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Strawson and Wittgenstein :

The No-Ownership Argument

ABSTRACT

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Summary :

A major element of P.F. Strawson's exposition of the concept of a person is his refutation of the no-ownership argument, hesitantly attributed to Ludwig Wittgenstein. It is first argued that he fails to refute the no-ownership theorist, and that this failure is crucial. The reasons for this are given in detail. The no-ownership argument is then examined in its context in Wittgenstein's Blue Book. It is found that the argument is intended to be a reply to an imagined solipsist who claims that "one cannot have another's states of consciousness". It is then shown that the argument applies equally to any position which requires that states of consciousness are possessed in a "logically non-transferable sense of possession". Since Strawson's account of the concept of a person presupposes the logical non-transferability of states of consciousness, it is finally argued that his account of these is incoherent.

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Introduction

A large proportion of recent writing in the philosophy of mind can be characterized as anti-Cartesian. Although it is generally agreed that Descartes' account of what a person is (a body and a mind) is faulty, there is great controversy over what precisely is wrong with the account. Although it would be difficult to establish, it appears that much of the contemporary interest in the Cartesian account can be attributed to the appearance of two books, Gilbert Ryle's The Concept of Mind¹ and Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations^{2,3}. Although the Investigations did not appear until 1953, by that time Wittgenstein's ideas had become common currency, especially in England and parts of North America. Part I, the major portion of the Investigations, was complete by 1945. Wittgenstein had at one time abandoned the idea of publishing the Investigations, but changed his mind when, in his words,

I was obliged to learn that my results (which I had communicated in lectures, typescripts and discussions), variously misunderstood, more or less mangled or watered down, were in circulation.⁴

1. Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (London, 1949).

2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations (Oxford, 1953).

3. See, for example, V.C. Chappell's assessment, The Philosophy of Mind (New Jersey, 1962), pp. vii-ix.

4. Phil. Invest., pp. vii, viii.

If we consider the role that Wittgenstein has played in the current revolt against Cartesianism, then, it is of considerable interest to note that P.F. Strawson, in his Individuals, attributes to Wittgenstein an argument which Strawson claims commits the same fundamental error that lies at the root of the Cartesian account of the self.¹ This could be a very serious matter, for in effect, this amounts to the charge that Wittgenstein is a crypto-Cartesian, something Wittgenstein would vehemently deny. Strawson's hesitant attribution of the "no-ownership argument" to Wittgenstein is based upon G.E. Moore's "Wittgenstein's Lectures, 1930-33".²

There are several possible alternatives here. Either Strawson is wrong in attributing this view to Wittgenstein, or Strawson is right about this and Wittgenstein changed his position between 1933 and 1945, or Strawson is correct in his attribution but incorrect in his assertion that the argument incorporates the fundamental Cartesian error.

In this thesis, I shall defend the last alternative. Wittgenstein employs an argument similar to the one Strawson attributes to him. Strawson correctly notes that the

1. P.F. Strawson, Individuals (London, 1959) p. 98.

2. G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures, 1930-33", Mind, Vol. LXIII, 1954, and Vol. LXIV, 1955. Also, Moore, Philosophical Papers (New York, 1959).

argument is intended to be anti-Cartesian. However, I shall argue against Strawson's claim that it commits the fundamental Cartesian error, that of holding that there are two uses of 'I', one use which denotes some thing not denoted by the other. Against this claim I shall argue that fundamentally the argument is designed to demonstrate the incoherence of solipsism. As the Cartesian account entails a solipsistic position, the no-ownership argument also demonstrates the incoherence of the Cartesian account.

In addition to his claim that the no-ownership argument commits the fundamental Cartesian error, Strawson attempts to prove that it is incoherent. After demonstrating that Strawson fails to prove the argument's incoherence, Strawson's claim that the argument denies what is prima facie the case, that is, that states of consciousness are "logically non-transferable", will then be examined. In the course of this thesis, I shall argue that the issue between the no-ownership theorist and Strawson is misleadingly expressed in terms of the "ownership" of states of consciousness. Rather, they are basically in disagreement about what the "counting rules" are for states of consciousness. We shall see that Wittgenstein and Strawson's reconstructed no-ownership theorist advocate one set of these rules; Strawson, the Cartesian, and the solipsist opt for another set.

Finally, if one can speak of "the fundamental Cartesian error" at all, it will be shown to consist in according the wrong sort of "particularity" to states of consciousness, which is reflected in the choice of "counting rules" for states of consciousness. It will be found that the counting rules presupposed in our ordinary discourse about particular states of consciousness are not those which are presupposed by a Cartesian, solipsistic, or Strawsonian account, and in this sense, these accounts are "revisionary" (that is, they do not reflect or accurately describe our conceptual scheme).

We shall see that Strawson's failure to demonstrate the incoherence of the no-ownership argument is most telling, for the argument can be used to show that it is Strawson, not Wittgenstein, who commits "the fundamental Cartesian error" and is thus a "crypto-Cartesian".

Chapter One

Section 1

The first part of this chapter is a characterization of the role the no-ownership argument plays in Strawson's Individuals, and an elucidation of the problems the argument purports to solve. Strawson's reconstruction of the argument will then be set forth in detail, followed by a thorough examination of his attempt to prove that it is incoherent. It will then be argued that of his two objections to the argument, the first taken by itself fails in its purpose. The second objection, which in effect is a counter-assertion, would render the no-ownership account incoherent if it were true. As it will prove necessary to examine the no-ownership argument as it is advanced by Wittgenstein in order to adjudicate on the validity of Strawson's second objection, this chapter will only clarify the arguments and specify what is at issue between Strawson and the no-ownership theorist, thus delaying the resolution of this conflict until the following chapters.

Section 2

"Persons", the third chapter of Individuals, is Strawson's attempt to "lay bare the most general features of our conceptual structure" which are related to and

constitute our concept of a person.¹ His procedure is to begin with the things we ordinarily say of human beings in general, and of ourselves in particular. If we think of some of the ways in which we ordinarily speak of ourselves, or of the things we ordinarily ascribe to ourselves, we shall find that they fall into two broad categories. The first category includes actions, intentions, feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and memories; the second includes position in two senses (location and attitude or posture) and such things as height, coloring, shape, and weight.² That we ascribe predicates from the second category to something does not stand in need of explanation, for that to which they are ascribed can be picked out from other candidates for the ascription; as it is a material body, it can be identified by ordinary criteria and described in ordinary physical terms.³

However, it does seem to need explanation that we ascribe both M-predicates and P-predicates to the very same things, when we ascribe both to ourselves. And whereas we have no hesitation to ascribe predicates of the

1. Strawson, p. 9.

2. Predicates of the first category are "P-predicates", p. 105.

3. Predicates of the second category are "M-predicates", pp. 89, 104-106.

second type to ordinary material objects (tables, for example), we do not ordinarily ascribe predicates of the first sort to material objects. For example, we do not ordinarily say of a table or a rug that it is smiling, thinking, in pain, or going for a walk.

Hence, according to Strawson, some explanation must be given for (a) the fact that we ascribe states of consciousness (or P-predicates) to anything at all, and (b) for the (prima facie) fact that they are ascribed to one and the same thing as certain corporeal characteristics, certain physical situations, and so on. Before this issue becomes clear, Strawson would say, we shall not be clear about our concept of a person.

Strawson reconstructs and criticizes three alternative accounts or explanations for these "facts", only one of which, the "unique role of the body account", accepts both (a) and (b) as fact. Another alternative, the "Cartesian account", accepts (a) but denies that P-predicates are ascribed to one and the same thing as M-predicates; on the Cartesian account, it is only a linguistic illusion that P-predicates are ascribed to the body; the body is the subject of M-predicates only, and the mind is the only thing to which P-predicates are ascribed. The third alternative discussed by Strawson, the reconstructed no-ownership argument (or "theory"), proposes that both (a) and (b)

are linguistic illusions.¹ This argument holds that in first person cases, at least, it is only a linguistic illusion that states of consciousness are ascribed (or reported or avowed) at all; hence, it is a linguistic illusion that they are ascribed to one and the same thing as certain M-predicates. In this thesis we are most concerned with the reconstructed no-ownership argument, but our understanding of this argument presupposes our familiarity with the first alternative proposal, the unique role of the body account.

Section 3

The simplest manner in which one might account for the fact that one's states of consciousness are ascribed to something, to which we also ascribe certain physical characteristics, would be to point out the unique role one's body plays in one's experience, particularly in perceptual experience. Visual experience, for example, is contingently tied to the states of material bodies in a number of ways. What is seen is dependent on the orientation of the eyes in their sockets and the direction the head is turned. It is also dependent on whether the eyelids are open or closed. And finally, it depends on where the head is located (eg., near the floor

1. Strawson variously refers to it as a theory, doctrine, view, and argument. As advanced by Wittgenstein, it was simply an argument.

or about the center of the room). Now the fact that visual experience is dependent on facts about material bodies in all three ways does not entail that the body should be the same in each case. It is a contingent fact that my visual experience is dependent only on facts about my body. It is this cluster of contingent facts which constitutes the complex causal uniqueness of the body to which the theorist wishes to draw our attention in order to account for the fact that I ascribe P-predicates to myself, to which I also ascribe M-predicates ("the eyes are turned up", etc.).

