RESEARCH ARTICLE

WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPT OF MIND THROUGH THE EXPLANATION OF THE WORD 'I' AS BOTH SUBJECT AND OBJECT OF THINKING

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ABSTRACT

The concept of mind has long occupied a central place in philosophical inquiry, yet it remains both deeply familiar and profoundly elusive. Traditional approaches have often treated the mind as an inner, private, and substantial entity, distinct from the body and the external world. This paper examines Ludwig Wittgenstein's contribution to the philosophy of mind within the analytic tradition, focusing on his critique of Cartesian dualism and introspective accounts of mental phenomena. Through an analysis of his early and later works; particularly TractatusLogico-Philosophicus, Philosophical Investigations, and the Blue and Brown Books, the paper explores Wittgenstein's view that philosophical confusion about the mind arises largely from the misuse of language. Central to this discussion is Wittgenstein's distinction between the uses of 'I' as subject and 'I' as object, his private language argument, and his claim that certain first-person mental self-ascriptions are immune to error through misidentification. The paper also examines Wittgenstein's proposal for the elimination of the pronoun 'I' in the expression of immediate experience, highlighting his rejection of the notion of the mind as an inner entity. Ultimately, Wittgenstein conceives the mind not as a metaphysical substance but as a set of activities embedded in language, social practices, and the world itself. By situating the mind within shared forms of life, Wittgenstein offers a non-dualistic, anti-Cartesian account of mentality that dissolves traditional philosophical problems rather than attempting to solve them.

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INTRODUCTION

The mind is both deeply familiar to each of us and yet remains one of the most mysterious and hard-to-understand aspects of our being. It refers to the collection of faculties that give rise to mental phenomena, which are sometimes used interchangeably with the term itself. These faculties include thought, imagination, memory, will, and sensation, all of which are responsible for experiences like perception, pain, belief, desire, intention, and emotion. Various ways of categorizing mental phenomena exist, often based on whether they are sensory, propositional, intentional, conscious, or concurrent. While the mind was once viewed as a substance, it is now more commonly seen as a set of properties or abilities inherent in humans and higher animals. Various competing definitions of the mind or mentality have been proposed. Epistemic definitions emphasize the unique way a subject has access to their mental states. Consciousness based approaches prioritize the conscious mind, considering unconscious mental phenomena part of the mind only if they relate to the conscious experience. Intentionality based approaches argue that the ability to refer to objects and represent the world is what defines the mental. Behaviorism holds that an entity"s mind is determined by how it responds to external stimuli, while functionalism defines mental states based on the causal roles they fulfill. Key questions in the study of the mind, such as whether non-human entities have minds or how the body and mind relate, are greatly influenced by the definition one adopts. The mind or mentality is often contrasted with the body, matter, or physicality, and the relationship between the mind and brain is known as the mind-body problem. Traditional perspectives, such as dualism and idealism, view the mind as non-physical, while modern views like physicalism and functionalism suggest that the mind is either identical to the brain or reducible to physical phenomena like neuronal activity, though dualism and idealism still have many proponents. Another key question is which beings possess minds. Is the mind exclusive to humans, shared by some or all animals, present in all living things, or even a characteristic of certain human made machines? Different cultures and religions offer varying answers to these questions. Some traditions view the mind as unique to humans, while others attribute mental properties to non-living entities (e.g., panpsychism and animism), animals, or deities. Early philosophical speculations often linked the mind (sometimes equated with the soul or spirit) to ideas about life after death and the natural order, as seen in the teachings of Zoroaster, the Buddha, Plato, Aristotle, and later in Islamic and medieval European philosophy. This paper tries to explore how Wittgenstein addresses the concept of the mind within his analytic tradition.

