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WITTGENSTEIN AND ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Meeting 5: Thursday 12 February 87

TOPICS: THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT.

Also: Conceptual innovation;
Theory-laden and concept-laden observation;
Kuhn and Hanson on paradigms;
Operationalization of concepts; and others.

READING: PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS:
paragraphs 244-308.

Jeff Coulter: Paragraph 244 of the
PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS [Tr: abbreviated PI]
is characteristically where the exposition of the
private language argument begins. Or you could
take the last bit of 243.:

243. ... But could we also
imagine a 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 be known to the person
speaking; to his immediate private

sensations. So another person cannot understand the language. [Tr: PI, paragraph 243.]

One could carry on here with: "one could only guess at what he means." Of course, what he's got in mind here is the Cartesian conception of inner experience as essentially inscrutable to any other than the experiencer. So, I know what I mean by the word 'pain', you know what you may mean by the word 'pain', and they might be completely different things. It's that sort of quasi-solipsistic, certainly mentalistic, conception of the relationship between experience and language that he's now going to try to attack. And it's the first time that it was really systematically taken on in this sort of way. There had been attacks on Cartesian conceptions, of course, prior to Wittgenstein, and after Wittgenstein, but there were no systematic 'conceptual' attacks. There were phenomenological attacks. There have been attempts to criticize the "cogito" of Descartes, but no systematic conceptual onslaught of the sort that Wittgenstein wages. And he finds himself waging this war for a number of reasons, but they all cluster around and grow out of his reconstruction of the logic of language as an enterprise. It grows out in part from his attack on the conception of 'meaning something by what one is saying' as a mental process, or mental act. It grows out of his attack on the misconception of 'understanding' as a process that accompanies listening to somebody speak. And it also connects with his attack on the Augustinian picture of language acquisition in which ostensive definition plays a central role, and the mechanism of learning is construed as one of association, particularly associating names for objects, or labels for objects - which is, of course, a good part of the pre-conception about language that animates the TRACTATUS, and animated as well, of course, Russell, and Frege, and a whole bunch of other people before them. But once having bitten this particular apple, he wants to chew it right down to the core, and ends up preoccupied for the rest of his life with the attack on Cartesian and mentalistic conceptions of language and mind, language and experience, language and conduct, and a cluster of issues that revolve around those matters. And he also, since he's interested in excavating Descartes root and branch, tackles Cartesian skepticism as well in a generic way in his final book ON CERTAINTY.

Ok, what I'll do is just sketch out what I think are the major arguments in regard to the private language argument, and although I've asked you to read from 244. onwards into the 300's, I'd just like to refer you back to a critical anticipation of this section of the PI, which occurs in paragraph 202. - Expositing Wittgenstein is a bit theological in some ways because it's sort of laid out in verses... - Sometimes to understand a paragraph you need to look at just a bit of the one before, so we'll just look at 201.:

201. ... It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another, as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shews is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is NOT an INTERPRETATION, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases.

Hence there is an inclination to say: every action according to the rule is an interpretation. But we ought to restrict the term "interpretation" to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another. [Tr: PI, paragraph 201.]

In that paragraph what he's attacking is the idea that since you could always invent or conjure-up alternative interpretations for any rule of conduct, that therefore whatever we may call 'obeying the rule' is to be thought of as simply an interpretation of the rule. And what Wittgenstein is really saying here is that interpretations run out, and action comes into play. As he puts it elsewhere, we don't have to have rules for interpreting rules, for interpreting rules, etc., we follow the rule "blindly", meaning ultimately without benefit of some ultimate interpretation - as if there was something like an ULTIMATE interpretation of a rule you'd have to have that fixed its meaning determinately for any context, for any user, before you could be said to be following it. In other words, just because you can conjure-up possible alternative interpretations doesn't mean that in order to be said to be following a rule, you have to be thought of as having arrived at the ultimate, self-evident

interpretation. As he says: interpretations run out and you act. I don't want to get into the argument around that right now because we'll come back and talk about rules a bit later, specially.

But then 202. [Tr: PI] - 202 is critical for the private language argument, and it comes up in various ways in the private language argument. As he says:

202. And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to THINK one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it. [Tr: PI, paragraph 202.]

Now, if the concepts in a language are grammatically or rule-governed, if there is a distinction between something having a meaning and not meaning anything, then any use of something that deserves the term 'language' is going to be a rule-governed matter. So, what he's doing here is anticipating the Cartesian conception of the 'private' language by raising this distinction - the distinction between thinking that one is following a rule and actually following a rule - anticipating the Cartesian conception of a language the meanings of whose words only the individual really knows, because only the individual has the experiences and the sensations that the words can be used to refer to. But, says Wittgenstein, if the individual is the one who is the sole sovereign arbiter with respect to the distinction between correct and incorrect use, or following the rule properly and merely thinking that one is following the rule, then he says effectively the thing collapses. Because if you can't make a distinction between 'thinking that one is following the rule' and 'actually following it', in principle, then the whole idea of 'following a rule' falls away, is inapplicable, because what seems right, is right, therefore you can't talk about something being right. It's a distinction between something seeming to be right and something actually being right. So one cannot obey a rule privately. So there cannot be something called 'private rule-following'. --- All right, so that's an anticipation, but it's not yet fully fleshed out and articulated with the other points that he wants to make about this question.

Let's just pick-up on a few of these things.
Let's pick-up on 256.:

256. Now, what about the language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand? HOW do I use words to stand for my sensations? - As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? In that case my language is not a 'private' one. [Tr: PI, paragraph 256.]

In other words, if my language for sensations is tied up with my reactions to sensations, then my language is not a private one. That refers back to the point made in 244.:

244. How do words REFER to sensations? - There doesn't seem to be any problem here; don't we talk about sensations every day, and give them names? But how is the connexion between the name and the thing named set up? This question is the same as: how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations? - of the word "pain" for example. Here is one possibility: words [such as "I have a pain", "I am in pain" - JC] are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behavior.

"So are you [text reads: "you are"] saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?" [Wittgenstein? - JC] - On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces [the - JC] crying [and the moaning - JC] and does not describe it. [Tr: PI, paragraph 244.]

So "I have a pain" seems to be something like, seems to have the same surface grammar as "I have an arm", "I have a leg", "I have an eye", "I have an ear". It seems to be a possessive and a material or mental object, or experiential object. So that the whole thing is easily misconstruable as

a description of an introspected observation. So, there's a pain, one looks to see it, one sees that one's got it, and one comes out with the description "I have a pain", just as somebody may say: "Tell me, do you have a cavity in your back molar?" And you may have to put your tongue in it, you find that indeed you do, come out having discovered the thing, you say "I have a cavity". So, that's the source of the possible misassimilation. But what Wittgenstein here is saying is that expressions like "I have a pain", though they seem to denote some sort of object possession, only here an experiential object, or phenomenon - an inner phenomenon that you have - along with other expressions like "I am in pain" - are to be construed, in their deep grammar, as verbal reactions to pain. So that these expressions are not descriptions, they are PART OF BEING in pain. They are on the same logical level as 'ouches', and 'wincing', and 'moans', and 'screams' and so forth, though they have a syntactic articulation that misleadingly can lead us to believe that they belong to some other domain of grammar. Just as if I say: "I promise you next week we'll start on time in this seminar" - I'm not describing a promise, I'm actually making a promise - so, here, people who say "I have a pain", "I am in pain" are NOT describing something, they are expressing, in the same sort of way as their facial contortions, their wincing, and so forth - their pain. So, this is a form of linguistic pain behavior. This is part of the pain reaction, and is NOT a cognitive overlay upon it. And that is how, according to Wittgenstein, we more or less go about acquiring first-person uses of the concepts of experience, by having them replace the natural, pre-linguistic behavior with linguistic forms.

