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The Opening: A Philosophy of Actuality (4)

Chapter 3 What Is the Impossible Private Language?

Section 1 Chaos for All and Order for One

The Actuality Persists!

The ontological proof causes a problem, not because it fails as a proof, but because it generally succeeds, if it does at all, concerning any God. Is it not impossible for the proof to point to *that* actually existing God, *that* God who alone actually exists? Is it not impossible for it to talk of the existence of *that* God?

‘I think, therefore I am’ also causes the same problem. If ‘I think, therefore I am’ is true, is it not impossible for it to point to *this actual I*, the I who alone actually exists? Indeed, Descartes himself says that ‘I think, therefore I am’ is a general statement applicable to anyone. In order for Descartes’ statement to pick out *this I*, it is necessary for me to *actually* connect the ‘I’ which is claimed to exist in ‘I think, therefore I am’ with the I who actually am. Is that ever possible? This is the problem of ‘my language’.

Can I, who alone *actually* exist, be grasped by language and given expression in language? That is the problem Wittgenstein poses in the form ‘Can solipsism be said?’ in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and in the form ‘Is a private language possible?’ in *Philosophical Investigations*. Essentially, it is one of the various debates encompassing the question of whether the Kantian problem can be linked with the Leibnizian problem. (Otherwise, I do not see what it could be.)

The problem is based on the mystery of the relationship between actuality and persistence, particularly that of *this actuality’s persisting*. Why does actuality persist? How does language bear on that? Those who have been captured by the mystery of the persistence of actuality could not take the ‘continuous creation’ theory to be an absurd doctrine. This theory maintains that the will of the Leibnizian God is performed at every instant and the world is newly created at each time. How can the world be continuous if it is newly created at every moment? Or, a more important question is how, even when it is not continuous, it could be continuous to the extent that it is known not to be continuous.

Of course, in a sense, actuality never continues. But it is necessary for it to appear as if

it did. And this, I think, is related to the fact that actual existence, although ungraspable as a concept, has to appear as if it was conceptually graspable. At the point where these two problems are linked is the problem of private language as I understand it.

The reason why actuality, even when it is not continuous, is continuous to the extent that it is known not to be continuous is that *my present language* is transtemporal. Even the sceptical supposition that a deceiving God has just created my present language such that it seems transtemporal to me—i.e. such that it seems as if it had continued all along—can be posed only by assuming the continuity of my present language. Since it is necessarily assumed, it cannot be said in that language. Is it not the case that the ‘deceiving God’ in the sense I understand ‘has just created’ in the sense I understand ‘my present language’ in the sense I understand ‘such that it seems transtemporal’ in the sense I understand ‘to me’ in the sense I understand? When I doubt and think so, ‘in the sense I understand’ always becomes the background and is presupposed, and cannot appear in the thought itself.

I shall discuss the problem of the possibility of a private language, but in so far as we understand the problem as I have just described, it is extremely difficult to pose it explicitly. For what always becomes the background and is presupposed is tantamount to ‘nothing’. Moreover, any attempt to drag it out from the background and make it manifest can only be done by means of a public language. Any attempt to present the existence of a private language to others is essentially self-contradictory. At any rate, philosophy cannot help devoting itself to such futility.

Even if private languages are destined to be completely erased from our established language with no trace left, it is the only route that connects actuality to public language. Therefore, it is possible, and is even necessary. If language is possible, some kind of private language must have been possible.

There are two ways to approach the problem. One is to ask, from the side of language existing in the established objective world, whether a private language satisfies the conditions that language in general must satisfy. The other is to ask whether it is impossible that my language is, in fact, a private language. The first question is whether a persisting person objectively existing in the world can have her own exclusive language, and the second is whether there is my language that establishes the objective world itself for the first time.

Let us start our discussion with the first question, which is less profound.

What Does It Mean to Read Copies of the Same Paper?

There is a unique mood that seems to happen only to me. It is a unique feeling I cannot express in public language. I invented the word ‘shiky’ as my own exclusive word to describe

it. The word sounds right for it, but I cannot explain to others the way it feels. The feeling occurs once every four days on average, and usually lasts for fifteen minutes to an hour. On a day I felt shiky, I write down ‘S’ with the time in my diary. I am trying to discover the law that determines when the feeling occurs (e.g. its relation to an amount of alcohol I had on the previous day), but I am not yet successful. ‘Shiky’ is a private language in the sense here given.

Perhaps because of how Wittgenstein (allegedly) argues, it seems to be commonly accepted that a private language in that sense is impossible. But I am yet to see a really convincing argument. Though most of the ‘arguments’ are question-begging, presupposing that language is social, the argument by Wittgenstein himself can be interpreted in a different way.