Concept of mind in Wittgenstein's philosophy: Wittgenstein made a significant contribution to the philosophy of mind through his analytical approach to philosophy. He was an Austrian philosopher and logician, he was one of the founders of analytical philosophy. According to Wittgenstein, the purpose of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts, and its task is to clarify the thoughts

expressed in language. This focus on language makes philosophy, for Wittgenstein and other analytical thinkers, a critique of language. Wittgenstein's philosophical thought evolved over time, and his ideas are often divided into two stages: the early and the later. His early works, especially Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, have an important role in shaping the philosophy of language. His later works, found in Philosophical Investigations, represent a shift in his views and further develop his approach to understanding meaning and mind. The early and later works of Wittgenstein are radically different, yet both share a common focus: analyzing language and its meaning. Wittgenstein believed that philosophy cannot add new knowledge but can clarify concepts. His teachings and writings were pivotal in placing the philosophy of mind at the center of philosophical discussions during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Cartesian legacy, with its emphasis on the mind, was critiqued in the early 20th century, especially in Wittgenstein's later works. Wittgenstein rejected both the introspective method and Cartesian dualism, leading some to view him as a type of behaviorist. In the case of the Cartesian framework, the mind was the central concept that inherited the task of making thought, the inner core of all human activities. This led to the fact that the mind belongs to the inner world and thought is pre-linguistic and hence an independent entity from the language. Thus, the mind is an autonomous and independent entity. The idea of the inner is the idea of making thought an inner process in the individual and subjective realm of the mind as distinguished from the body of man. According to this view, the inner mental process as distinguished from the bodily actions constitutes the mind. Thus, the mind is the store house of the mental process. Mind is the seat of these activities and so consciousness becomes the innate nature of the mind. This idea of an inner aspect has been criticized by many materialist philosophers and they claim that the concept of inner is a myth.

He argued that the study of the mind must account for both the first-person and third- person perspectives, that is, we know our own minds subjectively and observe the minds of others. For Wittgenstein, studying the mind means studying the concept of the mind, which applies to both oneself and others. His 'private language argument' critiques the idea that one can understand mental states without first acquiring a concept, which happens through language acquisition in social contexts. A child, for example, learns the concept of pain through interactions with others, such as reacting to sharp objects and crying. This process demonstrates how concepts develop in ways that are applicable both to the child and others. Wittgenstein's works, with their emphasis on the social aspect of understanding the mind, present a fundamental alternative to Cartesian individualism. In the Blue and Brown Book he mentions:

"There are two different cases in the use of the word 'I' or 'my' which I might call 'the use as object' and 'the use as subject'. Examples of the first kind of use are these: 'My arm is broken', 'I have grown six inches', 'I have a bump on my forehead', 'The wind blows my hair about'. Examples of the second kind are: 'I see so-and-so', 'I hear so-and-so', 'I try to lift my arm', 'I think it will rain', 'I have toothache'. One can point to the difference between these two categories by saying that, the cases of the first category involve the recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error, or as I should rather put it: The possibility of an error has been provided for It is possiblethat, say in an accident, I should feel a pain in my arm, see a broken arm at my side, and think it is mine, when really it is my neighbour's. And I could, looking into a mirror, mistake a bump on his forehead for one on mine. On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I say I have a toothache. To ask, are you sure that it's you who has pains? would be nonsensical. Now, when in at all And now this way this case no error is possible, it is because the move which we might be inclined to think of as an error, a bad move, is no move of the game of stating our idea suggests itself: that it is as impossible that in making the statement 'I have toothache' I should have mistaken another person for myself, as it is to moan with pain by mistake,

having mistaken someone else for me. To say 'I have pain' is no more a statement about a particular person than moaning is."[1]