Strawson is quick to point out that the complex causal dependence of one's experience on the state of one body is not sufficient to account for the facts in question. For while it does explain why a subject of experience should have a very special regard for just one body, why he should think of it as unique and more important than any other; it does not explain why the subject should have a concept of "subject of experience" at all. The facts to which the theorist points do not explain why I should ascribe my thoughts, feelings, and perceptions to anything. And of course, failing this, the theorist cannot account for the fact that experiences and so on are ascribed to the very same thing as certain corporeal characteristics.¹

1. Strawson, p. 93.

It thus appears that the unique role one's body plays in perceptual experience fails to account for the facts Strawson presents. But the theorist who proffers these facts is not yet forced to give up his case. For he can object, as Strawson anticipates, that the facts do not explain the concept of a person which is implicit in the two facts -- that is, the concept of a person as something to which both M-predicates and P-predicates are ascribed -- because Strawson has mis-described our concept of a person. The theorist could argue that the concept of a person which is implicit in these two "facts" is wrong or confused, possibly because our idioms and locutions are confusing in that they conceal the true nature of the concepts involved.¹ This sort of objection can be found in two very important positions, each of which denies at least one of these "facts".

Section 4

The first of these, which Strawson refers to as the Cartesian view, denies that physical characteristics and states of consciousness are ascribed to one and the same thing; to believe that they are is to be under some sort of linguistic illusion. On this view,

1. Strawson, p. 94.

When we speak of a person, we are really referring to one or both of two distinct substances, two substances of different types, each of which has its own appropriate types of states or properties; and none of the properties or states of either can be a property or state of the other. States of consciousness belong to one of these substances and not to the other.¹

On this view, then, one is not to be blamed for failing to explain why states of consciousness are ascribed to the same thing as physical characteristics, for it is only a linguistic illusion that we do so. Of course, this view must provide an answer to the other question, why are states of consciousness ascribed at all?²

The second type of view, Strawson later suggests, is but a special case of the "Cartesian error" of denying (b), that is, denying that states of consciousness are ascribed to one and the same thing as certain corporeal characteristics. It differs from the Cartesian view in that it further contends that it is only a linguistic illusion that states of consciousness are ascribed at all.

This second view Strawson calls the "no-ownership" or "no-subject" doctrine of the self. Strawson's reconstruction of this argument is as follows:

The no-ownership theorist may be presumed to start his explanation with facts of the sort which illustrate the unique causal position of a certain material body in a person's experience.³

1. Strawson, p. 94.

2. Ibid., p. 95.

3. Ibid., p. 95.

This complex causal uniqueness of the body is sufficient, according to the theorist, to give rise to the idea that one's experiences

can be ascribed to some particular, individual thing, can be said to be possessed by, or owned by, that thing. This idea, he thinks, though infelicitously and misleadingly expressed in terms of ownership, would have some validity, would make some sort of sense, so long as we thought of this individual thing, the possessor of the experiences, as the body itself.¹

This idea makes sense because when we are ascribing an experience or a state of consciousness in this sense, we (infelicitously) assert something that could have been otherwise; that is to say, the experience could have been causally dependent on some other body, or owned by, or possessed by some other body.

But now, the theorist suggests, one becomes confused: one slides from the admissible sense . . . to a wholly inadmissible and empty sense of these expressions, in which the particular thing is not thought of as a body, but as something else, say an Ego, whose sole function is to provide an owner for experiences. Suppose we call the first type of possession, which is really a kind of causal dependence, 'having₁' and the second type of possession 'having₂'; and call the individual of the first type 'B' and the supposed individual of the second type 'E'. Then the difference is that while it is a genuinely contingent matter that all my experiences are had₁ by B, it appears as a necessary truth that all my experiences are had₂ by E. Only those things whose ownership is logically transferable can be owned at all.²

1. Strawson, pp. 95-6.

2. Ibid., p. 96.

"Having₂" is an illusion, for there is nothing which is owned in a logically non-transferable manner. Hence, "E" must be eliminated from the picture altogether. Thus concludes the reconstructed no-ownership argument.

Section 5

Strawson presents two major criticisms of the reconstructed no-ownership argument. The first objection is "internal" in the sense that even granting the no-ownership theorist his premises, it can be shown that the argument is "incoherent". The second objection, which Strawson seems to view as partially a consequence of the first, is "external" in that it is an attack on a premise of the argument which asserts that only those things which are logically transferable can be owned at all. In this section I intend to show that Strawson's first objection fails; Strawson does not succeed in demonstrating that the reconstructed no-ownership argument is incoherent. In the following section, we shall critically examine the second objection, and determine what is at issue between the no-ownership theorist and Strawson, and how the issue is to be resolved.

Strawson's first criticism of the reconstructed argument is that it is not coherent because the theorist is forced to make use of the sense of possession he is denying in presenting his case for denial. The theorist must state the contingent fact from which the illusion of "having₂"

and the Ego arise, and, according to Strawson, this contingent fact must be stated in some such form as (1) "All my experiences are had₁ by (i.e., uniquely dependent on the state of) body B". According to Strawson, the 'my' in the above statement asserts possession in precisely the sense which the theorist denies. In order for this to not be the case, the theorist must be able to produce some paraphrase of the above sentence without using 'my' "or any expression with similar possessive force" such that (1) remains contingent, "as his theory requires".¹ (It is apparent that by the expression 'similar possessive force' Strawson means "expressing logically non-transferable possession".)

The theorist might first suggest that we should render 'all my experiences' as 'all experiences', continues Strawson. But this won't do because although the resulting proposition is contingent, as it must be, it is a false contingent proposition, which does not serve the theorist's purpose at all.

The second possibility, that 'all the experiences of person P' means the same thing as 'all experiences contingently dependent on a certain body B' is also inadequate, for then the proposition would become analytic, and thus could not be the contingent fact which supposedly gives rise to

1. Strawson, p. 97.

the illusion of 'having₂' and 'E'.

Strawson concludes this first criticism by noting that the theorist

must mean to be speaking of some class of experiences of the members of which it is in fact contingently true that they are all dependent on body B. The defining characteristic of this class is in fact that they are 'my experiences' or 'the experiences of some person', where the idea of possession expressed by 'my' and 'of' is the one he calls into question.¹

Let us try to state the crux of this objection.

According to the no-ownership theorist, the illusion of the Ego which "owns" logically non-transferable experiences arises from the contingent fact that: (1) All my experiences are had₁ by B. But now how is the theorist to account for the meaning of 'my', which makes its occurrence in this statement? Does it express possession in the sense which the theorist presenting this argument seeks to deny? Strawson expands on the difficulty the theorist is faced with by providing arguments against two accounts the theorist might be tempted to provide. Strawson argues, first, that 'all my experiences' cannot mean 'all experiences', which is most certainly correct. His second argument is:

1. Strawson, p. 97.

the theorist cannot consistently argue that 'all the experiences of person P' means the same thing as 'all experiences contingently dependent on a certain body B'; for then his proposition (1) would not be contingent, as his theory requires, but analytic.¹

I should now like to examine this in some detail. After making explicit two premises necessary for the validity of this argument (5a), it will be argued that by filling in the details of the no-ownership argument, one can see that the question of the analyticity of (1) is in a sense irrelevant to the coherence of the no-ownership argument (5b). That is, even if one insists that (1) becomes analytic when the theorist renders 'all my experiences' as 'all experiences causally dependent on body B', the theorist can provide an alternative statement of the contingent fact which gives rise to the illusions of 'having₂' and the Ego, which avoids the incoherence pointed out by Strawson. And finally, in paragraph (5c) I shall provide a third alternative account which the theorist could give of the meaning of 'all my experiences', which also escapes Strawson's internal criticism.

(5a) Strawson's argument as it stands requires the assertion of two more premises: (f) 'all my experiences' means the same as 'all the experiences of a person P'.

1. Strawson, p. 97.

The second necessary premise not made explicit by Strawson is: (e) 'contingently dependent on body B' means the same as 'had₁ by B'. I should now like to display Strawson's argument in completely explicit form.

- i. According to Strawson it cannot be the case that: (c) 'all the experiences of person P' means the same as 'all experiences contingently dependent on body B'.
- ii. Because if (c), then: (d) "all the experiences of person P are contingently dependent on body B" would be analytic.
- iii. Furthermore, if: (e) 'contingently dependent on body B' means the same as 'had₁ by B', and if: (f) 'all my experiences' means the same as 'all the experiences of person P', then by substitution in (d) of ii: (1) "all my experiences are had₁ by B" is analytic.
- iv. Hence, the theorist cannot assert (c).

It is important to notice both that (e) and (f) are not made explicit by Strawson, and that they have the appearance of stipulative definitions.