Let us suppose that a person is taught the word ‘computer’ by someone pointing to a real object. That person is then convinced that he has understood the meaning of the word ‘computer’. He believes that a television is a computer on one day, that a mirror is a computer on the next day, and that a bay window is one on another day. He calls them all a ‘computer’. In that case, he is, and can be known to be, wrong. Eventually, he might even believe in his mind that a pond, the ocean, and the sky are computers. Once he utters these beliefs, his error comes to light. This is because there are grounds on the outside that are independent of his personal convictions.

What is of importance here is not the fact that there is the possibility of error, but the fact that there is the possibility of disagreement. The possibility of disagreement gives the grounds to talk of error, and that is all we need. Therefore, the objection that these independent grounds (however many there might be) can be wrong, is invalid.

In the case of a private language, such independent grounds, by definition, do not exist. But the problem is not whether there are grounds on the outside that are independent of my personal conviction. Needless to say, they do not exist by the definition of a private language.

The problem must be whether I can have in my mind grounds independent of the grounds on which I base my judgement. Can I mistakenly judge that I feel shiky when I do not feel shiky, or that I do not feel shiky when I do feel shiky? By definition, I cannot make such a judgement in an objective way. That is a premise. The problem is whether I can *think* in my mind that, although I did not feel shiky, I have mistakenly judged that I felt shiky, or *think* that, although I felt shiky, I have mistakenly judged that I did not feel shiky. Since ‘I think in my mind’ here constitutes the definitive condition of a private language, we cannot assert the impossibility of a private language for its being added. For that would be to assert the impossibility of what is impossible by definition. Then, is it possible for me to *think* in the above ways?

Concerning this point, Wittgenstein coined a number of remarkable metaphors such as ‘to buy several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what is said was true’¹. Of course, copies of the same paper have exactly the same content. But the problem is what corresponds to the ‘same paper’. If it is the ‘same person’ or the ‘same mind’, we are, after all, asserting the impossibility of a private language by appealing to its definition, presupposing the publicness of language.

Therefore, if this metaphor has any sense, we have to construe it as saying that ascertaining through one route does not suffice, and so some other routes are necessary, instead of construing it as saying that personal conviction inside a single mind does not suffice, and so some outside grounds are necessary. Wittgenstein’s remark ‘justification consists in appealing to something *independent*’ must be taken to mean that it consists in appealing to the outside of *this* conviction of correctness, rather than that it consists in appealing to something independent of one’s own mind.² (To repeat the point, his argument would otherwise be a mere question-begging circular one.)

Now, when someone makes an error, we can tell whether it is because of misrecognition of facts or misunderstanding of the meaning of language. The person in the ‘computer’ case is one who has not properly learned the meaning of the word ‘computer’. On the other hand, someone who understands the meaning of words can sometimes be wrong by, for example, seeing things incorrectly. It is important that this distinction can be made. In a situation where no cognitive error seems possible, the meaning of a word is taught, and in a situation where no mistake in word meaning seems possible, the word is applied to things outside the language. That there is this distinction, it is said, is an essential condition for the possibility of language.

A private language affords no room for this distinction. This is because it affords no room for the most significant distinction between the fixing of a meaning and the description of a fact (which should presuppose the former). An error is impossible because there is not this distinction. That is why, it is said, a private language is only an imitation that pretends to be a language.

In my view, however, if the problem is thus posed, a private language too could appeal to ‘something independent’, and it would be even necessary in order for a public language to be possible that each person has a private language. Let us first discuss the rationale for this view.

¹ L. Wittgenstein (2001), *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.), Blackwell Publishing, Part I, § 265, p. 79e.

² *ibid.* My italics.

Objective Relationships among Private Languages

Is it possible to mistakenly judge that I feel shiky when I do not feel shiky, or to mistakenly judge that I do not feel shiky when I feel shiky? Since we are concerned with a private language, the question has to be posed as follows: 'Is it possible to *think* that although I feel shiky, I have mistakenly judged that I do not feel shiky, or to *think* that although I do not feel shiky, I have mistakenly judged that I feel shiky?' The problem is whether there can be grounds independent of the conviction of correctness that I am given an instance of shikiness.

As far as a single private language is concerned, that would be impossible. The thought 'this is certainly a shiky feeling' does not have grounds independent of my thinking it now. For the *memory* 'shiky feelings I have hitherto felt were this kind of feeling' cannot be independent of the *cognition* 'this is an instance of a shiky feeling'.

When two or more private languages are related to each other, the thought 'this is certainly a shiky feeling' can have a criterion independent of my simply thinking it. There would be grounds independent of the conviction of correctness that *this* is shiky. Therefore, naturally, there would arise the possibility of their disagreeing with each other.