But, of course, this is in contrast to the other conception that really does hold the day - or has held the day for many, many years - which is the 'Associationist' conception, which says the way it goes is like this, as in the bottom of paragraph 256.: "I simply ASSOCIATE names with sensations and use these names in descriptions." So, the idea is I have this thing called 'pain', that I don't know it's a pain - I can have a pain without knowing that it's a pain - Now, how do I get from a position of 'having a pain' to knowing that that is what I have? - Well, I have to acquire the concept of 'pain'. How do I do that? Well, my parents, or my guardians, or whoever it is who has given me my training in how to speak, provide me with the WORD, in the circumstances in which I am exhibiting pain, but then for me to be able to pick-up the MEANING

of that word, I have to associate the word with the INNER thing that I am experiencing, and by making that connection, by making that association, I acquire the meaning of the word 'pain'. And since the thing that I'm experiencing might be somewhat different from what you experience when you have a pain, then the meaning of the word 'pain' may be very different in my case from what it is in your case. So, from that point, one then gets the skeptical position about 'other minds'. Since if that's how the language of pain, for example, is acquired then one can say: "Well, of course, I know for certain only in my own case. But when you say you're in pain, I can only ever INFER that you may be in pain, because I can never have your pain, so I can't ever really know that you're in pain". And so, first-person certainty, via the associationist doctrine, leads to third-person and second-person skepticism. And it's this whole cluster of conceptual confusion that is generated by the Cartesian myth that Wittgenstein is trying to destroy. So, let's work through his way of doing this.

The first point to note, of course, is here again we have associationism rearing its head. Where did associationism first rear its head in Wittgenstein's discussion? - with respect to the meaning of concepts or the acquisition of the meaning of concepts?

Edith Rosenthal: With the "slabs"?

Jeff Coulter: Yes, Ok, that's the particular example given, but in the context of what issue?

Ed Parsons: Acquisition.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah. By?

Ed Parsons: The Augustinians.

Jeff Coulter: Right, which is?

Ed Parsons: Ostensive definition.

Jeff Coulter: Ostensive definition. Right. So, the first thing he did, if you remember, is to DENY that we acquire language by a process of ostensive definition - which is not to deny that ostensive definition enters in at some point - but it can't be the foundation. You cannot learn the meaning of a word by simply having the thing that it might occasionally be used to refer to pointed to you in connection with the use of the word. So

it doesn't teach anybody the use of the word 'cup' if I were to say "cup", and get the kid to repeat the word 'cup'. You remember the way the argument went, and it's articulated at length in the PI. That's the external ostensive definitional process. Now here we have its internal exact equivalent. Here the objects of ostensive training are INTERNAL, not external. So the same argument that Wittgenstein uses against the Augustinian picture of language acquisition via ostensive definition in the external world - the critique of all that is now brought to bear on the matter of the acquisition of concepts for inner sensations and experiences. The argument he attacks is this: Because the PAIN is the thing for which the word 'pain' stands, then how do we learn the meaning of the word 'pain'. By associating the word with the thing. It's the same argument, only this time it's inside rather than outside. So, the idea is here's the word [Tr: JC writes on board], which expresses the concept, and here's the thing [Tr: JC writes on the board]. And the way in which we're supposed to learn the meaning of this word is by attaching this word, associating it, with the occurrence of the thing it stands for.

Well, Wittgenstein attacks this conception now from all sorts of different directions using all sorts of different arguments, but I think it would be reasonable to conclude that any ONE of these arguments is pretty devastating in its own right, but when you put the collection together, there really, I don't think, is very much left of the Cartesian conception of language and experience.

Let's see where the problems might arise. And it seems to me that what he does in these paragraphs is essentially to roll around with this fictional interlocutor -- anything in inverted commas in Wittgenstein, that's like in a question form, is usually his interlocutor, his foil, and here it's the Cartesian, for the most part.

The Cartesian might say something like: "But look, the sensation recurs, and I can remember the association I made, in the first instance, when it comes up again". So, the association made the day - don't forget we're still without a clear conception of what is meant by association - you remember Wittgenstein renounces the whole notion of association as sterile ritual and simply repeating the sound of the word in the presence of the thing to which it can be used to refer. But let's say there is something mysterious, there's a sort of association - so, whenever THAT occurs, i.e., the

pain, there's something going to go on, i.e., the use of this [Tr: points to board where "PAIN" is written]. But, don't forget we're dealing with the individual here, the one sovereign subject. I will now treat the one sovereign subject as me, for purposes of exposition. Here's the way it goes: I would say: "Well, I'm keeping a diary of the occurrences of this particular weird thing, this sensation I'm having. And everytime it crops up I'm going to note the word that stands for it. But I don't have to keep an external diary; I can keep a mental diary. I know when I'm having the same sensation again and again and again." "How do you know Coulter?" "Well, because my memory is very good." "How do you know your memory is good enough? How do you know that the next occurrence of what you're calling 'S' is, in fact, the same 'S' as it was on the previous occurrence - occasion of its occurrence?" "Well, because I have a particularly vivid memory image of it, or I have a particularly vivid recollection of it." "How do you know that you are properly distinguishing between 'seeming to remember' and 'actually remembering'?" Problem: how do you know that the memory image you are having is of the same sensation as the one you had earlier? Problem: don't forget it's MINE, I can't check it out with you, it's purely mine. The occurrence of the sensation is purely mine. Ok, well, I can check one recollection with another. Well, Wittgenstein rebuts that quite quickly by saying it's rather like checking the truth of a story in the newspaper by buying multiple copies of the same newspaper. You get no further to a check on the correctness claim that's embodied in the notion of remembering as distinct from thinking that you remember, you get no further purchase on the idea of correcting memory by ramifying the images that you alone have access to.

Ok, the matter of the fallibility or infallibility of memory is easily disposed of in this regard. But even suppose we were to postulate an INFALLIBLE memory, it might not be that we could TELL that somebody's memory was infallible, but let's suppose it just happens to be infallible, and there's a difference between somebody being infallible and somebody being known to be infallible. Let's just suppose it happens that my memory is perfect about the occurrence and recurrence of 'S'. 261.:

261. What reason have we for calling "S" the sign for a SENSATION?

The problem now deepens.

For "sensation" is a word of our common language, not of one intelligible to me alone. So the use of this word stands in need of a justification which everybody understands. - And it would not help either to say that it need not be a SENSATION; that when he writes "S", he has SOMETHING - and that is all that can be said. "Has" and "something" also belong to our common language. - So in the end when one is doing philosophy...

Of THIS kind, of the Cartesian kind.

..one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound. - But such a sound is an expression only as it occurs in a particular language-game, which should now be described.

262. It might be said: if you have given yourself a private definition of a word, then you must inwardly UNDERTAKE to use the word in such-and-such a way. And how do you undertake that? Is it to be assumed that you invent the technique of using the word; or that you found it ready-made?

263. "But I can (inwardly) undertake to call THIS [all caps. in original] 'pain' in the future." - "But is it certain that you have undertaken it? Are you sure that it was enough for this purpose to concentrate your attention on your feeling?" [Tr: PI, paragraphs 261 - 263; parentheses in the original]

"What is the difference between concentrating your attention on the occurrence of the thing and undertaking to use the term according to a rule of use?" "Ok, well I stipulate that I'm using it according to a rule of use. I know my own bloody rule and I'm going to follow it, and you don't have to have anything to do with it." But now we go back to paragraph 202., thinking that one is following a rule and actually following a rule are distinguishable things.

