" and couldn't come up with the formula, then that would not be a sufficient

evidence of his having understood, no matter the fact that the right answer came into his mind. Now, says Wittgenstein, supposing the formula came into his mind. Supposing 'add 2' occurred to him. What is to make that evidence of his understanding how to continue the series? Well that he can now go on and add 2. So if he tells you "the rule is add 2" but then comes up with 14, when he should come up with 12, we have a problem.

So it's these sorts of considerations that lead Wittgenstein to the argument that a first person avowal of understanding, "I understand", is NEVER a matter of describing a mental going-on, even if, even in those cases where there is something mental going on, like a mental image of a certain sort occurring to one. But rather it is a claim to have acquired or be able to exercise an ability, and the claim to have acquired an ability is a check that can be cashed only in public conduct in appropriate circumstances. Which is not to say, of course, that we're all the time going around checking and testing our claims to understand, rather we employ other kinds of principles when we are beyond the surface stage of, say, language acquisition or level of reasoning, assignable levels of reasoning, and language mastery. We do things like give people the benefit of the doubt, we employ ad hoc assessments of character, we employ charitability, in order to let the thing go. But note as well that the assignability of understanding to someone can carry on INDEPENDENTLY of their avowal of understanding.

And Wittgenstein hints at something that he never develops, but is developed very systematically in the writings of Sacks, which is that in our public conduct, in appropriate circumstances, we are displaying our understanding. And it's not just in our explicit avowals, or explicit ratifications of avowals of understanding that understanding is assignable to persons by persons. But rather in and through their conduct they are displaying their understanding or misunderstandings. And, of course, it was up to Sacks to note how systematically the display and detection of understanding in everyday speaking is tied to what he calls "tying procedures", how we tie our linguistic actions together, and thereby, in the ways we tie them together we show, defeasibly of course, but we nonetheless display the understandings that we have. So one way to show that one has understood that something that one had just heard was a question is to come up with something that's hearably an answer, and so

on, through-out the adjacency-pair structures. And there are other tying devices as well that Sacks speaks to in respect of the orderly display and detection of comprehension.

All of which, of course, move the criteria for understanding completely outside of the skull, and put them where they belong in the public domain. And, of course, understanding belongs in the public domain precisely because when one is in the business of seeing whether or not someone really has understood something, one doesn't feel that one has only gotten a partial solution to that, when one finds that they fulfill all of the ordinary criteria, and that one really needs now to get inside their skull. No! The practical criteria suffice. And indeed there is nothing other than a linguistic illusion that may lead us to think that all we can ever do is ASSUME that somebody's understood, because we don't have access to the real inner contents of their minds. Wittgenstein switches it around, and says: no, no, we can very well know whether someone, ourselves and others, understand, and it's only a mentalistic metaphysics that might lead us to think that our ordinary approvals and ratifications of the predicate of understanding is merely inferential, is merely an assumption, and that someday and somehow, if we get access to the inside of the skull, then we'll get the real picture. Wittgenstein says this is based upon a linguistic or conceptual illusion. And he goes through a range of mental predicates with similar sorts of arguments, though the argument is subtly different depending, of course, on the depth grammar of the particular mental predicate.

In the case of 'remembering', he does something similar. 'Remembering', for Wittgenstein, is not a mental process, not a sort of searching through the storage-...

[Tr: tape change]

Jeff Coulter(cont): ...a term of capacity rather than of occurrence, or process, or activity. One can think that one has remembered, but it turns out that one has mis-remembered. In a similar way that one could think that one had understood, and it can turn out that one did not understand. One can try to remember and fail. Remembering therefore is not an activity, as trying to remember might be an activity, remembering is in that sense very analogous in its depth grammar to understanding. It is indeed an ability, though

this time an ability to give some account of the past. And one's 'memory' consists in the ratified account of the past that one gives, and that's it. It's not as if the ratifiable account that one gives of the past is just the surface manifestation of the memory that is really in the mind, but rather the account that one gives IS the memory. And that turns out to be extremely important, especially in the hands of Norman Malcolm, who uses Wittgenstein's analysis of the concepts of 'memory', 'remembering', 'forgetting', and so on, in an attempt to undermine storage theories of the memory trace in psychology.

But at the center of all of this, and really breathing life into all of these arguments, is the argument about "private language". And it's that that I want to begin to present to you today because it is at the core of Wittgenstein's anti-Cartesianism, and it breathes life into all these depth grammatical explications of the mental vocabulary. It's also important to get a handle on it because it's very easy for Wittgenstein's analyses of the mental predicates to be misassimilated to behavioristic considerations, to the idea that somehow Wittgenstein is denying the reality of mental goings-on, or is seeking to reduce genuine mental goings-on to mere behaviors. We'll come on to that later, and Wittgenstein has a very clear and systematic anti-behaviorist position as well as an anti-Cartesian position. [Tr: The arguments about private language do not really get picked up in the ensuing discussion. The topic is postponed until the next meeting.]

But for the moment we'll just stop and see if you have any questions.

Bernie Phillips: Well let me see if I can get back to that. What I was thinking of when you were talking about understanding was - Let's take two different people, and let's get an audio-visual sense of them. One person is able subsequently, say 20 seconds later, able to handle all of the manifestations of understanding that we would require in terms of what he in fact said. The other person is NOT, after 20 seconds, and tries to but fails. And I'm assuming now that we have got a camera trained on both. Both are going through

some kind of contortions with regard to facial distortions, and looking very upset, and then one finally starts to smile and we can see clearly that something is happening, but 'what' you don't know. And then that person is able to come forth with what we would classify in Wittgenstein with understanding - verbally, socially, correctly, and this kind of thing. Whereas the other doesn't go through that process. He never comes out of it, and still looks very pained. What I'm getting at is some very observable kinds of things that are not very (criterial) - just as observable, but much more difficult to interpret, of course, than what a person can say socially. How would Wittgenstein deal with that, or would he, or should he?

