ARGUMENTS FOR OTHER MINDS

THESIS
Submitted in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
of Rhodes University

by

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December 1988

Abstract

If I am aware of my own mental states by introspection (a) How can I know that other people have minds? and (b) How can I know what their mental states are? These are two of the questions with which I will be concerned in this dissertation. I discuss five different attempts to deal with them. (i) The claim that we can know that other people have minds by an argument from analogy. I show a number of serious flaws in Russell's and other versions of this argument. (ii) Malcolm's thesis that the criteria by which we apply mental terms to others are just different from the criteria one applies in one's own case. I argue that Malcolm's accounts of both first- and third-person criteria are not adequate. (iii) I consider Strawson claim that 'persons' is a primitive concept and that behavioural criteria are "logically adequate" for determining the correctness of statements about the mental states of others. I argue that both of his key concepts are underanalysed. (iv) A quite different attempt to answer our questions (a) and (b) is given by the empirical realist who argues that knowledge claims about other minds are best understood as hypotheses in a wider psycho-physical theory. I show that the major fault in Putnam's version of empirical realism is that he overlooks the subjective character of

our mental states. (v) Finally I consider the claim, due to Nagel, that a conception of mental states is possible which incorporates both subjective and objective aspects of the phenonemon. I speculate that with a great deal of development this approach might hold the answer to our questions.

Arguments for Other Minds

Introduction

There has been a great deal of discussion, in the recent literature, of something referred to as the "other minds" problem.[1] While these various contributions are interesting and valuable, in most cases, it is difficult to see what exactly each author takes the problem in question to be. For some philosophers the problem posed is (a) How does one know that other human beings have minds at all? This question can be global: How can I justify the claim to know that any other minds exist?[2] Why shouldn't I believe that others are not, say, highly sophisticated robots? Or the question can be local: How can I claim to know that some other individual, my twin sister, who is like me in all other respects, has mental experiences, and that she is not, after all, a zombie?[3] Sometimes the other minds problem may be seen in terms of (b) How does one know

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[1]For example, Ayer, A.J. (1976); Carruthers, P. (1986); Hyslop, A. (1979); Levin, M.E. (1984); Malmgren, H. (1976); Nagel, T. (1986); Pargetter, R. (1984); Peacocke, C. & McGinn, C. (1984); Plantinga, A. (1967); Putnam, (1975); Ray, P. (1976); Sikora, R.I. (1977); Smythe, T.W. (1983); Vendler, Z. (1984); Ziff, P. (1965).

[2]See, for example, Levin, M. (1984:343); Ray, P. (1976: 129); Robinson, G. (1972:504); Russell, B. (1972:31).

[3]See, Ziff, P. (1970:177).

the thoughts and feelings of others?4 The other minds sceptic here, assumes that there are other minds, and sees the problem to be one about how one can know **what** mental states another person is experiencing. Once again we can distinguish different types of sceptical questions. There is the global or the local question: How can I justify the claim to know what mental states anyone is experiencing? Or, on the other hand, how do I know which mental states Jones is experiencing? A third and tougher version of the other minds problem extends (b) above to the problem (c) why is it reasonable to believe that other people's mental experiences are anything like those one experiences oneself? When Jones, or anyone, is in pain, or is depressed, how do I know that what she is experiencing is anything like my experience when I have a pain or when I am depressed? Other philosophers regard the problem as essentially a meaning or conceptual problem.5 How can I understand the meaning of propositions that attribute mental states to others? If I know what pain is, by virtue of being acquainted with my own mental experience, how can your statement, 'I have a pain' mean anything to me? Still others see the problem as expanding a psycho-physical theory, so that we can adequately describe so-called

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[4]See, for example, Chisholm, R.M. (1979:233); Pargetter, R. (1984:158); Sikora, R.I. (1977:137).
[5]See, for example, Malcolm (1962); Vesey, G. (1973).

mental events.6 And yet another way of presenting the problem is to ask, as Nagel does: How can I conceive of the subjective character of my own experience as merely one example of mental phenomena? How does one combine the perspective of a person's awareness of his or her own states with an objective account of the mind?7

In everyday life, of course, we do not seriously doubt that there are other minds, nor do we generally doubt, whether or not, we know what a person's mental state is. Indeed, very often we claim to know what the thoughts and feelings of others are, and that they are like or unlike one's own. We claim to know that for instance, Smith is depressed, on the basis of a variety of evidence: By asking her questions, by observing her behaviour such as her facial expressions, her gestures, her actions; or by noticing the circumstances of her everyday life; from quite specific things like the death of a loved one, to quite general conditions like her health. So why should anyone doubt that she has a mind or that she has particular mental states?