(5b) If we grant the truth of (d), (e), and (f) in the above argument, and combine this with the assertion of (a), it certainly follows that (1) is not contingent. I shall now argue that by carefully examining the no-ownership argument, we can see that the stronger conclusion, that (1) is analytic, does not necessarily follow, though there is a prima facie case for the conclusion Strawson requires in order to demonstrate the incoherence of the no-ownership position. Controversies concerning the analyticity of

particular sentences are seldom resolvable, generally because the notion of analyticity is itself controversial. Hence our discussion of this will be followed by an argument to show that the no-ownership theorist can grant the analyticity of (1), but avoid Strawson's charge of incoherence by providing an alternative statement of the contingent fact which leads to the illusion of 'having₂' and the Ego.

It is presumed by Strawson that the no-ownership theorist begins with the facts which the "unique role of the body" theorist wrongly thought accounted for our concept of a person. This means that there is available to the theorist a series of facts which can be represented in this form:

List A

- a₁ This experience (S₁) is causally dependent on the state of body B.
- a₂ This experience (S₂) is causally dependent on body B.
- a_n This experience (S_n) is causally dependent on (the state of) body B.

It may be presumed that both Strawson and the theorist agree that these are genuinely intelligible contingent (factual) statement, either true or false. In emphasizing that these are contingent facts, we are allowing that it is possible that any given experience should be causally dependent on some body or bodies other than B. The no-ownership theorist introduces a technical phrase, 'had₁ by B', with the

stipulation that it be used in the following manner: if it can be said of a certain experience (S) that it is causally dependent on a certain body (B), then we can say, "S is had₁ by B". In other words, "S is had₁ by B" is a permissible restatement of the contingent fact that S is causally dependent on (the state of) body B. Now 'have' (or 'had') is but a part of our ordinary linguistic apparatus for the expression of possession, and our stipulative definition of 'had₁' (which is to be distinguished from 'had' in that it has but one of the latter's senses) lessens considerably the permissible implications from "S is had₁ by B". This meagreness of meaning is partially compensated for by the introduction of other portions of our ordinary apparatus for the expression of possession. Thus, given that the first fact of List A entitles us to say, "S is had₁ by B", the theorist will allow associated locutions, such as "S is B's" or "S is mine" and "S is my experience" (when uttered by B). Or, we can refer to S as "B's S". We are allowed these locutions provided that we keep in mind that they are governed by stipulative definitions; as a consequence, these locutions express ownership or possession only in the sense of being causally dependent on some body.

We could thus construct lists of locutions which the facts in List A would entitle us to say. This I shall forego to the reader, as it is not necessary for this thesis. I should now like to consider another aspect of

this list of facts with which the no-ownership theorist is presumed to begin. We can summarize the contingent facts listed in A by saying:

- (1') "All experiences $S, S_1, \dots S_n$ are causally dependent on (the state of) body B".

According to the stipulative definitions allowed by the theorist, we can restate this summary of contingent facts as:

- (1'') "All experiences $S, S_1, \dots S_n$ are had₁ by B".

In accordance with the other stipulative definitions, this proposition can be reformulated as:

- (1) "All my experiences are had₁ by B" (when uttered by B).

This constitutes the no-ownership theorist's case for not considering (1) analytic: it is a reformulation of a summary of contingent facts in accordance with agreed-upon stipulative definitions.

Undoubtedly, too, there is a case for considering (1) analytic. In displaying in detail how (1) come to be uttered by B, I have tried to show that the genesis of this sentence is complicated by many things, the most important being stipulative definitions. Perhaps the wisest course one could follow lies somewhere between the extremes of analyticity and contingency; perhaps the sentence belongs to an entirely different spectrum. We should be willing to entertain the hypothesis that (1) is the expression of a convention, a prescription or rule for the use of words, etc.. However,

one might insist that (1) is either analytic or contingent. In that case, if it is finally decided that (1) is contingent, Strawson's objection to the no-ownership argument fails to demonstrate its incoherence. If one decides, on the contrary, that (1) is analytic, the argument is not lost, for the theorist can express the summary of contingent facts which gives rise to the illusion of 'having₂' and the Ego. The summary is, as on page 20,

(1') "All experiences $S, S_1, \dots, S_n$ are causally dependent on (the state of) body B".

or (1'') "All experiences $S, S_1, \dots, S_n$ are had₁ by B".

We can thus see that the question of the analyticity of (1) is irrelevant to the question of whether the no-ownership argument is incoherent, for the theorist can accept it as analytic and still provide the contingent facts which give rise to the illusion he is arguing against. Having shown this, we have also demonstrated that Strawson's first internal criticism does not succeed in proving the incoherence of the no-ownership argument. The argument in this section has so far assumed that the theorist wishes to render 'my experience' as 'an experience causally dependent on body B' and thus 'all my experiences' are 'all experiences causally dependent on body B' (where the speaker of each of these is B).

(5c) Besides 'all experiences' and 'all experiences causally dependent on a certain body B', there is a third alternative rendering of 'all my experiences'. On this third account, one may construe 'all my experiences' to mean 'all the experiences which I express', where 'I' is taken to be the voice which (as a matter of fact) issues from B's mouth (that is, 'I' is the voice we have learned to associate with body B). In agreeing with the facts that the "unique role of the body" theorist adduces to explain our concept of a person, we agree that it is a contingent fact that the experiences which are expressed in B's voice are also causally dependent on the state of body B. Thus, it is a contingent fact that all the experiences expressed by B are had₁ by B; and it is from this fact that the illusion of an Ego, and of non-transferable possession, arises. To put this another way, the criteria for the identity of the voice which expresses the experience is independent of the criteria for the identity of the body or bodies upon which the experience is causally dependent.

Thus we can conclude that Strawson's first objection, that the no-ownership argument is incoherent, is not valid. There is implicit in "Persons" a second objection to the no-ownership argument which is not completely independent of the one we have been discussing. After presenting his first objection, that the no-ownership argument is incoherent,

Strawson feels justified in concluding that at least one of the assumptions of the theorist is false.

Section 6

That which I have hitherto referred to as Strawson's second "external" criticism of the no-ownership argument is in fact a counter-assertion. Confident that he has demonstrated the incoherence of the argument, Strawson sees no further objections to what is prima facie the case:

that is, that one does genuinely ascribe one's states of consciousness to something, viz. oneself, and that this kind of ascription is precisely such as the theorist finds unsatisfactory, i.e., is such that it does not seem to make sense to suggest, for example, that the identical pain which was in fact one's own might have been another's.¹

It is easy to understand the place of this "logically non-transferable kind of ownership" in our conceptual scheme if we think of the requirements of identifying reference in speech to particular states of consciousness, or private particulars, according to Strawson. Such particulars can only be referred to as the states or experiences of some identified person.

States, or experiences, . . . owe their identity as particulars to the identity of the person whose states or experiences they are. From this it follows immediately that if they can be identified as particular states or experiences at all, they

1. Strawson, p. 97.

must be possessed or ascribable in just that way which the no-ownership theorist ridicules; i.e., in such a way that it is logically impossible that a particular state or experience in fact possessed by someone should have been possessed by anyone else.¹

This claim, that sensations, experiences, etc., are possessed in a logically non-transferable sense, is of fundamental importance in Strawson's account of our concept of a person. It is easy to understand why Strawson should be concerned to demonstrate the incoherence of the no-ownership thesis, for it is the only argument against what Strawson claims is prima facie the case (i.e., that sensations are logically non-transferable). Of course, it does not follow from the fact that the argument is incoherent that experiences are possessed in the manner the argument denies; but at least no reputable argument is left which questions what is prima facie the case. In advancing this second criticism, Strawson reveals what he takes to be at issue between himself and the theorist. We shall see that this issue, whether states of consciousness are logically non-transferable, resolves itself into the issue of what counts as one sensation, or how do we individuate sensations, or what are the "counting rules" for states of consciousness?

This becomes clearer if we return to Strawson's first

1. Strawson, p. 97.

criticism with this counter-assertion in mind. The reader will recall that the theorist begins with such facts as, this sensation is causally dependent on body B, or "S is had₁ by B". It is presumed by Strawson, the "unique role of the body" theorist, and the no-ownership theorist, that this is an assertion of a causal connection between S and B. This entails that the criteria for the identification of S and B are independent of one another (otherwise, the connection would not be contingent, as was presumed). But if we are to agree that experiences owe their identity as particulars to the identity of some person, that is, if we accept Strawson's counter-assertion, it follows that the theorist cannot have had the facts it was presumed he had. That is, the theorist would not have been able to identify S independently of some person, though he would have been able to identify the body without reference to some person. A consequence of this counter-assertion is that the theorist must begin with facts of the sort, "S (of person P) is had₁ by B", where 'of person P' is an expression of possession in the sense the theorist intends to deny.

Thus, if Strawson were able to prove on independent grounds that states of consciousness owe their identity as particulars to the person to whom they belong in a logically non-transferable sense, it would follow that the no-ownership argument is incoherent because the theorist does not

have at his disposal facts of the form previously presumed by both Strawson and the theorist.

We can now see that Strawson's case against the theorist stands or falls with the truth or falsity of the proposition that states of consciousness cannot be identifyingly referred to in speech except as the states of consciousness of some identified person. The further assertion, that states of consciousness are possessed in a logically non-transferable manner, follows from this thesis, and hence its truth is also contingent on the truth of the above proposition. This proposition can also be formulated as: states of consciousness owe their identity as particulars to the identity of the person to whom they belong.