Jeff Coulter: Would you describe the two cases quickly to me again because I haven't quite followed the description.

Bernie Phillips: Ok. Both persons looked pained, upset, and so on, and then one person looks like he has an 'ah ha' experience, and he starts to relax and smile. The other doesn't go through that, and a-

Jeff Coulter: So, what would you say? Have they satisfied the criteria for understanding?

Bernie Phillips: What I would say would be, based on my normal behavior. I would think something important is going on. In the search method, one way of looking at things is you look at the 'context of verification' and the 'context of discovery' -

Jeff Coulter: No, forget all that sociologese. Let's talk about commonsense.

Bernie Phillips: All right. Ok. I would feel I guess more confident that the person who looks happier, and has gone through the experience has come up with something important, or I would trust to a certain extent.

Jeff Coulter: Maybe. But what has it got to do with understanding? Fill out the case, because we've got here a partially described example.

Bernie Phillips: Mm mh. Well, I guess in a practical vein I would probably be more interested in listening carefully, and drawing out the one who looked like he had the 'ah ha' experience, take more time with him, because I am more confident that there is something there that I want to learn.

Whereas with the other I would not do that.

Jeff Coulter: Right, now, the only thing that Wittgenstein has to say about those sorts of cases is that there are characteristic accompaniments to occasions of understanding, such as the look on the face, the 'I've got it', there are these looks, there are these things that can enable us now to say that in the given example that you're describing, it's worth going further. The individual may well think he's understood, may well have actually understood, but the characteristic sort of physical accompaniments wouldn't yet give us a way of being confident that they have in fact understood. But it is important to note that there are these characteristic physical kinds of accompaniments. Notice, however, that they are certainly not omnirelevant to all cases of understanding, like you can understand everything I'm now saying, occasionally you're doing nods, and I'm taking that as an index of your understanding. And you of me. But we might let each other down, because the next thing one of us may say may show that though we thought we understood, in fact we didn't. So simply showing the signs of understanding, including - and this is crucial - avowing understanding, saying "I understand", is not yet a sufficient criteria for understanding. But IF understanding were something mental, were something interior, if its criteria were crucially subjective, or internal, or mental, then that would presumably be sufficient to settle the matter, since after all I have access to what's going on inside me, better than you have, so the argument goes, therefore my saying "I understand" is something that on that model would count as essentially an expression of something in me that you simply have to live with. That's not how the verb works, clearly, you can tell me "No you don't understand".

Bernie Phillips: Suppose you tell me that I don't understand, or that I do understand - it doesn't matter which - and I still believe deeply the opposite of what you say. Ok. Now, you've already verified it socially, either positively or negatively. But there is something in me - what?, I don't know - that leads me to believe quite the opposite. But I've either failed or succeeded by your criteria.

Jeff Coulter: Well, no, because understanding is also a gradable notion. One can have SOME understanding of the problem. People can say of each other that they understand it a bit, but not

fully. And there are some circumstances around which the attribution of understanding is never really decidable, or is practically left undecidable, but that doesn't mean that understanding is not a matter of the satisfaction of public criteria. The fact that in given cases one might leave the thing permanently unresolved, the fact that in given cases one might say "well you evidence only some understanding", still doesn't gainsay the fact that understanding is subject to public conduct in circumstances, or rather understanding is a MATTER of public conduct in social circumstances.

Bernie Phillips: Final point. This 'reference' theory of truth, if we emphasize the public criteria, don't we also have to go along with some common agreement that there is some one common truth that we all have to agree on, which is either that he understood, or that he didn't understand - versus - a different kind of idea, a different approach to truth, which is that: I may not go along with what everyone agrees, either that I understand or that I don't understand, and that I can be against even all of society and still by going along with the public criteria, I'm also going along with- This is what I'm asking, am I also going with a 'reference' theory of truth?

Jeff Coulter: You mean 'correspondence' theory?

Bernie Phillips: Correspondence theory.

Jeff Coulter: No, because nobody needs to stipulate in advance what the particular content of the criteria might be in order to assert, as Wittgenstein does, that whatever they are, they will have to be in principle publicly available, and they will also have to, for whatever case you have in mind, they will also have to be witnessably non-idiosyncratic. So whatever their content might be depends, of course, on a particular case.

The only argument Wittgenstein is making in THIS domain is to shift one's consideration away from the idea that understanding the meaning of something, or understanding something goes on in the mind. In particular, what he's attacking is the idea that understanding language is a mental accompaniment to hearing its production. It's like the two track theory of communication here that he's attacking, where on the one hand there's the idea that we traffic in sounds and words and the rest of it, and that's physical and public, and on

the other side we traffic in the mental accompaniment, so that, for example, a characteristic metaphysical picture of what's going on right now, that Wittgenstein's trying to attack, would be as you are listening to me you're also, if you are understanding, you are understanding me and that's going on in your mind in addition to the listening to the words coming out of my mouth. Well, Wittgenstein argues here that when one thinks in language, there aren't meanings going through one's mind in addition to the words. [JC: see PI, paragraph 329.] That's one sort of quasi-phenomenological evidence that he produced. But the best arguments that he makes are of a conceptual, logical-grammatical nature, of the sort that we've just been going through. That understanding is not a process verb, and not an activity verb, and that to understand what someone says is not to do something that accompanies the listening to it, but to understand what someone says IS to be able, now, to do what is appropriate, to be able to paraphrase, to be able to put it into one's own words, to be able to do a bunch of things that satisfy the criteria for what it is to have understood. So he wants us to get away from this idea that understanding is a sort of simultaneous mental tracking of something. And, in fact, he also wants to propose that it's this view of understanding, and of a good deal of the other mental predicates, that leads us to a false general conception of mind as something that is kind of co-existing with the rest of the person's attributes and properties. But in order to do that, systematically, he has to work his way through an analysis of all of the verbs and the clusters of concepts that together constitute our mental vocabulary, our mental language, and see in fact what the language-games are that we play with these words, and what the rules are.