Speaking generally, the problem arises from the traditional Cartesian view which suggests that I am

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[6]See for example, Putnam, H. (1975); Wilkes, K. (1984).
[7]See Nagel, T. (1986).

directly aware of my own thoughts and sensations.8 For instance, I am directly aware of my sensation which I identify as a pain. When I say 'I have a pain' this is verified by my experience of the sensation. Moreover, **only** I am directly aware of my conscious states. Such knowledge is exclusive to me. Further, it is generally held that the privacy of this knowledge is necessary. As Williams notes (1978:296)

> ... it is not merely a contingent fact that I alone can feel my pains, as it is a contingency that I alone can read my diary, if I carefully lock it up.

The problematic nature of these claims can be shown when we attempt to make statements about the mental states of others. If only I am aware of my sensation, if the knowledge I have of it is incorrigible, and verified by my experience, it is in an important sense exclusive to the experiencer, how, then, can I have knowledge of the mental states of others? Necessarily every third-person psychological statement that I make must fall short of "knowledge", at least the standard by which such knowledge is measured in my own case. How do I know that when you

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8Descartes, of course, claims, (1969:171), he has incontrovertible evidence of his own mental states, "I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it, or that I mentally conceive it". This is the basis of his knowledge of mental substance. With this as a starting point, i.e. the only knowledge one has of consciousness is that of one's own mental states, how is it possible to know that other human beings have mental states at all?

say you are in pain, your experience is anything like the sensation I have? Indeed, how can I justify knowledge claims about the existence of mental states other than my own? How do I know that you have a mind or that there are any other minds that think and feel at all? In other words, once we accept that knowledge of mental states is private, necessary and directly evident only to the experiencer, all that I can know with certainty is my own immediate mental states. So how can I justify my claim to know that others have minds? To the most extreme sceptic, of the solipsistic variety, it does not seem that we have any basis for a claim to knowledge. Though doubtless psychologically difficult to hold, this doctrine is philosophically interesting in that most philosophers have thought it necessary to attempt refutations of it.

Milder forms of scepticism might allow that it is reasonable to believe that others have minds, but they might go on to claim that this does not justify the claim to know what this mental experience is. The sceptic's argument here might be as follows:9 While in everyday life we assume that we call sensations by the same name in virtue of our having qualitatively the same or similar experiences when they occur, it might be the

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[9]See, for example, Carruthers, P. (1986).

case that we have quite different experiences, but this difference does not become apparent because we refer to them by the same names. When I am struck on the arm, I experience a sensation which I refer to as 'pain'. You, on the other hand, when struck, experience a sensation, which you refer to as 'pain' but which if I were to have had the experience, I would call 'a tickle'. The piece of matter that produces in you what you call a 'metallic taste' may produce in me what, if you could experience it, you would call 'the taste of chocolate'; my 'sensation of green' may be your 'sensation of red', and so on. The general point is that, according to this kind of sceptic, although we talk as if we are both referring to the same thing when we speak of 'pain', I do not know, and I have no grounds for justifying the claim to know that we are experiencing the same things.

As we noted, the sceptic need not dispute the fact that we do make such claims about the mental experiences of others in our everyday lives. Neither is he concerned with the developmental process by which we psychologically explain how we come to believe in their mental states. It does not do to respond to other minds scepticism with an explanation of the process which, creates a belief in childhood for the existence of other minds. Even if one does acquire the belief that there are other minds in terms suggested by a developmental psychological account,

it may still not be the ground for holding that the claim to know is justified. And in Philosophy, surely, we are concerned with justification: Why am I rationally justified in claiming to know such-and-such? The sceptic questions whether our various assertions about the mental states of others are really justified. In particular, he questions whether one can claim to know that other human beings have minds at all and whether another's talk about pains, tastes, colours, etc. refer to anything like the experiences I have when I talk about such things.

I have structured this essay in the following way: In Chapter One, I will consider the traditional argument that we can know that other people have mental states by an inductive argument, namely, an argument from analogy. There are many recent versions of this argument. Most of them can be seen to be refinements of, or reactions to, Russell's (1948) argument from analogy. I have chosen to consider Russell's account because it is straightforward. What I want to show is that there are a number of flaws in the choice of the argument from analogy as a postulate.