In the attack on ostensive definition, generally, as the foundations of language acquisition, what Wittgenstein wants to impress upon us is that the objects, the phenomena, that words can be used to refer to are not themselves the meanings of those words that can be used to refer to those things. So I can use the word 'table' to refer to this table [Tr: JC knocks on table], and you can ask me "What do you mean by the word 'table'?" "This!" [Tr: JC knocks on the table again] Ok, you set fire to it; have you destroyed the meaning of the word 'table'? No. The object is not the meaning of the word that can be used to refer to it. Similarly, the 'sensation', the 'pain' - remember we're now using public language concepts here - the 'sensation', the 'pain', if they are to be thought of as the interior equivalents to externally available phenomena - flashes, events in the world, objects, whatever they may be - the same argument holds for them. And this is what Wittgenstein means in that very difficult paragraph where he seems to be saying that the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. It's paragraph 293., one of the most widely misunderstood paragraphs in the whole of the private language argument debate. Let me read through it:

293. 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 now, beautiful little point:

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. [Tr: PI, paragraph 293]

On that model, "the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant." It's not the most perspicuous way to put it, but what he seems to mean, in connection with all of the rest of his case, is something like this: He's NOT saying that we might be skeptical about someone's actually having a pain; he's not saying that THE PAIN drops out as irrelevant, because, of course, that would be absurd. That would be denying common language use, that, of course, people have pains. He's not denying that people have pains. But what he's saying is that the object - let's say now the 'pain', the 'sensation' - for which indeed the words 'pain' and 'sensation' can function as names, don't have their meaning assured by, or given by, the object. That's all he means. So it's not that he's saying the word 'pain' means something like 'whatever you have when you grimace or cry'. No, the word 'pain' means indeed 'pain'. But when he says the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant, what he's saying is that it's not the object that is the MEANING of the word. Just in the same way that this table [Tr: JC knocks on table] is not the meaning of the word 'table', even though the words can be used to refer, to mean, can be used to refer to, can be used in relation to, these things. And you can say things like "I mean this table by my use of the word 'table'". One can say things like that. But the meaning of the word 'table' is not the THING that it stands for. That's what is meant here.

Now some people have said, what Wittgenstein is denying is the reality of sensation, because he says, doesn't he, that the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant? So he's just a behaviorist. He thinks pain simply consists in crying, saying "I have a pain", holding your side - all the external stuff - he's denying the inner. Well, of course, Wittgenstein never denies the inner. He's not denying that people have pains in their leg, in their stomach, in their head, and all the rest of it. What he's denying, though, is that

the concept of 'pain' functions on the model of object and designation, that he's been trying to attack. And it's in THAT sense that the object drops out of consideration as an irrelevance. It drops out of consideration as an irrelevance in respect of trying to understand how these words are acquired, and they are certainly not acquired by any process including 'associating a word with an object', 'putting a label onto an object' like plastering paint on a wall. But rather we acquire these expressions in first-person as expressions. They are part of what it is to be in pain. It's PART of pain to say "I have a pain". That's part of the pain. Just as when I'm promising to you I say "I promise"; that's what it is to make a promise. It is the propositional fetish, the descriptivist fetish, that might lead us to think otherwise. That might lead us to think that when people say things like "I have an 'x'" one is always describing someTHING.

Edith Rosenthal: If the table is burned, the word 'table' is then related to some idea of a table...

Jeff Coulter: It expresses the concept of 'table'.

Edith Rosenthal: It seems to be casting it back into some sort of Platonic thing almost of the idea of existing without the embodied.

Jeff Coulter: Only if you have notion of Idea with a capital "I". What's THE idea? That's a Platonic idea. But the idea of 'table' is a concept of 'table', and the concept of 'table' is that which you express when properly use the word 'table'.

Edith Rosenthal: So when the table burns, what's still remaining flowing around is the concept of a table?

Jeff Coulter: There's no flowing around at all. Your possession of the concept of 'table' consists in your use of the word 'table' in appropriate co-texts and in appropriate contexts. {ER: right} And that's it. It's not like there's something else. Remember that stuff about language acquisition not being a matter of pulling out an essence from a set of examples and trainings and practice and drill and fetching and carrying. {ER: Ok} It's not that you somehow induce an essence and store it. There's no need to think that way. Possessing a concept consists in the proper use of

its words in expressions.

As Wittgenstein says, if our concepts consisted in wordless thoughts, how would we know when we expressed them in words that we had the correct translation of wordless thoughts into words. [JC: see PI, paragraph 342] So there can't be a notion of non-linguistically mediated discursive thought. There can't be such a thing. But if you were to insist that a concept or an idea or a thought is something non-linguistic, independent of language, that language somehow clothes, like clothes on a naked body, {ER: yeah} the problem there would clearly be: what would be the translation rule? How would you be able to specify that you were indeed expressing THAT thought rather than some other thought? As he puts it elsewhere, in what does the thought consist independent of its expression? [JC: see PI, paragraph 335] The thought doesn't consist in the ways it's expressed, because you can express the same thought in different ways. But the thought consists in its ways of being expressed. {ER: yes}

But note the asymmetry that Wittgenstein's pointing to in the acquisition of language. The acquisition of the first-person present tense use of concepts like 'sensation', 'pain', 'itch', 'twitch', 'urge', 'want', 'wish', whatever they may be, are seen as, in a sense, linguistically articulated substitutions for pre-linguistic but natural expressions. If human beings never expressed their inner experiences, there could be no knowledge of them. There, therefore, could be no concepts for them. Which is what he means when he says inner experiences stand in need of outer criteria. [JC: see PI, paragraph 580] But the third- and second-person uses of these expressions depend indeed upon conduct in circumstances. But not in our own case. But this asymmetry - the difference in how we acquire the concepts of experience - the difference between the first-person case - the 'I' case - and the 'you', 'he', 'they', 'she', 'we' cases has been wrongly conceptualized in the history of thinking about these matters, according to Wittgenstein. He doesn't deny there's an asymmetry. We learn them in different ways. We learn how to say of someone else that he's in pain on the basis of criterial satisfaction in the public social world, by seeing their conduct and the circumstances in which it takes place. But in our own case we don't see our conduct in a mirror, and then conclude, or notice our reactions and then make a conclusion on that

basis that "Oh geez I'm twitching, I must be in pain". So it's this asymmetry that's led, that's impressed people toward the Cartesian misconception that somehow it's because we have access to this private phenomenon that we can be certain in our own cases, better than we can be in other cases, and that only ultimately we can know what we mean when we say of ourselves that we have a 'pain'.

[Tr: pause]

Eileen Crist: I was recently reading about an Indian tribe where it's part of a ritual that the men in this tribe will pierce their chests and they'll pass a rope through the holes in their chests and hoist themselves on the trees.

Jeff Coulter: "A Man Called Horse". What was the name of the tribe?

Eileen Crist: I don't remember. -- And the reason that they do this is in order to find their guardian spirits. Now, if I'm understanding Wittgenstein correctly, what Wittgenstein would say in this case is that WE could not say that that Indian hoisting himself into the tree was in pain, because that Indian would not describe his sensation in that way.

Jeff Coulter: There are certain paragraphs where Wittgenstein speaks about problems of attributions of stoicism, and he's not denying that there could be undecidable cases. The idea that there are different thresholds of pains is commonsense. Some people might be able to put up with such an amount of pain, and others not. But that something like THAT is painful is, of course, the whole point of the process. If it wasn't painful, there's no finding out about the mettle of the man whose having to stick stuff through his chest.

Eileen Crist: But we don't know what that really means, that it's painful there. And if I were to do the same thing, we would usually say that it's not the same sensation.

Jeff Coulter: Well, no, I mean, they're presumably treated as painful, otherwise there's no point to the ceremony. The idea is to grit your teeth and be stoic in its presence. Now, of course, there are problems where - but they are not conceptual problems, they are practical problems - where you might wonder whether somebody is experiencing pain in a situation that is conventionally construable as painful when they

exhibit none of the signs of pain, but we do have notions for that. We have notions like 'stoicism', 'withholding your expression', etc. So there are still criteria. It doesn't mean that if there is a disagreement - for example, I might say "Geez that's tremendously painful", and someone else says "Not at all. It's easy as pie. I do it every day." - that you might be able to arrive in some practical circumstances determinate resolution as to who is telling the truth, or who is right. One might, for some cases, say "Well, ok, that kind of thing is painful for him but not painful for me", or vice versa.