We are not yet in a position to decide the truth or falsity of this proposition. In our adjudication on this important issue, we shall find it extremely relevant to consider some arguments advanced by Ludwig Wittgenstein, to whom Strawson has hesitantly attributed the no-ownership argument.¹

1. Strawson, p. 95, footnote 1.

Chapter Two

Section 1

In objecting to the no-ownership argument Strawson is not objecting to the argument's conclusion that there is no pure Ego whose sole function is to own states of consciousness. Strawson is not advocating a Cartesian account of the self. Strawson perceives the argument as an anti-Cartesian account, but he argues that in its incoherence, it can be seen as unwittingly committing the more general Cartesian error of holding that there are two uses of 'I'; in one use something is denoted which is not denoted in the other.¹ The no-ownership argument, in intention anti-Cartesian, is after all "crypto-Cartesian"; although it denies the existence of a pure Ego and affirms the existence only of bodies, it incorporates a dualism "paradoxically so-called": "a dualism of one subject -- the body -- and one non-subject".²

It has been mentioned that Strawson's attribution of the no-ownership argument to Wittgenstein is based on G.E. Moore's "Wittgenstein's Lectures, 1930-33". The arguments in that article are very sketchy, and it is difficult to separate Moore's commentary from his reporting

1. Strawson, p. 98.

2. Ibid., p. 98.

of Wittgenstein's lectures. However, an argument similar to the one reconstructed in "persons" can be found in Wittgenstein's Blue Book,¹ published in 1958, one year prior to the appearance of Individuals. There is no evidence that Wittgenstein changed his mind between 1933 and 1945, the year the Blue Book was first dictated and circulated among students and friends of Wittgenstein.

The argument in the Blue Book, however, occurs in the context of a more extended argument against solipsism, and hence against the Cartesian position, for Wittgenstein held the position that the latter entailed the former. A comparison between the arguments of the Blue Book and of Individuals should thus be very interesting indeed.

A sketch of some of the ways the issue of solipsism arises in the Blue Book will presently be given. I shall then argue that Wittgenstein's crucial argument against the solipsist involves an account of the identity of sensations which is directly opposed to the one Strawson defends. We shall then discover that this issue, the "counting rules" for states of consciousness, which divides Strawson from Wittgenstein, also divides the Cartesian and the solipsist from the no-ownership theorist. In the chapter following,

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books (Oxford, 1958).

the implications of this division will be discussed, and eventually it will be argued that it is Strawson and not Wittgenstein who commits the fundamental error. In our final analysis, if we can speak of the "fundamental Cartesian error" it will be found that it consists in ascribing the wrong sort of uniqueness to states of consciousness, not the error of holding that there are two uses of 'I', as Strawson claims.

Section 2

On the first reading, the Blue Book is likely to give the impression of incoherence. Although each paragraph is often understandable within itself, it is sometimes difficult to see how it is connected to the paragraphs succeeding and preceding it. Although it asks questions which are traditional philosophical questions, it does not provide clearly recognizable philosophical answers.

O.K. Bouwsma, in his expository essay on the Blue Book, indicates that the impression of incoherence can be accounted for.¹ He notes that one's impression is most likely correlated with the degree that one's expectations are determined by past experience with traditional philosophical texts.² The implication is that it is the conflict between

1. O.K. Bouwsma, "The Blue Book", Philosophical Essays (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1942), pp. 175-203.

2. Ibid., p. 178.

what classical philosophers did and what Wittgenstein does which, in part, generates the sense of incoherence. Another reason for this apparent unintelligibility can be found in the author's purpose, which, presumably, differs considerably from the purposes of the more famous metaphysicians. Bouwsma suggests that the Blue Book is a set of dictations "designed in connection with other oral discussions to help in teaching these students an art."¹ Wittgenstein was attempting to teach them an art

of which they had not heard and for which they could have felt no need . . . He is, remember, teaching an art which is new. He is the author, the inventor, the first teacher.²

Hence, it isn't difficult to see why it appears incomprehensible. The art which he was demonstrating is an art of clarification, of relief from the toils of confusion which results when our thinking slips.³

If we interpret the Blue Book as an attempt to impart a skill or art, it is of greatest importance to see what the author does, not what he says. Even though Wittgenstein's primary intention may have been to teach an art, it is surely no accident that Wittgenstein asks the questions he

1. Bouwsma, p. 183.

2. Ibid., p. 192.

3. Ibid., p. 186.

asks, uses the examples he does, and so on. One could argue that the primary intention is achieved by a fairly systematic attempt

to remove the temptation to think that there 'must be' what is called a mental process of thinking, hoping, wishing, believing, etc., independent of the process of expressing a thought, a hope, a wish, etc..¹

Now, we might well ask why is this temptation so important and how do you remove it? This temptation is important because it is at the root of the Cartesian error of body/mind, and hence, at the root of solipsism, or skepticism of other minds, in general. How is it to be removed?

Wittgenstein's "rule of thumb" is:

If you are puzzled about the nature of thought, belief, knowledge, and the like, substitute for the thought the expression of the thought, etc.. The difficulty which lies in this substitution, and at the same time, the whole point of it, is this: the expression of belief, thought, etc., is just a sentence; . . . and the sentence has sense only as a member of a system of language; as one expression within a calculus.²

Thus one could argue that in addition to being an attempt to impart an art, the Blue Book is an extended illustration of a type of theory which would explain philosophical

1. Blue Book, p. 41.

2. Ibid., p. 42. See also Blue Book, p. 184.

confusions in terms of grammatical analogies, and provide techniques for removing these confusions. Some of our philosophical problems arise when we misconstrue, or draw the wrong conclusions from, what we ordinarily say; others can arise from having the wrong view of language itself.

We are tempted to think that the action of language consists in two parts; an inorganic part, the handling of signs, and an organic part, which we may call understanding these signs, meaning them, interpreting them, thinking. These latter activities seem to take place in a queer kind of medium, the mind; and the mechanism of the mind, the nature of which, it seems, we don't quite understand, can bring about effects which no material mechanism could.¹

Both these sorts of confusions tend to culminate eventually in some form of solipsism. Hence, the Blue Book in large part is an attempt to show that certain grammatical confusions lie at the root of solipsism. We shall see that an argument not unlike Strawson's reconstructed no-ownership argument occurs in the Blue Book. It is one part of Wittgenstein's attempt to uncover the hidden grammatical analogies which were misleading the solipsist. In order to understand the argument we shall have to place it in its context, which is a reply to one form of solipsism.

Section 3

There are a number of considerations which would incline one to philosophical solipsism.

1. Blue Book, p. 3.

When we think about the relation of objects surrounding us to our personal experience of them, we are sometimes tempted to say that these personal experiences are the material of which reality consists.¹

This in turn inclines us to believe that

only my own experience is real: 'I know that I see, hear, feel pains, etc., but not that anyone else does. I can't know this, because I am I and they are they.'²

Another contributing factor might be the fact that there are propositions which describe facts in the material world (external world).³ On the other hand, there are propositions which describe "personal experiences", (for example, visual experience) which are independent of both physical and physiological facts. If we recall, a similar point -- or perhaps the same point -- was made by Strawson early in "Persons". Thus it may appear "that here we have two kinds of worlds, worlds built of different materials; a mental world and a physical world".⁴ Just as in the (material) world there are material objects, so too there must be 'ethereal objects' in the mental world. Ethereal objects often play this role in philosophy; they are used as a subterfuge when we are unclear about the

1. Blue Book, p. 45.

2. Ibid., p. 46.

3. Ibid., p. 46.

4. Ibid., p. 47.

grammar of certain words, when all we know about the so-called 'ethereal objects' is that they are not material objects. "This is a hint how the problem of the two materials, mind and matter, is going to dissolve", states Wittgenstein.¹

According to Wittgenstein, a problem related to this one can be expressed as follows: Can a machine think? It is commonly held that mental phenomena arise only when there is a high degree of complexity in material phenomena; yet the mental phenomena are such that they do not seem to be described by or predicted by the laws of physics, but only by laws of a different kind which apply only to the behavior of organisms. A machine is governed by the laws of mechanics; thinking is not. This view leads naturally to "idealism", and then to solipsism.

For in one aspect of the matter, personal experience, far from being the product of physical, chemical, physiological processes, seems to be the very basis of all that we say with any sense about such processes. Looking at it in this way we are inclined to use our idea of building material in yet another misleading way, and to say that the whole world, mental and physical, is made of one material only.²

Now, if everything rests upon personal experience, the world becomes less solid, our judgements less reliable -- we are up against the 'merely subjective'. If we have only personal experience to rely on there is some difficulty in accounting for the existence of other minds. This is because

1. Blue Book, p. 47.

2. Ibid., p. 48.

"I can only know that I have personal experiences, not that anyone else has." After reflection, we might decide that we can't even suppose that another has personal experiences for there is no method of verifying the assertion that someone else has them. Hence the solipsist asks, "How can we believe that another has pains; what does it mean to believe this?".