Eileen Crist: I wanted to ask a question about memory. I really can't understand what kind of an account you're giving of memory because it seems that even if a memory consists in giving an account of it, that first of all, you have to have something to give an account of, and this is what leads us to the notion of storing our experiences in images. And the second thing about memory, your account seems to point to a randomness in the way that we have memories, whereas there seems to be some way in which we organize or we choose over what kind of experiences to remember. We don't do

this consciously in any sense, but there are certain types of experiences that we tend to remember more than others, and this would seem to point in the direction of some form of mental organization of experience - choosing. I don't know if that's clear.

Jeff Coulter: Well the first point you made about what it is you remember, what it is you remember is the event or circumstance or occurrence itself in the past.

Eileen Crist: So it is somewhere?

Jeff Coulter: Yeah, it's in the past, not in your head.

Eileen Crist: Why isn't it in my head? How is that?

Jeff Coulter: Because the thing that you're describing took place in the past.

Eileen Crist: Right, but I remember it-

Jeff Coulter: And in what consists your remembering it; in what does your remembering of it consist?

Eileen Crist: I would think in certain emotions and maybe in certain words or in certain images.

Jeff Coulter: Well, you might remember the emotions you had in the past, but let's take the words and images. Of course, there's no denying that one could remember certain things in images, you have memory images of the past. No denying. Wittgenstein is not opposed to the notion that we have mental images in any way. Worth bearing in mind because that's one thing that classical behaviorism denies. But the argument that he makes, although it's primarily about the giving of accounts, or the telling of things, also holds for memory images, and he expands the point in the following way, he says: What is it that enables one to distinguish between a memory image, and mental image, where the mental image might seem to be a memory image. In other words, what is it that would enable one to say about one's mental image that in fact it was a memory image, and that in fact it was a MEMORY image as distinct from a mental image, just an image? Well one thing that makes a mental image a memory image is that the thing that you claimed to be remembering actually

occurred, and secondly that you were there. So if those two criteria are undermined, then no matter how much you may protest that what you have in your head is a memory image, someone can say of you that you just seem to remember, it seems to you that you remember, but in fact you dreamt it, or whatever. Now, one can go about - and I, for example, in my scatterbrained ways have certainly done this, and I'm sure many of you have had similar experiences - I've gone around absolutely certain that a mental image that I enjoy about a certain time and place was a memory image because I figure I was there, and I remember it in detail. And then I come up with it to my parents, and they say you were never there. It must have been a vivid image that came out of their giving me a vivid account of something. And I figure, yeah, I wasn't there. So, one can go through life seeming to remember, but not in fact actually remembering. Which is not to say that there aren't such genuine things as memory images.

But, now, the mere occurrence of a picture in the head, so to speak, for Wittgenstein still stands in need of conceptualization. Just as no object in the world emanates how it is going to be conceptualized, that also holds for the mental pictures. And he says the best way to think about this is to always, I think it's in the BLUE BOOK, always try to replace the mental image with an external picture, and make the same argument. And the argument holds, which is that no picture in and of itself tells you what it's about. No mental image at all tells you in and of itself what it's about. So, that no mental image in and of itself, or the occurrence of a mental image in and of itself is going to tell you what it's about, what it amounts to. And that holds true for the case of memory images, but it also holds true for other kinds of things.

The arguments that are sometimes made with respect to meaning, that in some sense the meaning of a word can sometimes consist in the accompanying mental images, begs that entire question, because what the image means has not yet been resolved. And if the image means something, then presumably the meaning of the image must be a further image, and we have an infinite regress. So, there are various moves that Wittgenstein makes to try to handle those questions.

Edith Rosenthal: How about the case of the historically heroic intellectual, such as Copernicus, who was not ratified socially in what he understands to be the design of the solar system. Can one say that he didn't understand until generations passed, and the science paradigm shifts, and we now think that he was right, and he understood.

Jeff Coulter: Lovely, ok. To stick as close to the text as I can, I'll vary the example slightly, because Wittgenstein discusses exactly this problem in a different example. It's partly due to the idea of exposition that I'll do this, but if it doesn't quite handle the problem that you have in mind then come back. What Wittgenstein lectured on was the construction "invisible light". He said: with the discovery - by who ever it was - of infra-red and ultra-violet light, radiation actually, infra-red and ultra-violet radiation, the expression "invisible light" now has a use. There's now a language-game you can play with it, which is geared into actual practices that are not restricted to domains of discourse such as poetry or mysticism. That with the development of this scientific innovation, it was possible to have a conceptual development, so that now you could put together two concepts 'invisible' and 'light' and have a sense, because there are now linguistic practices in which that expression can have a place, can be a counter. There's now some job for that tool to do, whereas previously it wasn't even a tool.

Now he says: if you look back at early writings or chronicles, and you came across someone who insisted that there is invisible light, and you found him being ostracized, thought of as a madman, or considered not to have properly learned the language, is it the case that we have to now retrospectively construe that use as a proper use in virtue of the fact that, as the historical progress of science now shows us, there can be a properly well-formed construction "invisible light" which prior to the discovery of infra-red and ultra-violet radiation would simply be a logico-grammatical monstrosity - that the concept of 'light' and the concept of 'invisibility' have no combinatorial tolerance for each other. It's rather like saying 'a quick square' or 'a round pain', 'invisible light' just has no combinatorial possibilities. But what he asks is do we go back to the previous use - let's say it was [Tr: Maxwell], or whoever it was, I don't remember who it was who discovered infra-red and ultra-violet

radiation - before [Tr: Maxwell], would somebody's saying this be a sort of proto-scientific use? Of course not. The praxis has got to be established for that use to be a tool, to be an instrument of reason.