An example of such a case is one in which shiky feelings form a system with various other aspects of my private language, such as emoy feeling, camy sensation, romacy emotion and comsy taste. It might be that a shiky feeling has always occurred after feeling romacy, and that, at each of the times, I crave the comsy taste. If, in such a case, I suddenly feel shiky for some reason without feeling romacy or wanting the comsy taste, I could ask myself, 'What is this feeling similar to shikiness? Do I really feel shiky?' as if it were when I suddenly feel cheerful without any context. And I could think, 'I thought I felt shiky, but I didn't in fact. It was an *illusion*' (and vice versa).

The fact that a shiky feeling occurs after feeling romacy is about a temporal earlier-later relationship, and the fact that I then crave the comsy taste may be about a causal relationship. Although these relationships interrelate private events (and therefore stand at the meta-level to them) they themselves are still private after all. So 'after' and 'then' are, in that sense, still in my private language. It is, as it were, only that it seems to me to be 'after' and to be 'then'. Existence of others who share my understanding of those relationships from an independent point of view is not yet assumed here. Nevertheless, interrelating them from the meta-level alone can be the source of objectivity.³ What? Private and objective? Yes. Public subjectivity

³ That shiky, emoy, camy, romacy, and comsy are words in a private language for me corresponds to the fact that Yukio Mishima, Tokyo, etc. are proper names, or, to give better examples, water, tiger etc. are natural kind names, for the actual world. Accordingly, sentences describing the interrelationships between private languages correspond to general sentences that are composed (in the actual world) using those words.

It is impossible to express the relationship between Yukio Mishima and Tokyo by further proper

and private objectivity can be contrasted. The contrast is between the case in which I agree with others without any objective relationships and the case in which I privately keep objective relationships without others involved. Chaos for all and order for one. Chaos for all indicates an accidental coincidence at every time.

Of course, our actuality is composed of both the chaos and the order. But which is more fundamental? Isn't this problem worth careful consideration?

The objection that private objectivity is, in the end, subjective is invalid. For it is a premise that all private languages are subjective in that sense. Discussions on whether or not it can nevertheless be a language make sense only at the level of the question of whether or not such objectivity is possible. To grasp relationships among private sensations is to appeal to *something independent* of private sensations, and is to buy and read a paper published by a different company. One may say that articles are not the event itself however many kinds of papers are bought and read. But the same would be true however many others are involved. No matter how many papers agree as to what is reported, they will never mean the truth of the event itself. The question is simply one of whether the articles are based on the same press release by the police or whether they are each based on original fact gathering. And relationships among private sensations are really based on original fact gathering.

Furthermore, we could even think that it is here that the source of objectivity lies. 'If representations that are "inside of the mind" are interrelated through causality or other conditions, the external world that is "outside of the mind" thereby obtains.'⁴ In this context, publicness is not a necessary condition for objectivity.

Following this Kantian framework, I could further claim as follows: in so far as I

words, by the nature of the relationship. A proper relationship is no longer a relationship, and two things linked by a proper relationship turn into one thing. A relationship between Yukio Mishima and Tokyo must be one that could exist between Yasunari Kawabata and Kamakura, for example. The relationship, therefore, goes beyond the world (in which Mishima and Tokyo exist) and can apply transworldly. Similarly, a relationship between private words cannot be expressed by further private words. A relationship between shiky and emoy must be one that could exist between romacy and comsy. Precisely because of this (not because other persons exist in the first place), the relationship can apply interpersonally.

The basic relationships between private words would be those of resemblance and those of temporality. And if shiky and emoy feelings have intensity and resolution before a relationship, they are general properties, and must therefore be public.

As proper names and natural kind names are indispensable for the actual language in order to link actuality and possibility, or the outside and inside of language, private names are indispensable for my language. (The view that a private language is impossible would correspond to the descriptive view of proper names.) But what is of overwhelming importance here is that, as shown in Section Twelve of Chapter Two, the two conceptions of 'actuality' hold of 'I' again. (See H. Nagai (2009), *The Opening: A Philosophy of Actuality (3), Philosophia OSAKA*, No. 4.)

⁴ See Chapter Two, Section Four (H. Nagai (2008), *The Opening: A Philosophy of Actuality (2), Philosophia OSAKA*, No. 3, p. 14).

locate myself in the objective world as a human being, even if my objective judgement is corrected by others, the subjective experience I enjoy as a human being—which is something objectively named—is still considered to be real.⁵ That is, from a Kantian standpoint, there are again two kinds of places for a private language to be located: on an outward route and on an incoming one.⁶

A drawback of Wittgenstein's private language argument is its ambiguity about the distinction between those two kinds of places. When Wittgenstein conceives of a person who keeps a diary in a private language, it is unclear whether he is thinking of a persisting individual already located inside the objective world or whether he is thinking of a subject who intends to locate himself inside the objective world as a persisting subject for the first time in virtue of the power of a private language. If what he does is the former, it is self-evident that a private language is possible. If it is the latter, this bears on the fundamental philosophical conflict.