Thus we see how idealism can lead to solipsism.

Wittgenstein remarks that the realist's answer, "Surely there is no difficulty in thinking, imagining, supposing that someone else has what I have" must fail to satisfy the solipsist, for the realist skips rather than solves the problem. In another context Wittgenstein has suggested that idealism strictly thought out leads to solipsism, and solipsism strictly thought out leads to realism.¹ Now there is good reason to doubt that Wittgenstein is, or considers himself to be, a realist. On the other hand, it seems equally obvious that he sympathizes with the truth of the realist's claim that surely we can imagine that another has pain. Wittgenstein shows how one could argue for the realist's claim, and in the course of doing so

1. This point and the following references are due to Hans Kaal; Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (London, 1922), 5.64. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Notebooks 1914-16 (Oxford, 1961) 2.9.16, 15.10.16.

shows that the solipsist's position is incoherent. Of course, if Wittgenstein can show in addition that idealism entails solipsism, by demonstrating the incoherence of the latter he in turn demonstrates the untenability of idealism. And in the course of doing this, light would be cast upon the question of "personal experiences", and their epistemological status, or their importance in epistemology. (The reader may begin to understand how the Blue Book may be related to classical philosophical writings.)

Section 4

Although this program is clear enough, the argument of Wittgenstein is not so easy to follow, for it is not always clear what he is arguing against, and thus it is not clear what the import is of each of his conclusions. There are various formulations of the solipsist's thesis, for example, and each requires a different response. We have already quoted one of them: "Only my own experience is real . . . I am I and they are they." This 'fact' of the solipsist must lead inevitably to the conclusion that I can't even believe that another has pain, because the hypothesis that another has pains transcends all possible experience; and this means that nothing can count as confirming evidence. Now this latter is certainly a stronger position than the former; it may be deduced from the former in conjunction with two other assertions which would likely

be made by the solipsist, namely: "I feel my pains, he feels his pains" and "One can't know that one is in pain unless one feels (has) the pain".

Now the realist's answer does not solve the solipsist's problem because the realist overlooks the different usages of the words "to have" and "to imagine", according to Wittgenstein. It is difficult to see how these are related to the problem, and it cannot be said that Wittgenstein makes the connection crystal clear. He seems to be attempting to clarify what the solipsist means by his assertion (I have, or feel, my pains; you have, or feel, your pains, etc.), and to show that they can't mean what the solipsistic position requires. The use of "feel" interchangeably with "have" is justified because (a) Wittgenstein slides from one locution to the other, and (b) the solipsist could give as a reason for his skepticism either, "one can't feel another's pain", or "one can't have another's pain".¹

Wittgenstein first argues for the following point: the solipsist, in saying, "I can't feel another man's toothache"

1. Norman Malcolm has advanced an argument against the view that there is a difference between owning bodily sensations and observing or perceiving them. See N. Malcolm, "The Privacy of Experience", Avrum Stroll, ed., Epistemology (New York, 1967), pp. 129-134.

does not mean "I can't feel pain in another man's tooth".

It is important to become clear about this in order to avoid confusing the experiential proposition "we can't have (haven't as a rule) pains in another person's tooth" with the metaphysical proposition "I can't feel his pain".

Wittgenstein elaborates on the differences between these two sets of sentences by arguing that it is conceivable that I should feel pain in another person's body. He accomplishes this by pointing out that there are all sorts of criteria connected with pain being in a particular place. We only need to imagine an extraordinary correlation of these criteria being fulfilled; for example, we could imagine the feeling of toothache being correlated with the visual and kinaesthetic experiences of seeing one's arm and hand reaching and touching the painful tooth in another man's mouth.¹

Thus the solipsist who contends that one cannot feel another's pain does not wish to deny that one can feel pain in another person's body. That is, he does not intend to deny that I could conceive of a pain in another's tooth; "In fact, he would say: 'I may have toothache in another man's tooth, but not his toothache'".²

Section 5

The context in which the argument we have been discussing originally occurs reinforces one's inclination to agree with

1. Blue Book, p. 52.

2. Ibid., p. 53.

Bouwsma that the Blue Book appears incomprehensible. For the argument is sandwiched between the following quotations.

'A has a gold tooth' means that the tooth is in A's mouth. This may account for the fact that I am not able to see it. Now the case of his toothache, of which I say that I am not able to feel it because it is in his mouth, is not analogous to the case of the gold tooth. It is the apparent analogy, and again the lack of analogy, between these cases which causes our trouble. And it is this troublesome feature in our grammar which the realist does not notice.¹

Without further mention of gold teeth during the course of the argument, Wittgenstein concludes it by stating:

Thus the propositions 'A has a gold tooth' and 'A has toothache' are not used analogously. They differ in their grammar where at first sight they might not seem to differ.²

It is not at all obvious that Wittgenstein has proven this. In fact, it is not obvious that he has even discussed this. Or at least if he has offered a proof, it is not easily discerned. Perhaps we can fill in an argument for this conclusion that is compatible with what Wittgenstein makes explicit.

In the first place, it might be said that the presence of a gold tooth in A's mouth justifies "A has a gold tooth", whereas we have just seen (on the solipsist's account) that the presence of a toothache in A's mouth does not justify us in saying "A has toothache", for it may be that I have

1. Blue Book, p. 49.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

toothache in A's mouth. So far this is not a difference in the grammars of these sentences since it is possible that I should have a gold tooth (which is) in another man's mouth; I could have lent him my bridge while his was being repaired (an admittedly far-fetched example). In this case, it is also true that A has a gold tooth, and this fact, that he and I may have the same gold tooth, points to a difference in grammars. For there are at least two sorts of criteria for the possession of gold teeth; one has to do with the sorts of things studied by lawyers, and the other criterion concerns location. A gold tooth can be mine by the former criterion and yours by the latter, if it is in your mouth or hand. This is one sort of difference in the grammar of the two sentences, for it seems there are no criteria of the first sort for the possession of toothaches (that is, one has no legal rights over toothaches), and the criterion of location is not sufficient to establish the ownership of toothaches.

The fact that there are legal criteria for the possession of gold teeth and none for the possession of toothaches is but a symptom of a whole set of other differences. All the following things are true of gold teeth, but none are true of toothaches: they can be loaned, borrowed, inherited or bequeathed, lost or misplaced, stolen, abandoned, destroyed, exchanged for money, confiscated, and so on.

We have noted that the location of a toothache does not determine its possessor, whereas the location of a gold tooth determines a possessor, if not the sole possessor. It has been argued that there are multiple criteria for the possession of gold teeth, each of which could "pick out" a different possessor; thus, two or more people might have the same gold tooth. It could have been a gold tooth that the three evil sisters passed from one to another instead of an eye (one set of false teeth shared by three people might be better than no teeth at all). The solipsist (and the Cartesian and Strawson) would deny that the same toothache could be shared by the three sisters, even though it might be the same tooth that pains each of them in turn.

The solipsist might argue that the possessor of a toothache is the one who feels it; in order to determine who possesses a given toothache, we need only discover who feels it. It is not clear what is meant by this; it could mean, as Norman Malcolm argues, that there is no difference between having a bodily sensation and feeling it.¹ If this is so, it points to another difference between the grammars of 'I have toothache' and 'I have a gold tooth', for I can feel any number of gold teeth which I do not have. Dentists feel, and fill, many teeth which they do not have. We should be able to explore many of the differences in the grammars of the

1. Malcolm, pp. 129-134.

two sentences by examining the grammatical differences between "I feel toothache" and "I feel a gold tooth". We are now in a position to return to the argument, which was interrupted at the end of Section 4.

Section 6

Let us return to Wittgenstein's charge that the realist overlooks the distinction between 'to have' and 'to imagine'. We now see that he means that the realist is assuming that imagining that A has toothache is like imagining that A has a gold tooth. This latter supposition makes sense because we can conceive the circumstances upon which we would agree that A has a gold tooth. And just as there is a quite definite act of imagining that another has a gold tooth, so too there is an act of imagining that another has toothache. "Of course we don't deny this, or any other statement about facts."¹ But are they therefore the same? In what sense can I imagine the latter? ". . . the sense in which an image is an image is determined by the way it is compared with reality."² If you think of comparing an image of A's toothache with A's toothache, you will see that you do not compare them as you compare the image of A's gold tooth with A's gold tooth.

1. Blue Book, p. 53.

2. Ibid., p. 53.

If you say, you compare them 'indirectly' via his bodily behavior, I answer that this means you don't compare them as you compare the picture of his behavior with his behavior.¹

Thus it is in overlooking these distinctions that the realist fails to reply to the solipsist's question, 'How can I believe that another has toothache?'. According to the solipsist it makes sense to suppose (believe, imagine) that A has a gold tooth, because we can imagine what it would be like to discover that our supposition were true (that our belief was correct, that we could verify that our image was an image of A's gold tooth). But we would have no way of discovering that our supposition that A had toothache was true, for this would entail that we knew A had toothache, for one can only know if one feels it, and if I feel it, it is not A's. Nor can we know that our image is an image of A's toothache, for we should have to compare our image with A's toothache; but the only toothaches we are in a position to "observe" are our own.