Wittgenstein explains that when 'I' is used as the object, the possibility of an error is accounted for, but when 'I' is the subject, no error can occur. For instance, the judgment 'my legs are crossed' involves self-ascribing a physical property. Whether or not I can be mistaken about whose legs are crossed depends on how I make this judgment. In normal circumstances, I can tell if my legs are crossed based on how they feel from within, and in this case, the judgment is immune to error through misidentification. It would be nonsensical to ask, 'Are you sure it's your legs that are crossed?' But in abnormal situations, these changes. For example, if I were anesthetized and unable to feel my legs, I would need to visually check to see if my legs are crossed, just as I would for someone else. In this situation, the judgment is no longer immune to error through misidentification. I might correctly observe that someone's legs are crossed but mistakenly think they are my own, because I am relying on visual information rather than feeling. However, it's important to clarify the type of error Wittgenstein refers to. For example, when someone says, 'I have a bump on my forehead' or 'I have toothache', they are doing two things: identifying who possesses a particular trait (saying it's 'I', not someone else, with the bump or the pain), and describing the trait itself (saying it's a bump rather than a scratch, or a toothache rather than a headache). This raises the question of error: Can the subject be wrong about which person has the bump or pain? And can they be mistaken about what they have? Many discussions of self-knowledge focus on the second type of error: whether a subject can be wrong about the existence of a particular pain, for example, although Wittgenstein addresses this elsewhere. In the passage from the Blue Book, however, he is concerned with the first type of error: Can someone be correct in saying someone has a bump but wrong in identifying themselves as that person? Or can they be correct that someone has a toothache but wrong in thinking it is their own? Wittgenstein argues that mistakes like this are impossible when it comes to something like toothache. It would be nonsensical to question whether you are sure it's you who is in pain. Using modern terminology, we could say that the judgment 'I have toothache' is immune to error from misidentification. But, he notes, judgments like 'I have a bump on my forehead' or 'My arm is broken' are not immune to such errors. For instance, if I see someone in the mirror with a bump on their forehead and mistakenly believe it's me, I could be right that someone has a bump, but wrong in thinking it's mine. Similarly, if I see a broken arm and assume it's mine, I could be wrong in my identification. The examples Wittgenstein presents might suggest that, according to him, 'I' serves as the subject when attributing a mental property to oneself and as the object when attributing a physical property.

Wittgenstein believes that 'I' is used as the subject only in mental self-ascriptions, and thus only mental self-ascriptions can be immune to error through misidentification. However, there is a strong argument against this interpretation. In the Blue Book, Wittgenstein discusses judgments about the position and movement of our own limbs, where he clearly indicates that such judgments are typically made from a first-person perspective, which is distinct from how we judge the position and movement of others limbs. For instance, he points out that I can know my finger moved from my tooth to my eye based on tactile and kinesthetic sensations. In such cases, there is no possibility of being correct that someones finger moved but wrong about it being mine. When the judgment is based on these sensations, the question 'Are you sure it was your finger that moved?' will never arise. This strongly suggests that the Blue Book does not fully support the idea that all self-ascriptions of physical properties involve using 'I' as the object. Some critics have challenged Wittgenstein's discussion of the distinction between as-subject and as-object uses of 'I'. For instance, they often argue that he does not explore enough the connections between the two uses, making it difficult to understand how the first-person and third-person aspects of mental phenomena relate to each other. Wittgenstein's claim that 'to say I have a pain is no more a statement about a particular person than moaning is' has garnered even less agreement. His claim involves at least two aspects: one is that saying 'I have a pain' is not simply making a statement,

but involves expressing the pain, or perhaps issuing a complaint. The other is that when I say 'I have a pain,'my intention is not to make a statement about a specific person, but to convey something about myself. These points are part of a broader strand in Wittgenstein's thinking that many find unconvincing.

The elimination of 'I'

Wittgenstein argues that "The word 'I' belongs to those words that can be eliminated from language."[2] He observes that one of the most misleading ways we represent things in our language is through the use of the word 'I' especially when it describes immediate experiences, such as in the sentence 'I can see a red patch'. He suggests that it would be more insightful to express this without the personal pronoun, as this would help us recognize that the previous representation is not crucial to understanding the facts.[3] Wittgenstein proposes replacing expressions like 'I have a pain" and 'I think' with alternatives such as 'There is a pain' and 'It is thinking'. Through these suggestions, he makes two main points. The first is that the self, or the subject of experience, does not, and cannot, appear in the content of experience. Part of his argument is phenomenological: the experience of pain is not about 'I' possessing something. While we can distinguish the intensity and location of the pain, we do not identify an owner. Wittgenstein extends this idea to visual experiences as well, "Visual space has essentially no owner... The essential thing is that the representation of visual space is the representation of an object and contains no suggestion of a subject."[4]