So, in the case of Copernicus, or in the case of those people who are making conceptual assertions like "the earth goes round the sun", which appeared to simply be a nonsense, in the case of those people only if they could establish a form of life and an array of language-games in which this expression now can have an instrumentality can it now be accepted as a part of the language, can it now be construed as a linguistic innovation. And so in certain respects what the scientific innovations are about is trying to establish new language-games. But it's not that you could say at any one point during the Copernican Revolution, or before Copernicus' discoveries were fully accepted, it's not that now one can go back and say that those who used the expression "the earth goes around the sun" were simply anticipating Copernicus. We don't know, maybe some of them were, maybe some of them had an insight. But one thing we certainly can't say anymore - and this is an interesting point about the temporality of the use of the concept of 'belief' vis-a-vis 'knowledge' - one thing we can't say about people who would say that "the earth moves around the sun" - say a hundred years before Copernicus - we can't say of them that they KNEW that the earth moved around the sun. We still have to say of them that they 'believed' it. But NOW we know it to be the case.

Darleen Douglas-Steele: But wouldn't it be possible to say of Copernicus that he 'knew' that the earth travels around the sun, rather than 'believed', because he could claim that he 'knew' because he could demonstrate through calculations. {JC: right} And yet other people at the time could say of him that he merely 'believed' it. {JC: exactly} So, ().

Jeff Coulter: Yes. Until such time as the practices are established through processes that Feyerabend and others refer to as almost a kind of "conversion". SOME began to say "he's right", and therefore to cease to ascribe the predicate 'belief' to him. Others maintained that he believes it, and he may be right, but we're not sure. And until it ripples out sufficiently, so as to establish the language-game,...

Dusan Bjelic: Could you also go the other way around and say that Copernicus' discovery or his statements were neither wrong nor right, simply it is the question if there are language-games that said that it is wrong, up to the point where we have established a language-game to say that he was right. In other words, some discovery is wrong as long as there are language-games around that at that time which said that it was wrong, but itself, he's just said something that - who knows what it can be - you have in history some blind people walking on the streets of Jerusalem saying, for instance, "there is going to come Messiah", and people will doubt what he said. Then after three or four centuries, they say, "Well, he was right". So, it's the same thing like with Copernicus. He can say something, and it's wrong because there are no language-games to say that it's right. There are only language-games around him to say that it's wrong.

Edith Rosenthal: You seem to be talking more about the mechanism of social practice, then you are about the state of Copernicus' 'understanding'. We started out talking about 'understanding', and 'understanding' needs to be socially verified.

Jeff Coulter: No, 'verified' there is too strong. It's not a question of there having to be determinate truth-conditions satisfied, but rather there have to be criteria for 'justification', conventionally acceptable criteria for non-defeated justification of the assertion of 'understanding'. It is not a matter of there having to be- To say of someone that they understand doesn't require that there be determinate truth-conditions satisfied, just that there be criteria for 'justification' that are acceptable in the given circumstances. I should just mention that. I'm not quite sure what difference it makes to your point.

[Tr: brief part can't hear]

Edith Rosenthal: But verification is out-here, not in his head, and he's lacking the verification. Therefore by Wittgenstein's proposition, he is not understanding.

Jeff Coulter: But the whole point that I was just making is that here we have a problem of reconstructing the history of the case. Because from where we stand, and here I would take issue with Dusan, we can't say of Copernicus that he was wrong, because Copernicus was right. We can't say that. Also Copernicus PROVIDED us with criteria

justifying us in saying of him that he DID understand. And these were PUBLIC criteria.

Dusan Bjelic: But even that...

[Tr: tape change]

Dusan Bjelic (cont.): ...if it is shown that is not so that the sun is fixed, it is also that the sun is going around. So, it is like everything is in motion. So, from the point of Ptolemy, that is a perspective that was reasonable, as well as for Copernicus. And by the way, Copernicus was not the first to say that the earth goes around the sun, it was even in the Greek time, I think it was Anaxagoras who said the same thing. It's just that people didn't pick it up, as they didn't pick-up the steam-machine in the Greek time, up to the 16th or 17th centuries. So, there is not one kind of criteria of understanding forever, outside of the context of the language-games, because it is always, and only, within those language-games that we can have some criteria to say if it is understood or not.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah. But the point that Wittgenstein wants to make about it is that SOME concepts have an essential temporal dimension to them, where you might not think they do. So, for example, you can't say of Copernicus that he 'thought that' without presupposing, in some sense, that it might not do. Or 'he believed'. Because by saying of someone that 'he believed' we are withholding the attribution of knowledge.

But now, how do we characterize Copernicus' orientation? The problem of characterizing Copernicus' orientation using one of these verbs: 'believe', 'know', 'understand', or 'think one understands', is precisely that we are of a different period, and in the linguistic practices that WE are bound by, we cannot do other than describe from that vantage point. We HAVE to say of Copernicus that he 'knew' that the earth went round the sun. We cannot say of him that he 'believed', even if he would have said at that point in the past "I believe, and I have some more tests to do". Because OUR characterizations of language-games have a historicity as well.

Pitkin makes a similar point with respect to 'cultural diversity'. [E.g.:] How can we describe the Hopi rain-dance? They describe it as making rain. If we describe them as making rain, that

presupposes that we are in accord with the efficacy of the practice. But if we say of them that they BELIEVE they're making rain, that's a way of putting it down, and saying "But, of course, it doesn't make rain". So, there is a lateral equivalent to this historical issue. The temporal sensitivity of the selected descriptor, the selected characterization, is very important here, and it's not as if there is an Archimedian point at which to stand. You can't simply claim to be reconstructing Copernicus's ways of thinking. Well, what verbs are you going to use? Are you going to say he 'believed'? Well, the problem with saying of him that he 'believed' is this: it leaves room for the possibility that he didn't 'know', and we can't allow that. But if we say of him that he 'knew', it might be that at that time he would only have said "I believe". And there is ultimately no way of bringing these things into close alignment, because we cannot but speak from our own linguistic commitments, i.e., there's no language-game-independent way of characterizing language-games.