What I Call a ‘Chair’

Shiky, emoy, camay, romacy, and comsy are obviously part of a private language, but even ordinary public language can be turned into a private language. In fact, the problem is even greater when ordinary public language is turned into a private language.

For example, I could say to myself, without any context or external expression (e.g. without falling over or making a grimace), ‘What I feel now is what I have always called “pain”’. Though ‘pain’, a word everyone knows, is used, it is in my private language. For whatever anyone else says, I am saying that it is what *I* have always called ‘pain’. I have said that even the sceptical supposition that a deceiving God has just created my present language, such that it seems to me to have always existed, can be posed only by assuming the continuity of my present language; it is a private language in that sense. In this case, the existence of private relationships, i.e. private corrigibility—the possibility to think that I have made an error—is already presupposed.

Is it not that a ‘deceiving God’ in the sense I understand ‘has just created’ in the sense I understand ‘my present language’ in the sense I understand ‘such that it seems to have always existed’ in the sense I understand ‘to me’ in the sense I understand? When I have this doubt, ‘in the sense I understand’ is integrated into the language itself—that language which only I understand, and therefore it cannot appear in what is thought in virtue of it. Yet it is, in fact, always tacitly presupposed.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

In a sense, even outside of such a sceptical situation, it can be said that all linguistic activities are performed in such a way. It can be said that even when my use of words is corrected by others, it is ‘corrected’ in the sense I understand. That is, in the sense that *the* world is thoroughly *my* world, language is thoroughly *my* language.

Wittgenstein said in his last years (when he wrote *On Certainty*) that such propositions as ‘I am sitting in a chair’, ‘I haven’t been to the moon’, and ‘My name is Wittgenstein’ cannot be doubted since they form the basis of a language game.

However, if that can be said, cannot we also say: ‘The meanings of ‘chair’, ‘moon’ and so on that I understand now cannot be wrong’? They cannot be wrong even if all other people insist, for example, ‘You are wrong. “Chair” is a word that means the only satellite of the earth, so you cannot be sitting in a chair’. I would never give up this certainty. If so, this certainty also means, tacitly, ‘I am now sitting in what *I call* a “chair”’. Since that is true of ‘sit’, ‘moon’, ‘go’ and any other linguistic expressions, ‘in my sense’ would be added to the whole language.

So there must somewhere be a point at which corrigibility (or ‘possibility of disagreement’, more precisely) as a criterion is eventually abandoned. This is naturally true. For in order for corrigibility or disagreement to make sense, certainty without any room for corrigibility or disagreement (in virtue of which such a judgement becomes possible) is always necessary. (A needless retort. There are many who presuppose the features of public language, e.g. corrigibility, and argue that a private language is not a language because it lacks them. But, then, why cannot we argue, conversely, that a public language cannot be regarded as a genuine language because it, unlike a genuine language, i.e. a private language, has the defect of corrigibility?) The problem is where that certainty lies. Is it given by the rules of a language game? Or, conversely, is it what makes the rules of a language game possible for the first time? I think that the latter is the case, and that it is this fact that erases the *actual* private language.

Section 2 In Order to Be Able to Understand Others’ Language

One Must Be Able to Understand One’s Past Language

Wittgenstein’s Beetle

In the case of ‘chair’, someone else could insist, ‘That is not a chair’. How about in the case of ‘painful’, ‘cold’, ‘sour’ or ‘red’?

If I say that I feel a ‘sour’ taste for some reason when I taste sugar, could others insist, ‘No. It tastes “sweet”’? If I say that the sky and the ocean look ‘red’ for some reason, or that I feel

‘pain’ for some reason when tickled, can others insist, ‘No. *They* are “blue”,’ or, ‘*It* “tickles”’?

I might be regarded as making an error in some sense, but not an error in the understanding of meanings of the words. My eyes or nerves might be regarded as abnormal in some way, but my language could not be considered abnormal. It would be understood that *I really feel so*. But why is it that, although language can be considered abnormal in the case of ‘chair’ or ‘moon’, it cannot be considered abnormal here?

Since my understanding of language could be abnormal in the case of ‘chair’ or ‘moon’, it could also be abnormal in the case of ‘painful’ or ‘sour’. That is, one *could* be wrong. However, even when one is, the abnormalities would normally be interpreted as those in sensation. One would not be taken as mistakenly expressing the meaning of ‘sweet’ by the word ‘sour’, but would be taken as having started to feel sweet things as sour.

It is not that private sensation alone is special. Ordinarily, an error in the understanding of meanings of basic words is not considered in the case of adults. Even when someone insists that he is sitting on the moon, he would hardly be taken as having a wrong understanding of language. Correctness in the understanding of language is presupposed, and an error in the grasping of a fact and some kind of mental disorder causing the error are attributed. That is, he is taken as being under a delusion! It is the same as in the case where someone who says that he feels ‘sour’ when he tastes sugar is taken as *feeling so*.