But, with respect to the facts, the forms of life on which these language-games operate, there isn't an indefinite latitude of variability permissible, because if there were there would be no anchor for the concept of pain, and the grammar of pain, ever to take hold. So, Wittgenstein is not saying that conventions and the criteria are absolutely fixed and rigid, but they can't be completely open-ended, there have to be latitudes. If there aren't any latitudes then we can't really say - about say this particular tribe's expressions - that they are talking about PAIN. Maybe they are talking about an itch. In other words, whilst there may be some variabilities in respect of thresholds - whether they be physical thresholds or just normative thresholds - I mean one of the things socializing kids involves is instilling in them normative thresholds. You say to your kid: "Shut up. It doesn't hurt that much. Knock it off. You're squawking the house down and you've only just pricked your finger. We don't do that. You can go "ouch", but you don't scream for half an hour if you've just pricked your finger." So, even with respect to actual physical thresholds, they are all tied up with normative ones anyway, until we have a kind of conventionality among us. Which is not to say there might not be some movements, some shiftings of those, but they can't be completely open-ended. If they were, there's no way of being sure that we're talking about the same thing at all. So this is actually a useful example for thinking of the difference between the calculus conception and the logical grammar conception. When Wittgenstein describes logical grammar, he's not trying to stipulate anything. When he talks about the 'criteria' for the attributability of a concept, he wants US to figure out what they might be by marshalling the evidence from the actual facts of life. So it's not that he's trying to theorize here about what...

[Tr: tape change]

Jeff Coulter(cont.): ..nonetheless that there must be socially transmitted and enforceable criteria and conventions, and it's up to us to figure out what they are. But we do figure out what they are. And by-and-large we do agree and understand each other. Just try doubting in a real case - that somebody's in pain. You see somebody fall off a window. They are clutching their foot and they are going white, and the ambulance is coming, and there's blood on the floor. And you say: "Now I wonder if he's feeling what I would feel", and "He might not be in pain" -- which is pursued further in ON CERTAINTY, on skepticism. Because one of the things that nurtures this whole Cartesian mythology about the inscrutability of inner experience, and the essentially mentalistic and individualistic character of our mental language, is the following sort of scenario: It's partly nourished on a one-sided diet of examples. [JC: see PI, paragraph 593] The scenario is this: I come into a room and I sit down, and I tell you "Gee, I have a real throbbing pain in my leg". Now that's partly a criterion. I'm satisfying a criterion of having a throbbing pain in my leg by avowing it. It's defeasible, of course, in respect of a whole bunch of matters. For example: I know that you know that I'm the sort of person who might joke like that; you've seen that before. I'm a liar, an inveterate liar. I'm a hypochondriac. You've just heard me say to someone else earlier "I'm going to come in and trick her". There are ways in which it's defeasible, but nonetheless I'm satisfying a criterion. The only thing to say there is that the array of circumstances includes a defeasibility condition. Now, suppose it were the case that in the present circumstances there's no defeasibility conditions satisfied; I'm satisfying a criterion for having a throbbing pain in my leg, like I'm grasping it, and I'm telling you, I'm expressing it to you, I'm saying "I have a throbbing pain in my leg". You haven't seen the cause of it. You are not going to do any sort of check on my biography. You're not going to go ask my doctor if I'm a psychosomatically ill person, or a hypochondriac. We just take it that way. And you might come away from some kinds of situations like that not being a hundred percent convinced, but you'll allow - as they say "We'll give you the benefit of the doubt". Natural epistemic justice. But, of course, that's only ONE very restricted case of the attributability of pain. But it's on THAT case, the 'private thing', the idea that it's

the individual who has the thing, and you don't have it. You only have this very thin connection between the pain and your being prepared to acknowledge it's presence, i.e., my saying "I have a pain", and it's rather thin. It's that sort of scenario that is now blown up out of all proportions by the Cartesians, because it's essentially taken out of its usual social contexts of actions and reactions, circumstances and so on.

So, my knowing that I have a pain, or my being able to pick out my pain, describe my pain, avow my pain, is only possible given that there is a socially organized conceptual apparatus, or grammar, of pain, and of other mental concepts, and in that sense, though I may have a pain, without knowing that I have a pain, if I have subjective knowledge of my pain, if I can be said to know that I have a pain, or if I am in pain, that is socially constituted. So, "the very coinage of your brain", [Tr: Pollner, M. (1975). 'The very coinage of your brain': The anatomy of reality disjunctures. *PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES*, 5, 411-430.; and William Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act III, Scene 4] so to speak, in that sense, is socially constituted, even when it comes to the inner, and the mental.

Now some folks say: "Look, when people have pains, they surely know they have pains; they don't have to have a concept of pain to know they have a pain." In fact, some people would be quite insistent about this. For example, a dog comes in yelping. It's just had its tail whipped by a cat. And you say: "Come on, it doesn't have any language, it doesn't have any concepts, but it knows it's in pain." But Wittgenstein says that is merely an emphatic way of saying "It's in pain" in the presence of somebody possibly doubting it. It's only when there is a situated occasion of DOUBT expressed that to assert the epistemic operator "I know...", or "he/it knows", or "he knows" in regard to these predicates that that really makes sense, otherwise it's idling. "I know I'm in pain" means no more or no less than "I'm in pain", but SAID usually in circumstances of being confronted with a doubt. So, the fact that we can sometimes say "I know I'm in pain" may seem like we have access to an object of possible knowledge, but it doesn't function like "I know it's a 'that'" because it has these properties, and I can now lay them out for you." It's simply, as Wittgenstein would put it, an emphasis operator, a stressor, that has its occasionality, that has its contextual specificity, ONLY in the presence of somebody doubting it. So, you are rubbing your sore patch,

and you say "Terrible pain here Doctor", and he starts to probe and says "I can't find anything wrong with you. You're a bit of a moaner aren't you?" You might say "I KNOW I'm in pain! Don't start doubting". But out of contexts like that it really is idle to start saying things like: "I know I'm in pain.", "I know I have a pain.", "I know what I think."

[Tr: pause]

Bernie Phillips: This is a general kind of question. In regard to private language, how from Wittgenstein's perspective, how uniform is the meaning of a statement within a context where a number of people are involved? One person, let's say "Doctor", staying with your example, when the patient says: "I have a pain here", what would Wittgenstein say in terms of this statement, how well it's understood by both the patient and the Doctor, or how much variation there is between their understandings?

Jeff Coulter: Well, we'd have to have a look at the circumstances and see how they work, see if they have satisfied the criteria for understanding that expression.

Bernie Phillips: But is it possible, does he open up a latitude where there can be considerable variation, depending on - pressing that point a little further - the Doctor has seen all kinds of pain situations different from what the patient has seen, and so the differences in meaning might be tied to the differences in experiences and maybe the memory images-

Jeff Coulter: Well, Tim Anderson has some data from Dentists, where one would be in a dentist office, and basically they do a secondary sort of socialization in respect of normatively acceptable thresholds of pain. So, they do things like - as they are probing around - and someone goes "OUCH!", and they can do things like say: "Na ,na ,na, that shouldn't have hurt so much, I'm only tapping. That's Ok. You're anxious, that's all. You're not really hurting. It's just you're anxious. Relax, relax." And they can say: "Ok maybe it doesn't hurt so much, maybe I'm just up-tight." You can get people to back off of avowals of pain, I've heard, but only to a certain limit.

[Tr: general laughter]

Bernie Phillips: There is variation that's allowed {JC: sure} by Wittgenstein?

Jeff Coulter: Well, Wittgenstein is not ALLOWING anything; he is trying to explicate. If there is anything in the PI that's stipulative, he would be the first to say "throw it away". He's trying to reveal the way things work, not have a theory that everything has to fit. Of course he would allow it if it goes on in the world. But what he wants to insist upon is that not any-ole-thing can happen and be claimed to be a case of any-ole-concept. There are LIMITS of sense; there are bounds of sense. They are not fixed and determinate, as he used to think, there are flexibilities, but there are still bounds.