Keeping this in mind, the statement, "I grant you that you can't know when A has pain, you can only conjecture it" gives us pause. For there is some question as to what impossibility is being referred to when it is said that one can't know. A solipsist in uttering this may have felt that he was saying something analogous to not knowing whether another man had a gold tooth because his mouth was shut.

1. Blue Book, p. 53.

But in this latter case, not knowing but conjecturing makes sense because one could imagine knowing (after looking in the other's mouth). It makes sense to say that you don't see his tooth, it makes sense to say you don't know whether it is gold, and hence it makes sense to say that you do see it or know whether it is gold.

When on the other hand, you granted me that a man can't know whether the other person has pain, you do not wish to say that as a matter of fact people don't know, but that it made no sense to say they knew (and therefore no sense to say they don't know). That is, you did not state that knowing was a goal which you could not reach, and that you have to be contented with conjecturing; rather, there is no goal in this game.¹

The solipsist's statement that one can't know another has pain is not a fact about human frailty; it is more like the statement, "There is no goal in an endurance race"; it is a statement about a convention the solipsist has made. Of course, if the solipsist's statement is a statement about a convention, it need not alarm us: it is not as if there are certain facts about another person we are contingently prevented from knowing, nor is knowledge somehow being withheld; rather, there is no such thing as knowledge or 'knowing' here. Of course, the solipsist did not intend that his statement should be read as a statement about a convention he had made. The solipsist considers himself to be uttering a statement of fact. But Wittgenstein has provided an analysis of the solipsist's position which reduces the solipsist's contention

1. Blue Book, p. 54. See also p. 67.

to a statement about a convention. Wittgenstein subsequently argues that it is not the same as our ordinary conventions in this area.

It was mentioned earlier that we could better understand Wittgenstein in this section if take him to be responding to a solipsistic argument something like this: "I know I have toothache because I feel it. I can't feel A's toothache. Therefore I can't know A has toothache." If we keep this in mind, we can in another way see the solipsist's contention as one about a convention. Consider the sentence, "I won't feel your cold" said to someone being careless on a cold winter's day. This is a proposition taught by experience, if we interpret this as, "I don't suffer when you catch a cold". In order for a proposition to qualify as one taught by experience, its contrary or contradictory must be at least conceivable, if not actual (if not a fact). For it could have been that when you exposed your head to the cold, I caught cold. The question Wittgenstein is trying to arrive at in this and the following example is: what counts as my pain, sensation, etc.? If both of us had pains whenever your head was exposed, would we say that we had the same pain? Even though there was but one cause, a person arguing for the solipsist position would say that perhaps we have pains which are exactly alike, but my pain is not yours. Wittgenstein give the example of two people who have a part of their bodies in common, a hand. When the hand is stung by a wasp, both people cry, contort their faces,

give the same description of the pain, etc.. Now are we to say they have the same pain or different ones? If one says that they do not have the same pain the reason is probably "because my pain is my pain and your pain is your pain".

And here you are making a grammatical statement about the use of the phrase 'the same pain'. You say that you don't wish to apply the phrase 'he has got my pain' or 'we both have the same pain', and instead, perhaps, you will apply such a phrase as 'his pain is exactly like mine' . . . Of course, if we exclude the phrase 'I have his toothache' from our language, we thereby also exclude 'I have (or feel) my toothache'.¹

This consequence (if indeed it is one) is unacceptable to the solipsist, for on his argument, it was precisely because I have only my own pains that I can only know that I am in pain, and because I can not have his pain, I cannot know that he has pain.

So there is a sense in which this argument from the Blue Book could be considered a no-ownership argument. If neither "I have his pain" nor "I have my pain" makes sense, the most we could say is "I have pain", not specifying 'his' or 'mine'. Since it is neither mine nor another's, it is not possessed. Nothing has been argued which would rule out saying "I have pain", and this seems to be an expression of possession, but it is not an assertion of possession in the

1. Blue Book, p. 55.

sense required by the solipsist as a reason (or cause?) for my inability to know that another has pain. "I have pain" means no more than "I feel pain". That is, the solipsist must use some notation in the statement of his position which emphasizes that the pain is not the same in the cases where I say, "I have pain and he has pain"; one should not be able to conclude from this that he has the same as I. The solipsist hopes to secure this by insisting that "I have my pain and he has his pain". The reasons for the solipsist's failure deserve elaboration.

Section 7

A careful reader might object that Wittgenstein has merely given the statement of a no-ownership position, and has not provided an argument. Now, the shortest way to deal with this objection is to admit that it is true. For Wittgenstein merely asserts the crucial inference, that if "I have his pain" doesn't make sense, then "I have my pain" is equally nonsensical. He does not justify it, at least in this particular section. As we shall see shortly, however, there are numerous justifications for similar inferences in the Blue Book. Before attempting to present the justification it must be emphasized that it is not Wittgenstein's thesis that sensation, pains, etc. are not owned: Wittgenstein is simply showing that this is a consequence of certain other things a solipsist is inclined

to assert. Chief among these are "I can't have another's sensation" or "Two people can't have the same sensation". It is these assertions which are at the root of solipsism; and it is these assertions which lead to the paradox that sensations are not possessed at all.

The inference which must be justified is: if we exclude 'I have your pain' as nonsense, we thereby exclude 'I have my pain'. In justifying this inference, Wittgenstein would have us look at the sentence 'I have my pain' as it is used by us. This sentence has sense only as a member of a system of language. It has sense because it has been given sense by the speakers of the sentence, and it has the sense that has been given it. It is one expression in a "calculus". In so far as this word is fitting, the "elements" of the calculus (this sentence and others related to it) must (should) conform to certain "rules", conventions, "the grammar of the phrase" which can be said to "govern" their use. These "conventions" are by no means strict; it is not always easy to tell whether or not an expression is being used in accordance with its conventions. There must be, however, occasions upon which there is no difficulty in deciding.

In Wittgenstein's argument against the solipsist, he shows that the solipsist would not allow that 'I have his pain' is true under any circumstances; that is, 'I have his pain' is inconceivable; it doesn't make sense; it is a violation of the conventions governing the terms in this sentence.

But in ordinary language, the conventions governing these terms are closely related to the conventions governing the terms in 'I have my pain'; so closely related that if the former makes no sense, neither does the latter. At most, this latter sentence might be seen as stating the convention that when I can say 'I have pain' I can say 'I have my pain'; but then the latter sentence has the same use as 'I have pain'.

This becomes clear if one examines the contrary claim carefully. Suppose that one argues "I have (or feel) my pain" makes sense but is not the statement of a convention, and means more than "I have (feel) pain". Now we are interested in what use 'my' has in this utterance. Let us compare it with the use of 'my' in respect to gold teeth or hats. In order to ascertain that this possessive of ownership is used to make a true statement, we must correctly identify the owner. "I have a hat" can be used to mean either "I have his hat" or "I have my hat"; "I have a gold tooth" can mean either "I have his gold tooth" or "I have my gold tooth". The question of who owns the gold tooth is independent of who has it at some particular time. This appears paradoxical because of the presence of 'have', which we assume expresses possession. We can see this more clearly if we contrast "I feel my pain" and "I feel pain" with "I am wearing my hat" and "I am wearing a hat". In the latter case, it is easily seen that the question of who owns a particular hat is independent of who

wears it. In order to decide on the truth of "I am wearing a hat", we need only note that I am wearing a hat; in order to decide on the truth of "I am wearing my hat", in addition to noting that I am wearing a hat, we must identify the owner of the hat. It is the presence or the appropriateness of this further inquiry which gives sense to the locution 'my'.

Let us now contrast this with "I feel my pain", or "he feels his pain", as opposed to "I feel a pain" or "he feels pain". In order for 'his' or 'my' to have a use analogous to their uses in "I have his (my) hat", the question of whether or not he feels his pain must be independent of the question of whether he feels pain. That is, in order for 'his' to have its normal possessive force in "He has his pain", in order to verify that he has his pain, we must not only ascertain that he has pain, but we must correctly identify the owner of the pain. Of course, if he cannot have another's pain, there can be no question whether he has his pain; and if there can be no question about it, if no mistake can be made, then it can't be said that we have identified the owner. Hence, if we accept the solipsist's assertion that one can't have another's sensations, it follows that the possessive adjectives 'my' and 'his' no longer express possession in the sense expressed in the phrases 'my (or his) gold tooth (or hat)'. That is, though there is an important difference

between "I have my hat" and "I have a hat", this difference is not reflected in "I have my pain" and "I have pain". "I have my pain" adds nothing to "I have pain". Thus, a consequence of the solipsist's assertion is that pains are owned by no one.