Eileen Crist: Isn't this a very anthropocentric way of looking at the whole issue, and isn't there also something about reality which could constrain whether one could say 'know' or 'believe'? Isn't there a sense in which the earth or the sun moves in a way that can be described in better or worse terms?

Jeff Coulter: Well, for what purposes? For the purposes of my getting up in the morning, I can say "Heh, the sun is rising". There is nothing wrong with saying "the sun is rising", or "the sun is setting". There is nothing wrong with saying that at all as long as you realize that I'm not trying to do astronomy when I make that remark; I'm not playing that language-game. But when I play the language-games of astronomical theory, and astronomical science, then an expression like "the sun is rising" or "the sun is setting" has no room. So you have to always remember what the purposes are in this respect. So, of course, language-use, and the grammar of language-use, is wholly anthropocentrically governed, because it's governed by the purposes of human discourse.

Don't forget now that here we are talking about 'language', not about 'scientific discoveries'. Scientific discoveries are of relevance only insofar as we are talking about the problem of 'linguistic innovation', for example, in the domain of CONCEPTS, not of THEORIES. This is

where the view has got to be anthropocentric, because - at least in Wittgenstein's argumentation - it's not as if the world, in whatever form it is, bespeaks its own mode of representation, or its own mode of conceptualization. And here's a classic case in point: For certain purposes, it's perfectly intelligible and correct to say "the sun sets". For certain other purposes, it's perfectly intelligible to deny that the sun moves at all vis-a-vis the earth. And for certain yet further purposes, even within astronomy, it makes perfect sense to (agree) that the sun moves with respect to the earth because we are all in galaxies, and all the rest of it. So, you can have all of these statements that if they are abstracted from their language-games might appear even to contradict each other.

Bernie Phillips: What about saying Copernicus believed that the earth went around the sun. Others at his time believed that he was wrong, and we KNOW that Copernicus was correct. In other words, we are using several different language-games. We are using our own...

Jeff Coulter: Yeah, but the point at issue here was that Copernicus might be going around saying "I know" at time 't' [Tr: read 't' as subscript], not "I believe". One of the key things about psychiatrists in their relations with paranoids is that the paranoids are always claiming to 'know'. The psychiatrists are always telling them "No, you believe", and that's a disjunction between them that they can't surmount. So, there are disjunctions with respect to the characterization of orientational claims that can't be surmounted given where we now are. That's what the point is about; it's about the temporal constraints upon the characterization of people's orientations - the historical, temporal constraints. So, it's not like someone can just come along and settle the matter for us, in that sense, and settle the conceptual question. In other words what one is trying to do, and I think Wittgenstein is making us aware of this, is that there are certain sorts of expressions, in certain language-games, which at certain points in history are asymmetrical and unresolved. And they can get resolved in certain ways. So that now, most everybody would say of Copernicus that he 'found out that', he didn't just 'claim that', he 'found out that'. It's not that he 'figured that', he 'discovered that'. It's not that he 'believed', it's that he 'knew that'. We have to say that, otherwise we are committing ourselves to an

anti-Copernican view. And, of course, if you hear someone saying: "This guy Copernicus, he thought that the earth moved round the sun", and left it at that, one might have grounds there to think that the individual who made that expression, circumstances permitting, was an anti-Copernican.

Imagine somebody saying to a physics professor: "I see, so you believe that a falling body falls at 32 feet/per second/per second in a vacuum. The physics professor would turn around and say "No. I KNOW it"; "We know it".

But then imagine the theist and the atheist speaking together. But here's an interesting difference actually, because theists make a concession to the common use of the concept of 'belief', on the whole. Though some would claim to 'know' God, most claim to 'believe' in God. So, perhaps that is not such a clear disjunction.

Isamu Kamada: Can I ask a question? For Wittgenstein, is understanding an ability?

Jeff Coulter: It's AKIN to an ability. He says that the depth grammar of the concept of 'understanding' moves along parallel tracks with concepts of 'capacity' and 'ability', but there are points of divergence. And I guess the best thing that I can do is to read you a good example of a point of divergence. Because he doesn't want to dissolve it completely into an 'ability' concept. He doesn't want to do that. There is a whole section in Baker and Hacker: WITTGENSTEIN: UNDERSTANDING AND MEANING (1980) on understanding and ability:

Understanding seems to be an ability. A person who understands something is able to do certain things. [in certain circumstances -JC] Nevertheless, the equation of understanding and ability is misleading. It leads to errors in an account of understanding language and its uses ... It is more correct to say that understanding is akin to an ability, or that in its dominant uses 'understanding' denotes an ability. Why adopt this cautious formulation?

The first point to stress is the DIFFUSENESS of understanding in comparison with the generality of practical abilities. This is visible in the following features

(i) If understanding is an ability, it is not an ability to do, for every item one understands, one single type of thing or uniform class of things. This distinguishes understanding from many, though by no means all, kinds of practical abilities. A person who understands a sentence of his native tongue can do many things, e.g. paraphrase it, explain it at length, use it in appropriate contexts, respond to it in appropriate ways. A person who understands children can get on well with them, make himself loved by them, communicate his sympathy to them, play with them to their delight, grasp (understand) their motives and their complex symbolic behaviour ... , and so on. This large variety of abilities of which different understandings may consist does not merely reflect the multiple criteria for understanding. After all, pain has multiple criteria, but lacks the inherent complexity and richness of the concept of understanding. ...

(ii) Understanding, over a wide range of its objects, seems intuitively more passive than SOME of the abilities which are associated with such objects. Understanding German is not the same thing as being able to speak German, since one may understand yet be unable to speak (although one can say what a German sentence means). Understanding music is not the same as being able to play or compose, nor is understanding art being able to paint or sculpt. Moreover, understanding how to do something is not in general the same as being able to do it. [though in many cases it is - JC]

(iii) There are different kinds of understanding which do not correspond in any straightforward way to different kinds of abilities. Compare understanding an order, understanding a

calculus or a proof in a calculus, understanding a person, understanding a late Beethoven string quartet, and understanding (as Augustine could not) how it is possible to measure time. Of course, in each case there are certain things which we are inclined to say that a person who understands such-and-such may do, for it is those things, which, if done, constitute the criteria for [their - JC] understanding [in the first place - JC]. But although doing so-and-so may be a criterion of understanding such-and-such, one must not jump to the conclusion that understanding IS the ability to do so-and-so. One may well have the ability long before the understanding manifests itself in the exercise of the ability.