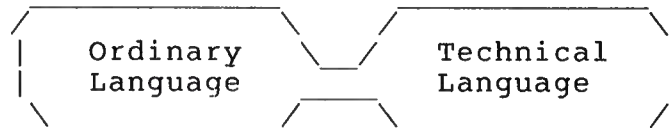
George Psathas: Would you say that what he's saying is that if the logical grammar of that concept, let's say "I am in pain", is indeterminate in the sense that you can't conceive of in advance all of the possible uses in which it could occur properly, but it's bounded in that it's not totally unlimited? It couldn't just be used arbitrarily. But, what I'm trying to get at is: are you saying that when he uses the notion of logical grammar then he's saying that it always carries with it the sort of unstated basis? Being unstated is something to the effect of "in the appropriate circumstances or occasions of use, which are to be"- it can't be stipulated - "but it remains to be discovered".

Jeff Coulter: I think that it's a bit more stringent than that, because what he argues is that an extension of a use is governed by an extension of a use where that is possible, because there are some concepts that cannot get any extension. There are no new empirical discoveries that could lead us to, say, revise the notion of a 'promise', or a 'stepmother'. But there are empirical discoveries that may lead us to extend the notion of 'light' or 'energy'. For those notions that are in principle extendable, he says that their extendability depends upon their connecting with previous uses via the picking up of one or other family resemblance. There has got to be a connection back to the grammar, the grammar now of these terms characteristically being an expression of their family resemblance nature. So, it's not that you can branch out in any old way. So, 'invisible light' clearly has a family resemblance to 'visible light', though it's radically different. In a sense you might say "Geez, it is the essence of light that you can see it." But that's prejudice.

In a sense, it turns out now to seem to be a family resemblance concept which Wittgenstein always claimed it was because, of course, there are other criteria for speaking about light other than it's visibility to the naked eye, namely that it is a form of electromagnetic radiation, namely that it involves spectra, etc.

George Psathas: Yeah, in that sense couldn't you be getting a different language-game? It's converted by virtue of the particular criteria coming from science, which are not, say, commonsense criteria. Commonsense criteria for light might exclude invisible light from the usage of light, but it's a different game that's to be applied to sciences which now have publicly available criteria for 'invisible light'. I guess the question is whether it's the same concept or whether it's now two different concepts?

Jeff Coulter: I think he has this sort of view of it. Here's, sort of, ordinary language [Tr: JC writes on board]



or commonsense, and here's technical language, but not the technical language of the philosopher, he's not going to accept the terms of: language-game, family resemblance. They are, he says, ladders we should throw away and not fetishize. By technical language he means the language of legitimate discovering sciences, and he sees them as having that sort of relationship. There has to be a connection, because we all start out as students, and there might be that sort of connection, and maybe other relations. But the other conception is that it's like this. Here's ordinary language [Tr: JC writes on board],



here's scientific and technical language, and they

are strict domains; they're just different, and that partly is a result of overplaying the notion of 'language' here. Because really the languages of science, chemistry, physics, they are English, and they're German, and they're French, and they involve some technical concepts, and those technical concepts must have their grounds.

But on the matter of whether or not you have a different concept, Malcolm wrote a notorious book on 'dreaming'. He was taking up the stuff that the psychobiologists were doing on REM's, or rapid eye movements. And a question was, is this simply a new criterion for attributing 'dreaming' to persons, or are the things that are being measured by REM's things other than dreams? Well, what he wanted to argue was that first of all he reminded himself of what Wittgenstein says about the acquisition of 'dream report language', which is NOT that, and this is quite instructive, we don't learn to report our dreams by being woken-up in the middle of the night by our parents, who then tell us "THAT which you just had, that's a dream, and now associate the word 'dream' with that that you just had." And now you know what 'dreaming' is. What happens is that kids wake up in the morning, and they start saying where they have been, and what they've been doing, and what they've been looking at, and they are taught, when it is perfectly obvious that they haven't been there, and they haven't been looking at those things, because they've been in bed asleep, and what happens is they are taught to use a 'prefatory' expression - again an epistemic operator - "I dreamt that". So, the "I dreamt that" is acquired as an epistemic operator on the 'x', which is a report on some experience, or undertaking, or whatever, whose criteria are NOT satisfied, whose publicly socially available criteria are not satisfied. Ok, now, this means that the criteria for the attributability of 'dream', of 'dreaming' are contingent upon waking reports. In fact, Wittgenstein really wants to deny that we do "report" things, he wants to say we "tell" dreams, we don't "report" them. The problem here is to say we "report" them presupposes there are criteria for "reporting" as distinct from "mis-reporting", and the problem around that is that there's no independent access that could anchor you in holding that distinction, so he says: it's the old argument, it's the difference between 'thinking that' and 'actually'. And if there is no difference then you can't say "report", because "report" is implicitly contrastable to "mis-report", therefore if there is no possible contrast, you are not 'reporting'. So, he wants to

talk about "TELLING" dreams, rather than "reporting" dreams. Now, what Malcolm argued with respect to the REM stuff was that here's people like Dement and the other experimenter saying "Look we can wake up patients in the morning, or they'd wake up in the morning, and they sometimes say they haven't dreamt. But we've got REM evidence that is highly correlated with previous occasions where [Tr: people say that they were just dreaming when awakened after the appearance of the EEG output of "hash", a low-amplitude, asynchronous wave form, and an indication of rapid-eye-movements from readings from electrodes attached to the muscles of the eye]. And we can say: whether you say so or not, we know you've been dreaming, and you may simply have forgotten that you dreamt." But the idea of a third party being able to base a charge "You forgot that you dreamt, but in fact you did" on something like that is a new language-game, is a brand new language-game.

Darleen Douglas-Steele: What about the circumstance where you can wake up in the morning, and somebody you were sleeping with can say "No, no you woke up in the middle of the night, you were screaming and yelling, you must have been dreaming". So, it's not entirely-

Jeff Coulter: You're right. There are other contexts in which you can say that. But the use of this [Tr: REM data] criterion is a new one. And, of course, it's also got to be distinguished between forgetting 'what you dreamt' and forgetting 'that you dreamt'. This is forgetting THAT you dreamt at all. Granted that would happen. But THERE the criterion is exhibiting the 'having dreamt' or the 'having had a nightmare' in some other way than having explicitly articulated that as a 'telling'. But you're right, it's a good correction.

Darleen Douglas-Steele: But there are other situations too that sort of are puzzling for me along those lines because Gestalt dream-workers will tell people to start trying to remember their dreams. And you will get increased reportings of dreams-

Jeff Coulter: tellings.

Darleen Douglas-Steele: Well but that's the difficulty-

Jeff Coulter: They call them reports?

Darleen Douglas-Steele: -They now refer to them as reports, and say things like: "I never knew I was dreaming this much before. So, I must have been dreaming all these other nights because look at all the dreams I can tell you about now, but I never realized before." And, in fact, you can train people to - if they keep a clip-board and a pen by the side of their bed - in a semi-dream or semi-wake state to write down the dreams and go back to sleep. You get many, many more reports or 'tellings'. It is sort of an ambiguous situation, and I am not sure what to make of it, but I offer it as one of those things that's-

Jeff Coulter: But I mean the fact is that we don't ordinarily go around playing the language-game of telling dreams in respect of assessing the truth-value of the telling. We say: "That's an interesting dream", not: "Are you absolutely sure that that is what you dreamt?", or: "Did you really dream this?". That only comes into play for very specific purposes. But the question that Malcolm raises in his book with respect to the REM's is: If you override - this is a slightly different case than the one you have been talking about - if you override somebody's explicit claim that they didn't dream, and there is no other evidence other than the REM's that they dreamt, are you either a) invoking a new criterion for the old concept, or b) invoking a criterion for a new concept that is disengaged from the old one? Well it's a little bit like the matter of discovering the 20 legged spider. Is it a 20 legged spider, or is it something that looks a lot like a spider but just happens to have 20 legs? And about these matters, if we have to make a decision - and it strikes me that there is no absolutely pressing reason that we should, except, say, pure theory here - but if we have to make a decision, then we do so on the basis of family resemblance considerations. Is there enough other stuff around? Are they sufficiently like the things we know about? Because that is all we've got to go on.