It does the solipsist no good to argue that "I have pain" expresses ownership. Even if it is in a sense an expression of ownership, it does not express what is required for the solipsist's conclusion that I can't know what you are feeling (or having). According to the solipsist, it is because I cannot feel (or have) your pain that I cannot know that you have pain. But if "you feel your pain" or "he feels his pain" mean no more than "you feel pain" or "he feels pain", so far nothing has been said which would imply that he (or you) feels something which I cannot. The solipsist's argument requires that he feel something (his pain) which I cannot (because I feel only my pains); but this supposed difference (the difference between his and my pains) is not secured by insisting that he feels only his pains and I feel only my pains. The solipsist's insistence that one cannot have another's sensations, which was intended to secure that he and I could not have or feel the same thing, paradoxically entails that we have or feel the same thing. The assertion that he has his pain and I have my pain means no more than he has pain and I have pain; thus we both have or feel pain; I have or feel the same as you.

Section 8

In this chapter we have seen that the solipsist's contentions, that I can't have his pain, or "One can't have another's sensations", although intended to be statements of fact, clearly are not. It has been suggested that they are the expressions of conventions, or expressions of a grammatical rule. Wittgenstein has noted that it is characteristic of metaphysical questions that what is expressed in the form of a scientific question is actually a lack of clarity concerning the grammar of certain words.¹ Metaphysical assertions might then be the expressions of grammatical rules in the form of empirical propositions. One mistakes the expression of a convention for the expression of an empirical fact. This is one sort of philosophical confusion. Philosophical confusions frequently arise through our failure to become clear about the grammar of a particular phrase. What we take to be a problem about the nature of a medium (for example, the mind) is often a puzzlement caused by our mystifying use of language; the puzzlement is removed by clarifying the grammar of the expressions involved.² Philosophical confusions (or grammatical misunderstandings) often arise when we mistakenly assume that two expressions which have analogous grammars in

1. Blue Book, p. 35. Also pp. 56, 57.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 7.

some respects are analogous in all respects.

When words in our ordinary language have prima facie analogous grammars we are inclined to try to interpret them analogously; i.e. we try to make the analogy hold throughout.¹

"I have my pain" and "I have my gold tooth" have prima facie analogous grammars, as does "he has his pain" and "he has his hat". The solipsist errs in failing to notice that the prima facie analogy does not hold throughout, or rather in failing to notice the consequences of the fact that the analogy is only prima facie. For the solipsist does notice, or at least draws our attention to a difference in the grammars of "he has his pain" and "he has his hat", for on the solipsist's account it is true that "one can't have another's pain", but the solipsist would not contend that "one can't have another's hat". It is only by trading on the prima facie analogy and the lack of analogy that the solipsist's position seems plausible. The solipsist first assumes that the 'my' in 'my pain' and 'my gold tooth' have the same grammar, and hence the same use. When he asserts that one can't have another's pains, the solipsist fails to realize that this signals that this occurrence of 'my' has a different sense than in 'my gold tooth'. Instead, the solipsist takes this to be a statement about the nature of pains as opposed to the nature of gold teeth. Believing (or implying) that 'my' has the same sense in 'my pain' and 'my

1. Blue Book, p. 7.

gold tooth', the solipsist concludes that the differences in the use of these expressions is a consequence of the differences between pains and gold teeth. A pain is like a gold tooth in that they can both be possessed; they differ in that only I can have or feel my pain, whereas gold teeth can be had or felt by anyone: pains are "private" particulars or objects. It is this confused picture of "private particulars" which leads ultimately to the solipsist's skepticism of other minds, and is at the root of solipsism itself.

Chapter Three

Section 1

We may recall from Chapter One that it was necessary to delay the resolution of the issue between the no-ownership theorist and Strawson until the "counting rules" for "private experiences" had been determined. It was noted that though Strawson considers the argument incoherent, he does not disagree with one aspect of the theorist's conclusion, that the Ego which functions solely to possess states of consciousness is an illusion. Strawson has an independent argument against the Cartesian Ego. However, Strawson found it important to refute the theorist in order to secure "logically non-transferable ownership" or 'having₂'. This particular kind of ownership is held by Strawson to be a consequence of the requirements of making identifying references to "private particulars" in ordinary speech. The requirements are alleged to be such that these particulars (for example, sensations) must be identified as the sensations of some previously identified person.

The solipsist and Strawson have this in common: both of their positions entail the same individuation rules for "private particulars". Thus, an argument which would show that the implied counting rule is not the one presupposed in our everyday speech would at the same time show that both Strawson and the solipsist have "revisionary" views of the concept of a person, in so far as one's concept of a person is determined by one's concept of

"private experiences" as states of consciousness.

Now, there are at least two sorts of argument for this conclusion. The first we have already given in Chapter Two. It consists in assuming the contrary, that states of consciousness are logically non-transferable, and showing that as a consequence states of consciousness are not owned at all.

The second argument which can be adduced is to provide plausible counter instances to the claim that it is prima facie the case that one ascribes states of consciousness to oneself in such a way that "it does not seem to make sense to suggest . . . that the identical pain which was in fact one's own might have been another's".¹

One could imagine the following conversation as two people were walking through a hitherto unexplored jungle. Suddenly one of the conversants grabs his hand and exclaims "Ouch!". After the initial shock, he asks, "Do you recall the pain one has when one is stung by a wasp? I have that sensation in my hand, without the swelling." The other grabs his elbow and exclaims, "Ouch! I have the same pain! We must be getting stung by the same thing, maybe a wasp."

Now this example illustrates a point which is de-emphasized by Strawson, namely that sensations, experiences, states of mind, etc., are very frequently individuated in terms of the

1. Strawson, p. 97.

cause of the experience, rather than in terms of the possessor. That is to say, in ordinary speech such experiences owe their identity as particulars to their cause -- the same cause, then the same sensations. We both get the same sensation in our stomachs as the elevator begins to descend. This method of individuating among sensations, experiences, etc., is particularly prevalent among those for which a cause can easily be specified; it is not true in general for the members of Strawson's favored class for easing our understanding as to how our concept of a person is possible.¹

To this sort of counter-example a Strawsonian might retort that even if it was true that we sometimes individuate experiences in terms of causes, this is still not an argument in support of the thesis that "he can have the same pain (sensation, experience) as I" -- because he and I never have pains which have the same cause. Now this rebuttal taken one way is false if it is seen to be denying, for example, that two people can be stung by a wasp or can ride down an elevator together (both are causes of certain sensations).

Now of course the Strawsonian does not wish to deny that several people can ride down an elevator or be stung by a wasp; but he is denying that the sensation which is caused in each case (and by 'each case' here he means 'the case of each person',

1. The favored class is described on p. 111, Strawson's Individuals.

not 'the case of riding down an elevator, etc.')

is caused by the same thing. That is, each person may be stung by a wasp, even by the same wasp, but if there are five different persons, there will be five distinct, different, actions of stinging, and hence five different causes.

Now there are two related things to be said about this sort of analysis of the identity of sensations and causes. The first is that this analysis can only be an analysis of what is "really" the case, not of what appears to be the case, for we do not make this sort of distinction in our ordinary discourse about sensations and their causes. That is, this analysis presupposes a certain way of counting causes, such that if there are five people riding a descending elevator, there are five causes of five sinking sensations in five stomachs. In order for the Strawsonian to defend the thesis that there are five sensations, he must stipulate that there are five causes. But ordinarily we would say that our sinking sensation was caused by the sudden descent of the elevator; and this does not support the view that there are five distinct causes of five distinct sinking sensations. Thus one who argues that there are five causes in this case must also argue that our ordinary discourse is misleading, for it implies that there is only one cause; "really" there are five causes.

We have assumed that a Strawsonian would accept the statement that in ordinary discourse we often identify or individuate sensations by reference to their cause. He would accept this

provided that he be allowed to count causes in the particular way described above. The causes themselves are individuated according to the number of people affected. Thus, the Strawsonian only appears to accept the view that sensations are sometimes individuated in ordinary discourse in terms of causes. An example from the Blue Book will illustrate this.

We are asked to imagine two persons who have a part of their bodies in common, a hand, so that between them they have three hands, though each could claim that he had two. If a wasp stings this hand, and both persons cry out, try to sooth the hand, curse wasps, and so on, are we to say they have the same pain? If we do say this, that is, that there is but one pain, since the pain has but one cause, then we must admit that it makes sense to say, "I have his pain", or "I have the same sensation as he". It seems quite obvious that in this case at least we would have no hesitation about asserting that the two persons have the same pain. There are less contrived cases in which we ascribe the same sensation, state of consciousness, a feeling, or experience to two or more people.

Thus far we have argued against Strawson's claim that sensations are dependent for their identity on the person who "owns" them by trying to make plausible the claim that "private particulars" are sometimes individuated by reference to the cause, according to the rules: if the cause is the same, it is the same sensation; different causes produce different sensations.

The individuation of sensations in terms of their causes has been dwelled upon because of its obvious relevance to the list of facts with which the no-ownership theorist was presumed to begin. When this was discussed, we noted that Strawson could prove the incoherence of the no-ownership argument if he could prove on independent grounds that sensations owe their identity as particulars to identified persons. But now it can be seen that it is unlikely that Strawson should be able to do this, for the theorist will be able to identify at least some sensations in terms of the causes.