However, if he feels *so*, *how* does he feel? If he has a delusion, *what* delusion does he have? Here, we have reached the bedrock where our spade is turned. I have reached mine, or we have reached ours. Language comes to a dead end here, and can only reiterate itself.

Although my present perception or my present memory is subject to philosophical scepticism, my present language is not. Even Descartes did not doubt the meaning of the language he was using. But why exactly is it so? Here, clearly, lies a sort of bedrock of certainty. However, it, being indubitable, could be wrong.

Wittgenstein invented a rather strange metaphor in which he compares a private sensation to a beetle in a box. ‘Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a “beetle”. No one can look into anyone else’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.’⁷ He says that if the word ‘beetle’ is used publicly by everyone, the word ‘beetle’ is not used as a name to refer to a private beetle in a box, and ‘one can “divide through” by the thing in the box’⁸.

Of course, this claim is wrong if taken literally. On the one hand, when a beetle begins to move in a way that goes against the public usage, the ability to recognise it and

⁷ *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, § 293, p.85e.

⁸ *ibid.* My italics.

report it in language is also part of the entitlement given publicly, and, on the other hand, no public usage is given in the first place unless an individual person has the ability of internal identification that enables him/her to *think* that *this* and *that* are of the same sort (because they simply appear similar). Therefore, this metaphor, understood as it stands, is philosophically immature.

However, it could be interpreted in a mature way. The problem is why ‘one might even imagine such a thing constantly changing’.

Indeed, it seems possible to suppose that what every person calls a ‘beetle’ is *different* in each box (this corresponds to the supposition of qualia inversion), but is it possible to suppose, in the same way, that the content of each box is *changing*? Although the *difference* among what are inside people’s boxes could not be known by anyone, a *change* in what is inside my box should be recognised (or at least be recognisable). That is, although the difference between what each person feels as ‘pain’, ‘coldness’, ‘sourness’ or ‘redness’ cannot be known in principle, a person himself could recognise its change. If the shape of my beetle starts to be different from when I learned the word ‘beetle’, I could recognise the change and report it in language; e.g. ‘Sugar now tastes sour to me’, or, ‘Red things now look blue to me’.

However, since the supposition of such a thing’s ‘changing constantly’ is contrasted with that of everyone’s ‘having something different in his box’, the supposed case should be that in which one’s meaning of the word ‘beetle’ changes in accordance with a change in the beetle inside a box. This is a staggering supposition. If a beetle changes into a cockroach, a cockroach is called a ‘beetle’. If sugar starts to taste sour, sourness is said to be ‘sweet’, and if blue things start to look red, redness is said to be ‘blue’ (or if shikiness starts to feel emoy, emoiness is expressed as ‘shiky’).

Does this supposition not give a far more unnatural impression than the supposition of everyone’s ‘having something different in his box’? To clarify the difference, let us conceive of a box that blocks temporal view instead of one that blocks spatial view. Let us give corporeality to time, regarding a day as a unit, and suppose that each box cannot be looked into on another day. Every day an event I call a ‘beetle’ occurs. However, what a beetle is can only be known by looking at *the day’s* beetle. A box is fixed such that, for example, a beetle appears when I wash my face every morning. Here, it could be that, *in fact*, something different happens every day. Could one ‘divide through’ by that difference?

That is precisely what Wittgenstein describes as ‘a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it’.⁹ For he imagines ‘a person whose *memory* [my italics] could

⁹ *ibid.*, Part I, § 271, p. 81.

not retain *what* the word ‘pain’ meant—so that he constantly called different things by that name—but nevertheless used the word in a way fitting in with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain’¹⁰.

However, we can easily imagine an opposite person—a person whose memory could retain what the word ‘pain’ meant—so that ‘he constantly called the *same* thing by that name—but nevertheless did *not* use the word in a way fitting in with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain’. Taken literally, this person would be a more normal one. He feels a ‘pain’ when tickled, and feels a ‘tickle’ when hit. He says so because he *really* feels so.

The point is that the supposition of the opposite person does not hold in the case of the relationship with others, i.e. in the case of everyone’s ‘having something different in his box’. Suppose that ‘he called the *same* thing as others by that name—but nevertheless did not use the word in a way fitting in with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain ...’. Nothing could give any content to this ‘same’, because there is nothing at all that would correspond to ‘memory’, which could, or could not, retain anything. This asymmetry has a great significance. Is it not *impossible* to detach this wheel from some other parts of the mechanism?

The person who calls a cockroach a ‘beetle’ when a beetle becomes a cockroach believes that that is how it continues to be the ‘same’ beetle, so he should be able to, by assuming that belief of identity, talk of the change. Could he not also say, by assuming his belief of identity, ‘A beetle has become a cockroach’ (e.g. when a beetle has *not* changed)? If the person Wittgenstein conceives of merely cannot correctly remember the meaning, he should be at least *thinking* that he always calls the same thing ‘pain’. Then, it should also be possible that he *cannot think* so; he should also be able to think and say, ‘I no longer feel *pain* even when hit or kicked’.