But if somebody were to say something like: Somebody is wide awake. And they say: "I'm getting readings off your brain that show me that you are dreaming. And I don't mean day-dreaming, I mean dreaming because they are exactly the same readings that I get at night. And you're dreaming, but you are dreaming unconsciously." Nobody is going to buy that. I don't think people are really

going to buy that unless they are simply already stuck into that whole stipulation.

George Psathas: Yeah, but that assumes 'dreaming', as used in that language-game, means that there are visible experiential matters which can be then told, versus dreaming which is simply in this different, technical sense. I think there is a distinction between those. The technical one which says "you're dreaming", it's using the same concept but it's not using it within the same language-game.

[Tr: brief interruption about the scheduling of the room the seminar is held in]

George Psathas (cont.): You see what I'm trying to get at? {JC: Yes I do} It could be that they are simply using the same term. But what the people using the technical language are saying is that "We have a technical way of specifying what it is that's going on, REM and alpha, and we therefore have grounds for 'believing' that you also are 'seeing things', but that is not confirmed.

Jeff Coulter: But then you see you really still have a choice. You have a choice to take the testimony, the negative testimony as refuting the claim, or you hold onto the claim, make that incorrigible, and refute the testimony. You still have a choice here, and- {GP: or it's undecidable} - It could be undecidable, except that there are certain circumstances where the assertion is so far removed from any family resemblances with the normal case, that- I mean, for example, that 500 legged thing looks a lot like a spider. You know, we're starting to stretch it; it's not available.

[Tr: seminar group moves to new room; break in recording]

Edith Rosenthal[recording begins mid-utterance]: ...merely change.

Jeff Coulter: No, it's an idiom, because you know what they mean as 'I think that', so it's idiomatic. It's not a new game, because it translates without residue in various uses to: 'I think that'.

Edith Rosenthal: I see, it just becomes a synonym.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah. I mean you can get sort of new synonyms like: 'hanging out' is an idiomatic way of saying: 'sitting around'. It's not like a new meaning given to the word 'hanging', which has a family resemblance to 'hanging'. There is an important distinction. Sometimes the import is a blur, granted, between a 'conceptual innovation' and a 'idiomatic transformation' of a common expression. And one way in which one can speak about a conceptual innovation is where there are - well the only way you can tell the thing really - is where there are different practices that sustain and inform the conceptual transformation, other than, or in addition to, the simple juxtaposition of two notions. For example, among Blacks in some parts of the States, to say "hey man, that's bad" is really to say "hey man, that's good". It doesn't have any conceptual significance; it's idiomatic. But if they went around- I don't like to pursue this one because it could come out in a racist sort of example. Let's suppose that for some reason all the people who happen to have black skin were bombarded by a ray, from outer space, that made them start doing a whole order of things that for the rest of us uncontaminated souls led them into unspeakable evils. And every time they did it they'd say "hey man, that's good". Then you'd be able to say there was a conceptual difference, as distinct from a mere idiomatic replacement. That people have 'facon de parole' is of no significance here. Because to understand the language is to understand the form of life.

Edith Rosenthal: Ok, so you are saying that actually what you are describing there is some sort of structural, major structural change. You're talking about 'rays'.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah, if 'good' is now going to mean 'bad', and 'bad' is going to mean 'good' as distinct from simply a transposition of surface grammar, that has no depth grammatical implications. But if 'good' is going to MEAN 'bad', and 'bad' is going to MEAN 'good', then the whole world is turned around. I mean we're getting a little bit there with 'war' and 'peace'. New weapons are called 'peace-makers', and 'peace-keepers'.

[Tr: omits because of overlaps]

Edith Rosenthal: Well suppose I were to push this a little further and say that this interchangability of thinking is based on some sort of structural shift, not as dramatic as what you have just posited, but as an outgrowth of the shift into a tremendous focus on subjectivity, and what I call 'the human potential movement', which focuses on one's feelings. And a lot of energy and social practice turned into the exploration of one's feelings, and getting in touch with one's feelings, etc. And then as an outgrowth of that structural shift, social structural shift, people begin to blur the two ideas.

Jeff Coulter: Outside of the context of their therapy sessions?

Edith Rosenthal: Oh yes. In ordinary conversation, constantly. 'A feel that you should take the late train and not the early morning train' - is actually a funny use, I mean it's really 'I think'. But it may be that that is not what you mean by it, that that's not a sufficient, firm structural change.

Jeff Coulter: Yeah, but wait a minute. No matter what you may say you mean by it, you can't mean by it 'I feel' as in another expression like 'I feel toothache', or 'I feel anxious'. 'I feel that you should take the train', no matter what you may say about the use of 'feel' there, it MEANS you 'think that', you are 'of the opinion that'. You are not sovereign with respect to what your words mean. [Tr: E.g.] Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say? The answer is, by-and-large "yes", whether you like it or not. And you can be held responsible, though you may protest "Well I really didn't mean that was my opinion. I meant I have this feeling that I was describing as a 'you should take the late train' type of feeling, that's rather like a feeling of 'heartburn'".

Edith Rosenthal: "I feel you should take the train rather than the plane because the plane may crash" - that's more like 'I feel'.

Jeff Coulter: But it's not a reform of the concept of 'feeling'. It's not a transformation of the concept of 'feeling'. It's a mere idiomatic juxtaposition that people- {ER: I see. Ok.}

What would be a 'you should take the train late' kind of feeling? IF it is supposed to be a 'feeling' in the family of feelings: of twitches, itches, aches, heartburn, pains, etc. I don't know. What criteria could that have? It's got nothing to do with that family of cases.

Ed Parsons: Is it a sort of anxiety, is it you are anxious about somebody taking a late train, or a plane, because you have a fear of somebody taking late trains, or planes?

Jeff Coulter: So what would be the expression?

Ed Parsons: And you say: "I feel you should take the train not the plane." And you actually have an anxiety about it.

Jeff Coulter: Still the use of 'I feel' there is not expressing the anxiety; it's giving you an opinion; it's an opinion prefatory device. The anxiety may ACCOMPANY the expression, but that is not what that expression could mean in that context. If you say "I feel anxious because I'm worried you are getting late, and I'm going to have to drive faster to get you there on time", that's different; that is expressing anxiety. But "I feel that" is, exactly as you were saying, is "I think that", though it may be accompanied with anxiety.

The thing that Wittgenstein talks about time and time again - and I'll run you off a paper by J.F.M. Hunter about this - is the matter of the accompaniments, the experiential and mental accompaniments to expressions are sometimes treated as infusing the expressions with a particular meaning. But that's a very dangerous misconception for certain purposes to think that way. [J.F.M. Hunter (1985). UNDERSTANDING WITTGENSTEIN. Edinburgh University Press; Chapter 3: "On the Question 'What Happens When...?'", pp. 27-42.] The idea that some particular experiential accompaniment to a locution may well be UTTERLY irrelevant to the locution, and in other circumstances the locution may EXPRESS the accompaniment, the accompanying feeling, and you have to get them clear. So, "I have a pain" is an expression of pain. But "I understand what you said", or "I certainly understand what you said", even if you had a sudden 'click' or 'flash', that's not the understanding of what you said. The understanding of what you said is given in now being able to do things with it, though it was accompanied by a 'flash' or a 'click'. But the

mistake is to think that when you say "I understood suddenly" that you are now using the expression 'understood suddenly' as descriptive of the 'click' or 'flash' that accompanied the sudden acquisition of the capacity now to paraphrase what you said, or to go and do the right thing accordingly, or to apply the words in new contexts, and so on. So, this is a very useful chapter to look at. [Tr: Hunter chapter cited above]

Darleen Douglas-Steele: Jeff could you say a little bit about theory-laden uses of words, and how that in some ways proposes, perhaps falsely at times, that conceptual (shakes) have indeed been made. I'm thinking of Freud, particularly. I'm always confused about how one launches an argument when it looks as though there is a form of life, or there is a language-game in which those things have a place, and yet they seem not to have the same kind of meaning that they do in commonsense terms.