If one understands a calculus then one is able to operate it. But understanding women is not at all like understanding a calculus. In what sense does a person who understands women have an ability which the person who does not understand them lacks, other than the ability to understand women? The quest for philosophical understanding is not obviously best described as an attempt to acquire an ability to DO something. [Tr: Baker, G. P., and Hacker, P. M. S. (1980,1983) WITTGENSTEIN: MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING. University of Chicago Press, pp. 343-344. Parentheses and emphasis in the original. This is the paperback edition of the essays from the above mentioned reference.]

So, the point that Baker and Hacker go on to make is not to deny that 'understanding' is akin to an ability, but what they want to say is that it is only AKIN; it is not itself an ability. Because there are various uses of the concept of understanding that are not squareable with concepts of 'capacity' and 'ability', for certain predicates. for example, 'understand a word' and 'understand a woman' are quite different uses of 'understand'.

Isamu Kamada: I (don't) want to go back to the previous argument, but, if to show that somebody understands something is to perform

something clearing the proper criteria, then he cannot say that "I understand women", because he cannot perform anything. ().

Jeff Coulter: But we wouldn't say that understanding music or understanding women is a particular kind of ability - I think - We wouldn't be as happy saying that, anyway, as we might 'understanding mathematics', or 'understanding language' is having certain abilities.

Isamu Kamada: Well, understanding is not belonging to the performance or achievement - So, where does it belong?

Jeff Coulter: Well, what would be the criteria for saying of someone that they understand Beethoven, or they understand women? What are the criteria? I mean, Wittgenstein is not stipulating what the criteria are except to say that whatever they are, they are going to have to be publicly available. And one of the main reasons why he keeps on insisting about their public availability is because the acquisition of these concepts and expressions depends upon there being public "teaching-links" between the concepts and the way the world is, so that a child can acquire expressions like 'understanding music', 'understanding women', and all the rest of it.

Isamu Kamada: But to understand music is just a private personal experience.

Jeff Coulter: No, no. But all he's saying is that it is a bit strained to say that understanding women is an ability. ... Perhaps for some of us it's not strained ...

Isamu Kamada: But he does not say that understanding can be seen in his performance or achievement.

Jeff Coulter: Oh yes, of course. Understanding consists in the sorts of things that people can do and say, and the sorts of dispositions they publicly can be seen to have. There is the generic point - which is to get 'understanding' out of the head, and then you have got, of course, to get into the business of detailed analysis: for what kinds of predicates of understanding do we require what kinds of analysis? In other words, the depth grammar of 'understanding' now needs to be extended to the depth grammar of different composite expressions like: 'understanding a word', 'understanding a

woman'. They are going to be different sorts of things. And it's in that sense that Wittgenstein permits that the concept of 'understanding' also has family resemblances. It ranges over a family of cases. There is nothing exactly in common between 'understanding a word' and 'understanding a woman'. But there may be some things in common, there may be some over-lapping similarities in certain respects. They might be very, very minimal in that case.

[Tr: omits]

'Performance', 'achievement', 'ability' are inter-related concepts. They are not identical; they are subtly different, but they also overlap. To be able to do something IS to be able to perform in certain ways, and to be able to do something for certain kinds of things is to be able to achieve.

[Tr: omits]

The understanding consists in the exercise of the ability for a whole class of cases of understanding 'X's'.

[Tr: omits]

Isamu Kamada: Ok, if I can write something. [omits] I write with my hands, and I achieve this with my hands. But my ability is not belonging to my hands. My ability is belonging to ME. And where? In my mind.

Jeff Coulter: There is no place where we store abilities. An ability is not like an object or an element that is stored somewhere. It's like saying when you are not smiling at me where do you put your smile. There is no PLACE that we store abilities.

Isamu Kamada: Well, mind is not a spatial thing. It does not exist in space or time. But still, there is the mind. And if this "is" does not mean 'exists in space'...?

Jeff Coulter: Well, of course, part of this really is begging the thing that Wittgenstein is trying to tackle. For Wittgenstein, the Cartesian concept of "mind", as distinct from "body" - the idea of dividing the person between mind and body - is in part motivated by the necessity to find some PLACE for all of these activities and processes that are apparently not physical. But if Wittgenstein can show you -- that's only one part

of the problem, there are other parts which we'll get onto when we get on to the 'private language' argument next week -- But if he can show that a whole vast collection of the so-called 'mental-predicates', the predicates of the "mind", are, in fact, NOT predicates descriptive of activities, processes, states, and so forth, that are somehow unobservable, or are somehow independent from public circumstances, conduct, and the rest of it, then he's depriving the *raison d'être* for the postulation of an entity called the 'mind', or of a 'space', or a 'thing' - in the Cartesian sense of 'mind' now. You may have some other theory of mind that is not exactly (pertinent) - we're talking about the Cartesian mind. It turns out that most of the successor theories of mind in Psychology have definite links to the Cartesian concept, but that is a separable matter. What Wittgenstein has got to do is first of all - and indeed if he succeeds in destroying the Cartesian concept of 'mind', then the other kinds of psychological constructions get deprived of their *raison d'être* also. But that again is a check that has to be cashed.

What we need to do next time is to get down into some details of the 'private language' argument - which ranges in the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS through the following paragraphs: 244 through 308. [Tr: This is reading for next time]. It starts off "How do words REFER to sensation?", and that's the problem, and that is what he is trying to solve in the subsequent paragraphs. So, next time we'll work our way through the 'private language' argument, and that will give you a different angle of attack, and will inform and nourish some of the other techniques of analysis that Wittgenstein uses.