Of course, we could conceive of a person who, no matter how much the beetle changes, necessarily believes *for some reason* that it is still a beetle, and so cannot believe at all that it has ceased to be a beetle. But even in that case, since the person, in believing that he has a beetle, will also have a belief as to what features make up a beetle (i.e. as to in what way it is the same as what he has been calling a ‘beetle’ all along), he would be able to conversely think, at that time, in what case he would believe that he no longer had a beetle. Does that not mean that the possibility of believing *for some reason* that it has ceased to be a beetle is also preserved?

It is possible to judge that sugar *has come to* taste ‘sour’ to me or that blue things *have come to* look ‘red’ to me. What is impossible in relation to others is possible in relation to the

¹⁰ *ibid.*

past self.

Does that not give a reason why the scepticism to the effect that a deceiving God has just created my language can be posed presupposing the continuity of my present language?

Just as the supposition of qualia inversion among people can be ‘divided through by’, so the supposition that a human being internally ‘calls different things by that name’ can also be ‘divided through by’. But the crux of the problem is that the latter person must still be able to judge for himself whether it is the same sensation or whether it is a different one, presupposing that dividing through.

If we can conceive of a person who distinctly remembers what the word ‘pain’ means, so that he constantly calls the same thing by that name, but nevertheless does not use the word in a way that fits with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of pain, the same should be true of ‘shiky’; we could imagine a person who distinctly remembers the meaning of the word ‘shiky’, so that he constantly calls the same thing by that name, but nevertheless does not use the word in a way fitting with the usual symptoms and presuppositions (i.e. private relationships) of shikiness. Therefore, an isolated private language that can become independent even of private relationships must also be possible.

Section 3 Nothing Is Weirder than an Illustrated Diary

Is the Sky Red As Usual?

There is, however, a further problem. The private language problem enters the third stage here.

Let us suppose that when I wake up in the morning, all the colours look inverted compared to those on the day before; red things look blue, blue things look red, and so on. I would then think of two possibilities. One is the possibility that something unusual has happened to the world—that tomatoes, blood, and the album cover to ‘The Beatles 1962-1966’ have actually turned blue, and the sky, the ocean, and ‘The Beatles 1967-1970’ have actually turned red. The other is the possibility that my eyes have become abnormal—that the sky, the ocean, and ‘The Beatles 1967-1970’ have not turned red, but have come to look red to my eyes. Whether it is the former or the latter that is the case can be known by asking others. (Of course, it is also possible that everyone’s eyes have become abnormal.)

A possibility which no one other than philosophers would think of is the possibility that although things look the same as they were on the previous day, the memory has been inverted while asleep. If a change is talked of on the basis of memory, it is always possible that the change is in fact in the basis.

However, there remains a possibility which even philosophers would not normally think of. It is the possibility that a meaning of such words as ‘red’ and ‘blue’ has been inverted while asleep. How is that inversion different from that of memory? And is it possible at all?

We could say that it is impossible, or inconceivable. If the meaning of words changed while asleep, yesterday’s red and today’s red would be the ‘same colour’ after all. The sky is red and blood is blue *as they were yesterday*. Memory too is what becomes possible for the first time supported by the identity of meaning. So we cannot, in principle, memorise the change of meaning. (Awareness of the change of meaning implicitly presupposes the identity of meaning to support that awareness.)

Nevertheless, this fourth possibility is still a possibility. The change of meaning for an individual person would present itself as disagreement with others. I would say, *as I have been doing*, that the sky, the ocean, and ‘The Beatles 1967-1970’ are ‘red’. If I were the only human being in the world, that would cause no problem. I would be able to distinguish between colours as I have been doing (or in the same way as before), and I would not have any trouble in my everyday life.

However, the difficulty is that there are others in the world, and that they insist that certain things are ‘blue’ (such that I hear a sound I would symbolize as [blú:]). Is there a possibility of my admitting my error? Probably I would accept their *way of speaking* for the convenience of my life. Still, even if I officially admit the ‘error’ in my use of words, I would *have to*, in another sense, be certain of my correctness.

I say, ‘The sky is red as usual’. From the outside, this utterance bears two sorts of subjectivity. It means, ‘The sky *looks to me* to be what *I call* “red”’. Whereas the subjectivity in ‘look to me’ is sometimes made explicit, it is far more difficult to conceive of a case in which the subjectivity in ‘I call’ is made explicit. But from the outside point of view, that ‘red’ means blue. However, there exists no language that describes this fact from my side. Therefore, it makes no difference to think that others, instead of I, have all become inverted.