Jeff Coulter: Well 'invisible light' is theory-laden. It's laden with the theory of ultraviolet and infrared radiation. We talked a bit about that.

Darleen Douglas-Steele: Yeah. The other thing is, though, was not that it was an unjustified extension, or an over-extension of commonsense usage.

Jeff Coulter: Because it's instrumental. It means ultraviolet and infrared radiation. And how could it mean that? It could mean that because there are practices, there is praxis that embodies those concepts, like: measuring, etc. I don't quite know how it's done; I'm not a physicist.

But then, let's pick up something about that because one of the problems - and I'm very critical of Kuhn [see e.g.: Kuhn, T. S. (1970). THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS. Second Edition, Enlarged. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.] on this - because Kuhn picks up the notion of 'paradigm' [JC: although perhaps not that WORD exactly] from Hanson [see e.g.: Hanson, N. R. (1958). PATTERNS OF DISCOVERY. Cambridge], who picked up the whole idea from Wittgenstein's concept of 'language-games'. So, 'paradigm' in Kuhn is, I think, a degenerate reading of 'language-game'. And what Kuhn wants to argue is, by the invocation of the notion of paradigm, is that there might be such a thing as one bunch of scientists tied up with one paradigm, and another bunch of scientists tied up with another paradigm,

and they can't communicate together, because they are locked in different paradigms. The concept of 'incommensurability' crops up in this context.

A strict reading of the notion of 'incommensurability' is un-Wittgensteinian in the extreme, since if something is a concept, then it consists in its ways of being expressed according to rules of use. It has a grammar. And if it has a grammar, there are ways of telling a difference between a 'use' and a 'misuse'. That's point one.

Point two is: the notion of 'theory-ladenness' that comes out of this paradigm notion is used sometimes to make the following argument: there is NO difference between an observation and a theory-laden observation in science, if you are working within a paradigm. All observations that you make are theory-laden. So, there is no NEUTRAL, or THEORY-NEUTRAL observation language, as they put it. Whereas the old positivists used to insist on a difference between 'the observation language' and 'the translation rules to the theoretical language'.

What this misses completely is: Well first of all, take the attack on the positivist notion of a sharp division between the pure observation language, and the theory-laden language. It is well motivated, because what the positivists always forgot, and what the Kuhnians are trying to remind them of by this distinction, is that observation is CONCEPT-LADEN. So, without concepts I can't really SEE the [e.g.] 'photon'. If I don't have a concept of 'photon', I can't see a 'photon'. I can see a 'flash, or whatever, and so on, and so forth. Similarly, if I don't have a concept of 'table', there is a sense in which I can't SEE a table, i.e., I don't know the criteria for telling you what is a table and what is a chair -- though there are opaque/transparency problems with pre-linguistic infants, but which we'll just leave aside for the moment, because they don't affect the real case. [see: Coulter, J. (1983). RETHINKING COGNITIVE THEORY. St.Martin's Press, Chapter 6.]

Now, what Hanson does - let's take it in proper chronological order, because N. R. Hanson was the first person to start using Wittgenstein in philosophy of science this way - what Hanson says is: Wittgenstein tells us that all observation is 'theory-laden'. No! It's concept-laden. It's concept-laden, not theory-laden. Now, Kuhn comes along and uses this notion of 'theory-ladenness' of observation, which is really concept-ladenness of

observation, in the following way: He treats the observations that scientists make as the concept-laden observations that they are, but thinks of them as embodying the concepts that belong to the theory, and only the theory that they are involved in, which immediately totalitarianizes their intellect. It's as if now all they have got to see with are the terms of the theory. But that is absolutely not a part not only of the way that scientists actually think and reason, but it's not even a part of the Wittgensteinian point. The Wittgensteinian point is to say: indeed there is no such thing as concept-less observation, but that doesn't mean that observation always commits you to a certain theory of anything. So, that it might be practically difficult for somebody steeped in a given theory to talk easily with someone who is steeped in a different theory, whilst it might be practically difficult, doesn't mean there's no bridgehead, because the bridgehead is where you go back in the loop to ordinary language. You can say: "Well now look, let's start from this point. The thing is swinging; the pendulum is swinging. If you don't like 'pendulum', let's say the stick is swinging." "Now, why do you call it a pendulum?" Ok, and we can get into all of that. And, of course, that's the way it works.

Now, here is where, I think, Popper [see Sir Karl Popper's critique of Kuhn in: Lakatos and Musgrave (Eds.) CRITICISM AND THE GROWTH OF KNOWLEDGE. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press -JC] has to be defended against Kuhn, because Kuhn ends up in a position where paradigm transformation on the part of a single scientist, or a community of scientists, gets assimilated to something almost like a 'conversion experience'. Whereas Popper argues, I think correctly, that not only does this make science indistinguishable from mysticism, but it also fails to grasp the fact that scientists don't have to think exclusively in the terms of their theory, though it might be practically difficult not to. So, a philosophical or metaphysical thesis is made out of a set of sociological observations about the contingent difficulties of getting people to understand each other.

And, of course, it begs the following kinds of questions, namely: if somebody ceases to be an adherent to a given paradigm, does that mean that automatically they cease to be able to understand its terms? It's rather like the old business of you have to be a Christian in order to understand Christianity. So, you have to be a Marxist to

understand Marxism; you have to be an Einsteinian relativist to properly understand Einsteinian relativism. And effectively the whole thing gets us back into the old Cartesian mythology, because it makes the intellectual apparatus the prime possession of the sovereign subjects, this time not the one subject, but the community of scientists, subscribing to the given theory which now pervades their cognitive apparatus, so there is no room for anything else. Well, we would (now) ordinarily call them dogmatists. Instead of calling them dogmatists, Kuhn points to those cases of the dogmatic adherent, who can't think outside of the terms of his pet theory, and treats that as a criterion with which to think about scientific communities and their practices. It's just, I think, a mess; a mess made out of confusing 'concept' and 'theory', ultimately. I think that's where the whole mess arises. Because, of course, a theory involves concepts, but a concept is not yet a theory. I'm not committed to a theory of 'tables' just because I can tell that that's a table [Tr: JC knocks on table] and that's not [Tr: JC points to something else].

Darleen Douglas-Steele: I'm trying to remember, a couple of years ago I had this discussion with you; it had to do with Freud's theory of the concept of 'unconscious'. Do you remember it? {JC: mmh!} I'm not remembering pieces of it, and I can't remember what my difficulty with it was at the time. I can't remember what it was that troubled me about it. Can you help?