Wittgenstein's argument is not just that I do not encounter the subject in experience, but that it is impossible for me to do so. He continues to emphasize this point in his later works, often drawing on the analogy from the Tractatus that compares the subject"s position in relation to consciousness to the position of the eye in relation to the visual field. For example, he states, "it makes no sense to say: 'I see the seeing eye'"[5]. One reason Wittgenstein believes the use of 'I' is not logically essential in representing immediate experience is that there is no element in the experience of pain or of seeing an object that corresponds to the word 'I' in describing these experiences. This is why we could, without any loss of meaning, replace the usual way of speaking with an alternative that does not use the personal pronoun to represent immediate experience.

Wittgenstein also presents a second argument for eliminating the word 'I', which is not directly related to the nature of experience itself. This argument concerns the importance of context specifically, the physical identity of the speaker in determining what is meant when someone uses 'I' in a sentence. Wittgenstein argues that the statement 'I have a pain' carries a different meaning when spoken by oneself compared to when spoken by someone else. The reason for this is that the phrase, when uttered by another person, is meaningless unless we know who said it specifically, which mouth produced the words. The meaning of the statement isn"t just in the words themselves but in the fact that they came from a particular person. However, when I say or think 'I have a pain', the sign is simply the sound of the words themselves. To eliminate 'I', Wittgenstein's point is that to understand what someone means by 'I have a pain', it is not enough to know the words; you must also know who is speaking them. The word 'I' is necessary to identify the speaker. However, Wittgenstein suggests that this could be achieved without using the first-person pronoun. For example, if we replaced 'I have a pain' with 'There is pain,' understanding who is in pain would only require knowing who spoke the words. This way, people could express pain and be understood without using the word 'I'. While it might seem extreme to suggest that 'I' could be completely eliminated from language, the core idea is valid: the meaning can be conveyed without it. Wittgenstein shows that the conception of the inner is based on a grammatical mistake and that the mind is real though not as a mental entity but as a mental activity. Mind is real in the sense that we are already playing the language games involving the mind.

That is why those who deny mind are as much at a fault as those who affirm the existence of mind. So is the case for the world. Both mind and world go together in that language presupposes both as real. There is a chance of having the question, how does Wittgenstein conceive the relation between mind and the world in the absence of a substantial entity called mind? Wittgenstein's answer is that a mind-body dualism is not necessary to think of the mind-world relation. In fact, if mind and body are different then there can be no relation between the two. The mind belongs to the world as much as the body and so the mind is not something which is less related to the world than the body. The body, as Wittgenstein says, is the "best picture of human soul"[6] in that the body is not alien to the mind but is its spontaneous expression. In this sense the world is not alien to the mind as the mind requires the world and the bodies of its expression.[7] Wittgenstein advocates for a conception of the mind as existing within the world, rather than as something separate from it. The mind, as part of the world, is deeply intertwined with it because we cannot understand what the mind is without the world. The mind is essentially the minded being, referring to the human being who possesses a mind. In this sense, it does not make sense to think of a mind existing outside of the world. Wittgenstein argues that what we refer to as mental phenomena are all found in human beings, or beings that are similar to humans. Only these beings can truly be said to have a mind, and we can attribute to them the qualities of thinking, feeling, willing, and so on.

Wittgenstein argues for the mind mind-in-the-world rather than for the mind that is outside the world. The mind being part of the world is most intimately connected with the world since without the world we cannot think of what the mind is. Mind is the minded being, that is the human being who has mind. In this sense it is not intelligible how there could be a mind beyond the world. Wittgenstein finds that what we call mental phenomena are all found in human beings. It is because only human beings or those which are closer to human beings can be said to have mind. We can ascribe to them only the predicates of thinking, feeling, willing etc. To sum up it maybe pointed out that according to Wittgenstein mind is not very complicated entity, it is easy to digest. The reason for the complication in philosophical ideas related to mind which makes it a complicated entity is the wrong use of language. Wittgenstein explained mind by the use of the term 'I' as object and as subject. 'I' serves as the subject when attributing a mental property to oneself and as the object when attributing a physical property.

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