Language as The Opening

If there is something that could make me seriously doubt the correctness of my language, it would be my illustrated diary rather than other people. Nothing is weirder than an illustrated diary. In a diary that I have been writing until yesterday is the description ‘under the blue sky’ accompanied by an illustration of a *bright red* sky, and the description ‘the deep blue ocean’ below a picture of a *bright red* ocean! That is exactly what those other people say!

Even if everyone’s language as well as my language had changed over night, the weirdness of my illustrated diary would remain. Let us take an ‘illustrated diary’ as a

symbolic expression, and weaken its conditions a bit; when something identifiable by a criterion other than its colour has a certain colour—i.e. in the case of the sky, the ocean, the clouds at sunset, etc.—we could do without a picture. The words ‘the blue sky’, for example, shows that the substance ‘the sky’—which is graspable independently of blueness—contingently (but in most cases) has the property of being blue, so this word could, by itself, function as an illustrated diary. It could be other than the substance-property relation, and could be causality, simultaneity, or any other category. In any case, such a relationship must be embedded. (Could it be a private relationship, which was discussed in relation to the case of ‘shiky’?)

An illustrated diary has a special value. While a diary about a sensation cannot record the sensation itself, an illustrated diary can denote (without the medium of memory) the *immediate correspondence relationship* (which obtained in the past) between language and extralinguistic facts expressed by language. A diary about a sensation cannot be written in the same way as an illustrated diary. So it cannot denote (without the medium of memory) the *immediate correspondence relationship* (which obtained in the past) between sensory language and extralinguistic facts expressed by that language.

If there were no written language, and every language was a spoken language, which is directly connected with the signifying act at the very time, all language would be a momentary language, which is a private language applied to the case of time. (That was the main point of Jacques Derrida when he criticised Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena*.) French philosophers tend to raise problems appealing to metaphors, and that is somewhat disagreeable for those who are trying to clarify things by careful arguments, but that question itself must never be neglected. It could be thought that just as language does not function unless the existence of others (who are *on a par with* me) is acknowledged, so it does not function unless the existence of the past and the future (which are *on a par with* the present) is acknowledged.

Then, is it *impossible* to have language without having written language considered in that sense? Is language impossible without written language, especially without language that records its very correspondence relationship to extralinguistic facts? This question is the temporal version of the question of whether it is impossible for me to have my own language without having any relationships with others.

Let us suppose that the days when I wrote an illustrated diary are not only recorded but also remembered. I remember that I, on those days, connected the word ‘blue’ to something *red* like *this*. That recognition itself presupposes the continuity of my language. Can an illustrated diary constitute the meaning of language starting from that fact? Or could the reverse be the case? Is it possible to assume the truth of the descriptions in the diary and

interpret my present memory on the basis of it? I might also ask as follows: is an illustrated diary a subject or an object of construction? The only answer could be: it is an object made up as being a subject.¹¹

In one aspect, in order for an illustrated diary to have meaning, it must be (made on a par with and) contrasted with my present use of language. But in another aspect, the understanding that it is an illustrated diary written by me in the objective world in the past must itself rely on my present memory and on the continuity of the concepts that support this memory. The authority of an illustrated diary has meaning only on that basis. When I relativise myself, I *must* believe in the absoluteness of the present I in a different sense.

It is impossible to imagine total error in my own language. The place where that is impossible (however it diminishes) can be secured. Or rather, it has to be secured. This requirement is so strong as to compete with the requirement that it be impossible for all languages in the world to be entirely wrong. I, even in conflict with all other persons and all I's in the past, still do not acknowledge the error of my present language. Indeed, more precisely, it is not that I do not, but that I am not acknowledging it even when I do.

However much my language is ‘in fact’ changing, that it is not changing is the starting point for the grasping of change. Since this is the only point from which change and changelessness of other things become possible, ‘in fact’ here is in fact inside the changelessness of my language. (Any interpretation would be impossible without language that is no longer interpreted.)

In the World There Do Not Exist Others, Who Can Stand on a Par with Me

The incorrigibility of *this* language (the language which alone I understand now) actually links the Leibnizian Principle and the Kantian Principle. According to the Leibnizian Principle alone, it is possible that the language is seriously wrong or is constantly changing, and according to the Kantian Principle alone, it is not necessary that the language, which is not wrong or changing, is actually *this* language of *this* I at *this* present.

Indeed, that really can be said. But which one is ‘this’ one? This question would put the whole argument of Chapter Three, which basically rests on the Kantian Principle, back to where it started.

The content of a box that one can ‘divide through by’ or a wheel that can be turned, even though nothing else moves with it, in fact, emerges for the first time when we try to answer that question. And, to repeat what I have said, the problem here is of the same sort as that of

¹¹ See Chapter Two, Section Four (H. Nagai (2008), *The Opening: A Philosophy of Actuality (2)*, p. 18).

the ontological proof of God or that of the creation of the actual world.