Jeff Coulter: Some theory-laden uses are viciously circular. Like to say that something is theory-laden can be an effective way of saying it's a self-guaranteeing argument. Like I think one good example, to change the example from Freud, like Chomsky's asking the question: how do we understand new sentences? - which generates the whole apparatus of the mentally represented, recursive functional rule-system. Well, there is one thing that you could do with that question, and that is to deny that it is well-formed. What sentences? Sentences in general? What do you mean: How do we understand new sentences? And in any case it seems to presuppose that understanding is a process that we have to learn how to engage in. But understanding is not a mental act or a mental process, as Wittgenstein shows. So, what could it mean? Well, ok, how is it that one can, when one hears a sentence one has never heard before, how is it that one can figure out what it

means? Well, let's take an example. And we take an example, and we can give all sorts of vernacular, commonsense responses to that. "Well, I know what that word means, and what that word means, and I've been in those circumstances"; one could do that. But that, to a Chomskian, sounds facetious. It's sounds sarcastic. It's sounds like you're not really getting to the REAL problem here. But the real problem that Chomsky thinks he's pointing to is an artifact of a behavioristic conception of comprehension that he wants to refute, and substitute with a neo-Cartesian conception. So, to say that that question is theory-laden is a way of saying that it has only the sense it has to guarantee the relevance of Chomsky's thinking about it. And what we need to do is to deny the question. So, with Freud and the unconscious. In everyday life we say - "I did it unconsciously". And, of course, he's quite right: we do say that. So, he says what we're doing when we say that is we're using a proto-Freudian theory of the unconscious that I've now explicitly articulated for you. But that's not true at all.
...

[Tr: tape change]

Jeff Coulter(cont): ...word unconsciously, and committed to the idea that that portion of my own conscious mind caused my action. But that's what Freud really wants to read it as meaning, so he can use it as grist for his metaphysical mill.

Darleen Douglas-Steele: 308 [PI] talks about that: "How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviourism arise?"

Jeff Coulter: Yeah, "We talk of processes and states..." [PI: 308]. There's a tendency to think - now, what belongs to mind?: understanding, remembering, forgetting, thinking, having a motive, reflecting, pondering, wanting, wishing, believing, knowing, desiring. All of those things are things to do with the mind. And they're all mental states and mental processes, processes or states of the mind. Because if the mind is a sort of entity, then it can only enter into either states or it can be something that's dynamic and has processes. It's one of the two in the Cartesian picture. But one of the things that Wittgenstein does throughout the INVESTIGATIONS is to show that the logical grammar of all of the mental predicates, with very very few exceptions, cannot be thought of as

process concepts or state concepts. So, a fortiori, they're not mental process concepts or mental state concepts either. And so as he goes on to say: "The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that we thought quite innocent." [Tr: PI: 308], which is to think of 'understanding', 'remembering', 'intending', and 'thinking' as mental processes. They're wrongly taken to be predicates attributable to the MIND, rather than predicates attributable to PERSONS on the basis of their satisfaction of intersubjective criteria.

One of the things he doesn't do very effectively in the PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, but does more effectively in, I think, ZETTEL or possibly REMARKS ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF PSYCHOLOGY, which is sort of an extension of ZETTEL, is specifically attack the behavioristic concept of 'behavior', which is another theory-laden concept in the bad sense. What psychological behaviorism wants us to do is to think of behavior purely in biological-physical terms, which ends up with the notion that behavior consists in bodily movements. Now there's a good case of a theory-laden concept being deployed in a viciously circular way, because it feeds into its own system. Whereas, in fact, the first move is to deny that the concept of behavior is properly being explicated. But it also connects with the whole pernicious business of operationalization, because one of the moves that's made by the behaviorists to support this very odd conception of behavior as just bodily movements is not just the idea that psychology must be intrinsically connected to biology, and physics, though that is indeed part of it, so you describe the environment in terms of physics as stimuli, photonic and mechanical and acoustic events that impinge on perceptor organs, and you describe behavior in the terms that are purely for biological purposes, so that that is not a 'wave' [Tr: JC waves his hand], but the flexor and tensor muscles moving, subtending an arc of 30 degrees from right to left. All of these distortions are partly to be explained by psychology's attempts to connect with biology and physics, but also by the misuse of the principle of operationalization, where what you're supposed to do is to render an observation scientifically useable, you are to render it in such a way that it is capable of measurement or quantification. And that leads you, right away, to violate logical grammar in the interests of a pure stipulation about what scientific inquiry HAS to consist in. And it's wreaked havoc in the behavioral sciences; whereas

in the physical sciences, on the whole, it's made sense. It's made sense because, by-and-large, the things that have been meaningfully operationalized have been operationalized precisely because the kinds of measures that have been used as the operationalizations of the concepts - like the thermometer for measuring degrees of hot and cold, and other things - are not, in a sense, the phenomena that physics is really investigating anyway. Because as Einstein says, physics doesn't give you the taste of soup, it doesn't deliver for you the experience of hot and cold, it doesn't want to get at the essence of hot and cold. It wants to know HOW hot and HOW cold something is, and to give you a calibration for talking not in terms of how hot and how cold it is, which is fine if you're asking someone what the weather is like outside, but in order to figure out how hot and cold something is in order to have trans-person replicability in experiments. And it's for that purpose, through the playing of the language-game of experimentation, that you can fix a calibration, that you needn't fix for how hot and how cold it is in everyday life. But then what happens is people come along and say: but it is sloppy and it's imprecise to ask "how hot is it?", and for somebody to answer "it's pretty warm" is sloppy and imprecise. Nonsense. It's only sloppy and imprecise if you're doing a physics experiment. But that's not the only language-game we play when we ask someone how hot and how cold it is, and we say it's pretty warm and pretty cold. 'Pretty warm' to me means I shouldn't wear a coat with a sweater, perhaps. But what you find very often is that the physical measures of things are brought back to discredit the ordinary expressions, as if the ordinary expressions are somehow defective and so we feed back into the whole purpose of the ideal logical language, that logicians before the PI were trying to construct to make it all exact, and precise. But as Wittgenstein says, precision is contextually and purpose relative. Which doesn't mean that he is saying, and this is the way he's often read by some philosophers of science, it doesn't mean when he says that precision and exactness are context and purpose relative, it doesn't mean that he's a wild, woolly relativist, who's saying that anything goes. That like because precision is relative to context and purpose therefore he's saying that precision is a fuzzy open-ended notion, and it's really subjective, and like what's precise for me might be imprecise for you, and it's my opinion that counts - and I've seen that account given. So "stand exactly there", [Tr: JC points to floor] where there's a chalk

mark - and you start saying now "should I stand where the chalk...- because the chalk has a width...- should I make sure that I'm standing... - how?", to talk like that is to talk nonsense, "stand there you jerk". [Tr: general laughter] Whereas if it's a matter of doing a measurement for some purpose that has to do with, say, constructing a laser, then you have to know it down to the micron, or the mu [millimicron], etc. So, operationalization has its place, but it has had a disastrous effect on us in the behavioral sciences because it means from the beginning we violate logical grammar of concepts - of 'behavior' for one, of the 'mental' for another - in the name of doing science. And then, having done that, we very often then take the kinds of operationalizations that go on in the natural sciences and use them as ways of discrediting our ordinary locutions in everyday- in OTHER PRACTICES, I don't want to say everyday life and science, it's not that easy a contrast. In OTHER practices.

So, you have the famous work by Smith Stevens and Quine, and others on "subjective acoustics" - what they call "subjective acoustics" - that I talk about in THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MIND [1979, Rowman and Littlefield p.85]. People are brought into a lab - it's a famous set of psychoacoustic experiments - and they are given different volumes and pitches of sound, and they are asked to assess them. [Tr: For example] "is that twice as loud or half as loud as that?" And they say: "yeah, it's roughly twice as loud", "it's about half as loud". But all the time the sounds are being calibrated to the exact decibel by an instrument. And it's found that when compared to the decibel readings, you can make an irony out of the expressions that people might use like "half as loud again", and "twice as loud", and all the rest of it. But whoever said that when I say "half as loud again", or "twice as loud", I'm producing an expression that is part of the same language-game as approximating to a decibel reading? Of course I'm not. My purposes would be to say something which gets something done in the world. But if I'm brought into a lab and I'm asked for some completely purposeless, meaningless reason to assess sounds and their relationship to each other, that's not a language-game I've ever played before - or you've ever played before. And therefore it's idling. But, oh no, it's treated as good evidence for the defectiveness of the human auditory system. Defectiveness? Why?

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: xxxxxxxx]. 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 forming 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.