Isamu Kamada: Do you believe that our ordinary understanding, commonsense understanding of the mind and body is dualistic?

Jeff Coulter: Whose ordinary understanding?

Isamu Kamada: Our everyday understanding.

Jeff Coulter: To say that we have a commonsense understanding presupposes that we have something correct, when we say our everyday understanding of mind. You said "our everyday understanding of mind". {I: yeah} Do you mean our everyday ways of using the word 'mind'? Our practical uses of the mind in talk? Or our theorizing about mind in ordinary discourse? Different things.

Isamu Kamada: Actually I cannot see the difference.

Jeff Coulter: Well, I can go around saying "Geez, I've got a lot on my mind" without being committed to a Cartesian conception of mind in virtue of the way in which THAT might come-off to somebody as if I were so committed - if they thought that where I use an expression like that I am speaking about the location of something. [E.g.:] "I've got a lot on my mind." So, there's a mind, on which I have a lot. So, "He has a lot of food on his plate", "I have a lot of things on my mind". Now, the very fact that we use locutions like that may encourage or nourish Cartesianism, but doesn't by the very fact that we use expressions like that commit us to Cartesianism. Ordinary language-use does not embody a theory of anything. Ordinary language-use is a set of tools and instruments for playing language-games, for engaging in practices, for pursuing practical purposes.

Isamu Kamada: But Wittgenstein is trying to derive his theories from people's ordinary ways of using their terms.

Jeff Coulter: Not at all. He's trying to destroy what he construes to be a theory that consists in logical grammatical violations.

Isamu Kamada: But against the idea that theories are universal, pure, against this idea, he just insists to go back to our ordinary ways of using the terms.

Jeff Coulter: He never abandoned the idea of logic.

Isamu Kamada: The logic is the way of using the terms.

Jeff Coulter: Right, more or less.

Isamu Kamada: Now how can Wittgenstein criticize people for their way of using the terms?

Jeff Coulter: He's not. He's not criticizing the way people use their terms in practical discourse. What he is doing is criticizing THEORY construction that is INSENSITIVE to the ways in which people use their terms in practical discourse - to the way in which we might get beguiled by grammatical disanalogies, where IN practical discourse, we use the expressions, and make perfect sense. So, if somebody were to hear someone say he has a lot on his mind, and use that as evidence to support a theory of mind as an entity that you can have things on, or in,: "I had you in my mind when I made that point". That's where you can go wrong.

Isamu Kamada: Sometimes we say: "I'm caused to do something".

Jeff Coulter: Wittgenstein doesn't deny that you can say things like "I was caused to do something". What he does deny is that when you say "I was caused to do something" that you are invoking natural, causal laws. The concept of 'cause' is used in various DIFFERENT language-games.

Isamu Kamada: ...

[Tr: tape change]

Jeff Coulter: ...of the logical grammar of use. Ok, and what he argues - rightly or wrongly, and we'll see how it works out - what he argues is the Cartesian theory of mind, and the Tractarian theory of meaning, and various other - not idiosyncratic, but - widely accepted and widely assumed theories about human conduct are based upon subtle, but pernicious, logical grammatical mistakes, some of which are the result of misassimilating similar surface grammars - among other things.

[Tr: omits]

Isamu Kamada: Our theories are derived from people's everyday understanding. And the theory is not totally different from people's ordinary language. There must be some relation. {JC: yes} So it's something very basic derived from the ordinary language. {JC: what is?} Cartesian understanding, of mind and body.

Jeff Coulter: Ok, where ever it comes from- Let's suppose that Wittgenstein is wrong in the idea that it was nourished in Descartes by the necessity of finding a space, or a location, [JC: i.e. a place] for things that appear to need them, but in fact they are not those kinds of things. Let's suppose that's wrong. It still doesn't undermine the idea - though it may turn out again to be incorrect - it doesn't undermine the idea that Cartesian thought, theorizing about mind is logically invalid. What Wittgenstein has to do is to set about showing that. And the way in which he does it - he does it in different ways. So far we've been looking really at one very, very thin way - I think. I think there are much richer things that Wittgenstein ends up doing. But one way - and it's powerful, though limited - is by the notion of the "Übersicht" on depth grammar - is by showing that some of the mistakes that we make are due to taking our cue with respect to what concepts might mean from too few examples, and generalizing too quickly to an entire logical category. And the therapy that stops us doing that is to ramify the examples of combinatorial possibilities for these concepts. In other words, ramifying the instances of surface grammar. So that we don't think that because you can have a lot of food on the table, and a lot of things on your mind, that the mind is something like a table, only mental. And what it might have in common with a table is not, of course, that it has four legs and a top, or anything as crass as that, but that it MIGHT be a kind of mental place, or object, entity. That's just one thing. Now, nobody is going to build a theory of mind on such slender grounds. But if our language is full of ways of beguiling us, if we when we reflect on our language are easily beguiled, are easily misled, by, for example, the pseudo-present-continuous tense form, as just one instance. There are many other instances that he gives. Another one would be the pseudo-substantive, where a word looks like a noun that has an object as its proper point of reference, like 'table', 'pain', where it might appear as if there are substantives at work here, and lots of other devices of logical grammatical demystification that he employs. If all of these things are there in the language to mislead us, so to speak, then we've just got to be alerted to them. And when we're alerted to them, we don't so much solve the problems as dissolve them. It's therapy; it's not replacing one theory with another. It's dissolving the problems as artifacts. Cartesianism is an artifact of a misconception of how language works, in this case

how the language of mind works.

Isamu Kamada: These are just language-games, and we are not concerned with whether it is right or not, true or not in fact. That is just a matter of rules. And just a language-game. But sometimes you say that there is truth, and we can see it through language and action.