It is not that each person has a beetle in a box. First, although the entire world is in a box, the box is a thing in the world. Second, although there is only one box that is *actually* in that way, in a discourse the same description applies to every box.

There are two ways to assent to others' solipsism. One would be of the following kind: 'Yes, you are right. The world is my world. So you too are only one of my subjective representations.' The other would be: 'Yes, you are right. The world is your world. So I too am only one of your subjective representations.'

I might be spoiling the start of the argument and straying from it, but those two ways of assenting hold in the case of others' egoism too.¹² However, the significant difference between solipsism and egoism would be present in whether the two assenting positions in each of the cases can overlap. They can overlap in the case of egoism. That is, 'My only concern is your benefit' and 'My only concern is my benefit' are compatible. For it is possible that the only purpose of my life is to live for you.

Is there an analogous situation in the case of solipsism? Is it possible that I, only through being your subjective representation, make the world including you my subjective representation? It seems not. But why is that? The reason is that whereas egoism allows a gross deviation in the contents of 'benefit' (e.g. there can be such a thing as masochistic pleasure), solipsism simply does not have contents which can deviate in such a way. For example, the property of 'being a mere subjective representation' must be mutually exclusive.

Now, let us return to where we were. The first of the two ways of assenting to solipsism obviously does not assent to the solipsism of the original solipsist. The responder would be asserting his own solipsism, inspired by the original one, and the two assertions of solipsism would be incompatible, at least inside one and the same world.

Then, how about the second way to assent to the original solipsist? The problem of whether it is possible to believe that one is only a subjective representation of another person is not uninteresting as such, but it is not essential here. The problem to be pursued is whether that person is really assenting to the solipsism of the original solipsist. For what reason does that person assent to the solipsism of the original solipsist? Whatever the reason, it could not be the same as that of the original solipsist. For whereas the solipsism of the original solipsist incorporates 'because it is me' as its indispensable element, that is impossible for the assenter. He lacks the significant element of 'solipsism'. He is not a solipsist in the first place. In that sense, the first responder assents more properly to the original solipsist.

Is it possible to unite these two sorts of assenters? Probably not, because 'ipse' of

¹² See my *What Is Ethics?* (Sangyo Toshō, 2002) for the discussions on the contrast between solipsism and egoism.

solipsism neither expresses reflexive self-consciousness existing in the world nor refers, as a personal pronoun functioning as a substitute for a proper name, to an individual person existing in the world. Therefore, one who can meaningfully assent to the solipsism of another could not exist in the same world.

That is the true meaning of the thesis that solipsism cannot be said. Nevertheless, even this argument holds for any solipsism, that is, any beetle box.

Although the meaningfulness of *this* language—the language which alone I understand now—is itself the opening, it never manifests itself inside that language. Just as the ontological proof of God fails, so the opening cannot be said inside of it. I am confined within the meaningfulness of this language. There will never be a time when it becomes open. If I believe myself to know that the time has come, it has not.

Language conceals the opening. To put it the other way around, it opens the world. Person, tense, and modality are the essential conditions for the world to obtain, but they become possible by concealing the opening itself. The words ‘my present language’ will be understood within language through their being absorbed into its concept of person and its concept of tense.

Now, did you understand that discourse? If it is thought, ‘I understood it’, who is that ‘I’?

Presumably, even if language is private, as long as it is possible, it thoroughly requires the existence of others who stand on a par with me; that is, it requires symmetry—the agreement between the content of what is said and that of what is understood. In other words, language is supported by the possibility of the existence of samesayers. Language cannot describe a fact that essentially denies that requirement. (Recall the two ways of assenting to solipsism.) That would, in fact, be what the impossibility of a private language means. Being able to be turned with nothing else moving with it would mean that the requirement of symmetry, because there do not exist others in the world who stand on a par with me, is not fulfilled. (Hence, for a private language to be possible would, conversely, mean that the requirement always ends up being fulfilled.)

Therefore, even the words ‘the actual world’ would be our private language if they refer to *this* world. Indeed, we so easily equate the public concept of ‘actual’ and the private reference ‘this’. Is that not ‘a beetle’ in its nature?¹³

When the requirement of symmetry is not fulfilled within the world, symmetry has to be conceived of beyond the world. So it follows that I, in this book, am not speaking to readers who dwell in this same world with me.

¹³ This means that the Leibnizian Principle must have been effective here.

Understood inside the world, I, Now, Actuality, and God are always merely a wheel that can be turned with nothing else moving with it, if they each are not a being in the world. So, of course, it could always be said that such things do not exist. However, this wheel, which can be ‘divided through by’ and is completely detached from the entire mechanism, is precisely that which is making the entire mechanism exist actually for the first time.

While it is the opening of everything, it does not exist anywhere. That is to say, while it does not exist anywhere, it is the opening of everything.

(translated by Shogo SHIMIZU)

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