The claim that sensations can in some cases be individuated in terms of their causes is a consequence of a more general claim which has been made by several philosophers who argue that sensations are individuated in terms of their description. Undoubtedly, giving the cause would be giving part of the description of a sensation in many cases; for example, "Its like the feeling you have when you start down in an elevator". Norman Malcolm writes:

Descriptions of sensations provide the criteria of identity for sensations. Since your sensation can have the same description as mine, you and I can have the same sensation.¹

Section 2

It should be clear by this time that Strawson has failed to

1. Malcolm, p. 143.

prove that the no-ownership argument is incoherent. It has been argued that logically non-transferable ownership ('having₂') is an illusion, at least with regard to states of consciousness. Logically non-transferable possession of states of consciousness is a requirement for both the solipsistic and Cartesian positions. Strawson's argument against the Cartesian was not an argument against 'having₂', but against the existence of an Ego to which only states of consciousness could logically be ascribed. Strawson correctly sees that such an Ego necessarily could not perceive the existence of other minds, and hence leads to solipsism, which is not in accordance with our ordinary concept of a person.

How then does Strawson avoid solipsism? He avoids solipsism by insisting that the other-ascription of P-predicates is a necessary condition of the self-ascription of these same predicates. Let us see what this involves.

Noting that a necessary condition of ascribing states of consciousness to oneself is that one be prepared on some occasions to ascribe them to others, Strawson continues:

This means not less than it says. It means, for example, that the ascribing phrases are used in just the same sense when the subject is another as when the subject is oneself . . . But to the philosopher this thought has given trouble.¹

1. Strawson, p. 99.

The philosopher cannot see how the sense could be the same when the method of verification is so different in the two cases, "or, rather, when there is a method of verification in the one case (the case of others) and not, properly speaking, in the other case (the case of oneself)".¹ To this objection, Strawson gives no reply; nor does he reply to a subsequent objection he mentions: "Or, again -- a more sophisticated scruple -- how can it be right to talk of ascribing in the case of oneself?"² It would seem that these objections deserve more consideration than Strawson gives them, but at the moment we are more interested in Strawson's assertion that "'in pain' means the same whether one says 'I am in pain' or 'he is in pain'."³ For it would seem that from this we could conclude that he is in the same state as I. Or, we might put Strawson's point this way: "a stabbing pain in the right shoulder" means the same thing whether it is ascribed to myself or to another. But it appears that if it means the same thing in either case, then we have the same thing. And it would appear that this is incompatible with Strawson's assertion that states of consciousness are ascribed in a logically non-transferable manner. That is, the necessity of other-ascription of predicates in the

1. Strawson, p. 100.

2. Ibid., p. 100.

3. Ibid., p. 99.

very same sense presupposes a counting rule for states of consciousness which is incompatible with the assertion that they are logically non-transferable. In this sense, Strawson's account of P-predicates is incoherent. As a consequence, one may well be suspicious of his concept of a person -- that to which both M-predicates and P-predicates are ascribed.

It is interesting to compare Strawson and the no-ownership theorist in terms of their criticisms of the Cartesian position. Strawson attacks the notion of 'having₂'; if it can be shown to be an illusion, then it follows that there is nothing which possesses things in a logically transferable manner. On the other hand, Strawson's criticism is that the self-ascription of P-predicates presupposes the other-ascription of these predicates, and this in turn presupposes that one can identify other subjects of states of consciousness. But one cannot identify others if they can only be identified as subjects of experience, possessors of states of consciousness. Hence, Strawson replaces the Cartesian Ego with "persons", which are identifiable as possessors of both M-predicates and P-predicates. Persons and Cartesian Egos are both possessors of logically non-transferable "private particulars". Are there any other similarities between Strawson's and the Cartesian's positions?

We have seen that on Strawson's view, self-ascription of states of consciousness, unlike other-ascription, is

"otherwise than on the basis of observation of the behavior of the subject of them."¹ Though there are methods of verifying the truth of ascriptions to others, there does not seem to be a method of verification for self-ascription.²

Now, the difficulty here is what can "otherwise than on the basis of observation of the behavior of the subject of them" mean? There are several alternatives. It could mean "upon no basis whatsoever", and although we would find this completely unobjectionable, it does not seem that this is the interpretation most consistent with Strawson's discussion in Section 5 of "Persons". That there is some basis for self-ascription is implied in:

But there remain many cases in which one has an entirely adequate basis for ascribing a P-predicate to oneself, and yet in which this basis is quite distinct from those on which one ascribes the predicate to another. Thus one says, reporting a present state of mind or feeling: 'I feel tired, am depressed, am in pain'.³

The implication of the paragraph in which this quotation occurs is that there are two other sorts of cases of self-ascription of P-predicates; cases where the predicates are self-ascribed on the same basis upon which they are other-ascribed, and

1. Strawson, p. 108, my italics.

2. Ibid., p. 100.

3. Ibid., p. 107.

cases where they are self-ascribed other than on the

basis of the criteria on the strength of which one ascribes them to others . . . (but it is) also true that their ascription is liable to correction by the self-ascriber on this basis.¹

From these remarks we can conclude that on Strawson's view, some P-predicates are ascribed to oneself on the same observation/behavior basis upon which they are ascribed to others. Other P-predicates are not ascribed on the observation/behavior basis, but are subject to correction on this basis. Still other P-predicates are ascribed to oneself in a manner completely independent of the basis upon which they are ascribed to others. However, in each of these cases (which, it is implied, exhaust the possibilities for the self-ascription of P-predicates) P-predicates are ascribed to oneself upon some basis. It thus appears, on Strawson's account, that there are two sorts of relevant "bases" for the ascription of P-predicates, and although both sorts may be relevant to some cases of self-ascription, only one kind of basis is relevant to other-ascription. This interpretation is reinforced by a later quotation:

To think that it does so is to forget the self-ascriptive use of these predicates, to forget that we have to do with a class of predicates to the meaning of which it is essential that they should be both self-ascribable and other-ascribable to the same individual, where self-ascriptions are not made on the observational basis on which other-ascriptions are made, but on another basis.²

1. Strawson, p. 107.

2. Ibid., p. 110, my italics.

Now, a very interesting and very important question is: what can this basis be which is peculiar to self-ascription cases? We can only surmise that it is the "private particular" itself which is the basis for the self-ascription or report. But this, of course, is part of the Cartesian view. It is however, a very important part of the Cartesian position. For this leads naturally to the view that the meaning of the ascription made on this basis is the basis itself, and hence one cannot ascribe the same thing to another, for one is not -- and cannot become -- acquainted with that upon which the ascription must be based. Hence, Cartesianism leads naturally to skepticism about other minds, and finally to solipsism.

We have thus uncovered yet another respect in which Strawson's position is similar to the Cartesian's. We might note that the view that private particulars are the basis for the self-ascription of P-predicates when combined with the view that these particulars are logically non-transferable leads quite directly to solipsism; for I ascribe P-predicates to myself on the basis of my private particulars; I have no access to your private particulars, and hence no basis on which to ascribe them.

Section 3

In this chapter it has been argued that Strawson's concept of "private particulars" is fundamentally Cartesian for they

are logically non-transferable and are sometimes the basis for the self-ascription of P-predicates. We have seen that on Strawson's account, there are two aspects of P-predicates, self-ascriptive and other-ascriptive. It has been shown that his account of self-ascription of P-predicates is fundamentally Cartesian. It has been noted that the necessity of other-ascription for self-ascription was introduced by Strawson in the context of his refutation of the Cartesian account of the Ego. And it has been concluded that Strawson's account of P-predicates is incoherent because the counting rules for states of consciousness presupposed by his account of self-ascription is incompatible with the counting rules presupposed by the necessity of other-ascription of P-predicates in the same sense. In this context it might be noted that the cardinal failure of "Persons" is the failure to answer the philosopher's question: how can P-predicates mean the same thing when they are other-ascribed and self-ascribed on different bases? Strawson's implicit answer, that an account of the meaning of a P-predicate requires an account of self-ascription and other ascription of that predicate, does not remove the difficulty (that is, the incompatibility of the counting rules presupposed by each); it simply conceals it. Strawson's account of P-predicates, and hence of the concept of a person, is a philosophical example of having one's cake and eating it too: the Cartesian account of states of consciousness ("private

particulars") which lies at the root of the Cartesian (solipsistic) skepticism of other minds is incorporated in Strawson's account of the self-ascription of P-predicates, but the skepticism of other minds is ruled out by his account of the other-ascription of the same predicates.

On independent grounds, in this and the last chapter, we have seen that the counting rules presupposed by Strawson's insistence that states of consciousness are logically non-transferable are not in fact the rules presupposed by our daily discourse about these states. Strawson holds that the logical non-transferability is "prima facie the case". We have seen that this is not prima facie the case. This is ironic in the light of Strawson's distinction in the Introduction of Individuals between "revisionary" and "descriptive" metaphysics. The latter, which Strawson obviously prefers, attempts to lay bare the features of our conceptual scheme, whereas the former seeks to revise it for one reason or another. Strawson implies that the no-ownership theorist (and hence Wittgenstein) presents a revisionary account of a person by holding that states of consciousness are not logically non-transferable. We can now see that it is Strawson, not the no-ownership theorist or Wittgenstein, who practices "revisionary" metaphysics.

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