Jeff Coulter: There are certain conceptual truths, yeah - that we have to be interested in. At this stage of the game - we haven't yet got onto Ethnomethodology - at this stage of the game we are looking at conceptual analysis, and the generation of conceptual truths - or argumentation that leads to conceptual truths, and that requires, in the form of counter-argument, different powerful examples that undermine the claims already made.

Isamu Kamada: We, perhaps most of us, believe that the language has an impact on our thinking. But if the concept is true or not, we must refer to the object itself.

Jeff Coulter: Concepts are neither true nor false.

Isamu Kamada: Ok, you are right. But anyway we have certain objects of language. If I said "this table" [Tr: knocks on table] I have an object, this table itself. And "this table is blue", and you cannot ask if my statement is right or not just analyzing my words. You must compare the object and my statement.

Jeff Coulter: What object am I to compare to your statement? {IK: Different ones} Which one?

Isamu Kamada: This. [Tr: knocks on table]

Jeff Coulter: This. [Tr: knocks on table] What's this? {IK: ok, ok [Tr: laughing]} No, no, no. Play the game. {IK: ok} What's this? Why did Wittgenstein spend so long talking about ostensive definition?

Isamu Kamada: Ok. I agree with him. I agree that each word does not have 1:1 corresponding object, BUT the combination-

Jeff Coulter: That's not the point. It's that the object does not give the word its sense, even when it's a word for an object. {IK: Yeah, I agree with that} See, this is the thing that you've got to bear in mind. The object doesn't give the

word its sense EVEN when it's a word for an object. {IK: right} It's the rules for practical use that give the word its sense.

Isamu Kamada: But the combination of words have certain objects. So, if I said "this table" [Tr: knocks on table], "this" does not have any particular object. 'Table' does not have any particular object, but "this table" [Tr: knocks on table] has only one object. [omits] I am saying that language has a function of referring to something, and if we just cut off those objects and their referents, we cannot talk about truth, and it will lead scientists to lose interest in our discussion.

Jeff Coulter: Well, one of the things that, of course, one must deny is that language has as its ESSENTIAL function referring to things. That's just one among many, many, many functions. But in those areas where you can use language to refer to things, it's absolutely crucial to bear in mind that it is not the referents that give the words their meaning; it's the rules of use that give the word their meaning.

Isamu Kamada: If I ask "what is the meaning of this table?" [Tr: knocks on table], and you'll assert "look at the table, you can understand it".

Jeff Coulter: I'm sorry, I don't understand that at all. There is no such construction as 'understanding a table', except a table in mathematics, like a 2 x 2 table. We don't go around understanding tables.

Isamu Kamada: Ok, if I ask you "what is the meaning of THIS table?", -

Jeff Coulter: It makes no sense. That construction has no sense, Isamu.

Isamu Kamada: I think perhaps if we said "what is the meaning of this flower", or, I don't know.

Jeff Coulter: Maybe in some areas of phenomenology we might say that. It's never been clear to me. "What is the meaning of this flower." Maybe you could! I could imagine a context. You're in a hotel in Spain; you've been out; you come back to your hotel room, and you see that someone has neatly laid a flower across your pillow. "What is the meaning of this flower?" I could see that. You'd need a very special context

for that to have any sense. By which you mean, of course: what is the significance of someone's having put it there?

Edith Rosenthal: Maybe in some sort of introspective, philosophical, Hamlet-like mode - "what's the meaning of life?", or "what's the meaning of this flower?". It's 3am....

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

These transcriptions were prepared from an audio recording, the auditory quality of which was not always optimal. Participating members, especially Jeff Coulter, have reviewed initial drafts of the transcripts and have attempted to clarify portions that were particularly difficult to hear, and also provided assistance in correcting errors in transcription that were made during the production of the first draft of each session. The generous assistance of all those involved is gratefully acknowledged. Particular appreciation goes out to Jeff Stetson who took on the laborious task of copy-editing. Unfortunately, not all errors in transcription, and not all inaudible portions could be corrected given the time lag in producing the transcriptions. The transcriber apologizes for any remaining typographical errors.

The following are conventions employed in producing the transcriptions of these meetings:

- [x] square brackets: Text in square brackets is for the most part that of the transcriber. Such text is indicated by "Tr:" at the beginning of the brackets. It includes: 1. paraphrases of talk, 2. clarification of indefinite references, for example pointing, drawing or writing on the chalk-board, producing a behavioral display etc., 3. information about references to texts referred to in the talk, 4. other general remarks and clarifications and 5. indications of omissions and tape changes. PLEASE NOTE that there is almost always some bit of talk missing at the points of tape change. On occasion, comments in square brackets are insertions offered by those who have edited the text and are indicated as such by the initials of the person in question, e.g.,

[JC: xxxxxxxxx].

Also, if additions or deletions are made in text quoted during the class, then these changes are noted in square brackets, with the speakers initials included within the brackets.

{ x } braces: Text in braces is the talk of persons who are commenting on or responding to the talk of another person who currently has the floor. This talk is introduced by the initials of the person making the remark and/or comment, e.g., {JC: xxxx}.

(x) parentheses surrounding text: Text in parentheses is the transcriber's best guess as to what was being said when there is some doubt about exactly what was said due to the poor auditory quality of the tape.

() empty parentheses: Parentheses containing no text indicate a portion of the talk which is not transcribable due to the poor auditory quality of the tape, although it is possible to tell that something was being said.

CAPITALIZATION: Capitalization is used to indicate titles (or partial titles, e.g.: INVESTIGATIONS for the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS) for books. It is also used to indicate vocal emphasis by the speaker in question, i.e., something which is spoken noticeably louder, or with more emphasis than the surrounding talk. It was not possible to underline text in the editing/text-formating system employed, which is why capitalization rather than underlining was used in the above cases. This also influenced the formating of terms in languages other than English, e.g.: Ubersicht, vis-a vis, etc, which are neither capitalized, nor underlined, although occasionally are explicated in square brackets following the text in question.