In Chapter Two I will discuss Malcolm's claim that the analogical argument does not answer scepticism about other minds. Malcolm's objections, as we shall see, are

quite different from mine. He thinks that the entire other minds problem was conceived in sin. According to the other minds sceptic and to holders of the analogical argument we have direct knowledge of pains, tastes, colours, in ourselves but we do not have this knowledge concerning the pains, etc. of others. Malcolm claims that it is this view which has created the problem of other minds. The general thrust of Malcolm's objection is to show that the other minds problem is not a genuine problem, but arises out of the erroneous belief that the only mental phenomena we are directly acquainted with are those of "one's own case". In other words, he attacks the privileged access doctrine.

Malcolm's major thesis is that the criteria for the correct application of mental terms to others are just **different** from those which one applies to oneself. As far as other minds are concerned, he claims, statements about the "circumstances, behaviour and utterances" are criteriological for knowledge claims about their mental states. I will argue that he does not succeed in establishing this. We might try to show that there can be a relationship between physical and mental states which is in some other sense a "logically adequate" relation.

This is what P.F. Strawson attempts to show. I

examine his account in Chapter Three. His thesis is that 'persons' is a primitive concept and that we apply predicates like '...is in pain', what he calls P-predicates, to persons. I will show, however, that his treatment of the concept of persons is unsatisfactory. More importantly, I will examine and reject Strawson's claim that behavioural criteria are logically adequate for determining the correctness of statements about the mental states of others.

If all goes well by the end of Chapter Three, I hope to have shown that Russell's analogical argument will not support the claim that we can know the mental states of others; and that neither Malcolm's nor Strawson's criteriological accounts provide us with an adequate basis for knowledge claims about the mental states of others. What other possibilities are there? The difficulties raised by these theories are avoided if we adopt the stance that knowledge claims about other minds are best understood as hypotheses, in a wider psycho-physical theory.

In Chapter Four I will examine Putnam's expansion of Ziff's claim that we can best explain phenomena like pain, sadness, anger, etc. by reference to psychological theories. In other words, in psychology and related

neurophysical sciences we will find the best explanations of phenomena, like pain and anger. I will try to show that this approach is incomplete. It does not provide us with an adequate account of the essentially subjective character of mental experience.

In Chapter Five, I consider a quite different approach due to Nagel. He attempts to combine the subjective character of mental states with what he calls "the objective standpoint". Nagel, too, wants to give us an objective, neutral account of mental phenomena. Minds are to be thought of as general features of the world. For Nagel the other minds question is: How can I conceive of my own mind as one example of mental phenomena in the world? I will show that along with the many shortcomings in his account, there is a hint of a possible solution to our problem.

The purpose of the final chapter is to indicate the major lines of argument which have been developed in the essay. Of course I have not attempted to give an exhaustive account of all of the arguments, for instance, identity theory and logical behaviourism are dealt with only in passing. I hope to show that each of the theories considered offers important insights, yet neglects other features necessary for a satisfactory

answer to the other minds problem.

Chapter 1

The Argument from Analogy.

In his 'Argument from Analogy'10 B. Russell writes (1972:31/32)

> The problem with which we are concerned is the following. We observe in ourselves such occurrences as remembering, reasoning feeling pleasure and feeling pain. We think that sticks and stones do not have those experiences, but that other people do. Most of us have no doubt that the higher animals feel pleasure and pain ... (however) common sense admits an increasing doubtfulness as we descend in the animal kingdom, but as regards human beings it admits no doubt.

At first blush, it is difficult from this extract to say precisely what Russell takes the problem of other minds to be. Presumably, we must treat it as a problem that follows from the fact that "we observe the occurrence of certain conscious states in ourselves". It is suggested that we have no doubt that other people also have such states. Although clearly, we cannot observe their occurrence in others, any more than they observe ours. So it seems that the problem of other minds, for

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10Recent interest in the argument from analogy seems to stem from Russell's account of the matter in 1948, although the argument itself has a longer history; (see, for example, J.S. Mill (1889:243/4)). Most recent accounts seem to be reactions to, or refinements of, Russell's thesis.

Russell, results from the fact that one observes (is directly acquainted with) one's own mental experiences. It is this awareness that justifies one's claim to know that one has a mind. My experiences are not accessible to others. So they are not justified in claiming to know that I have a mind. Much more importantly, I am not directly acquainted with their "remembering, reasoning, feeling pleasure" etc. So I am not justified in claiming to know that they have minds.

We need to be cautious here. We cannot take Russell to be arguing that while my remembering, reasoning, feeling pleasure and feeling pain are not public, certain of my experiences are accessible to others. From the standpoint of access, my experience of a (public) thing like a table is no more available to others than my most secret thoughts. Whatever the mental states, happen to be, if it is **my** mental state, only I am directly aware of it. This seems to be true simply as a matter of logic. Neither can Russell be taken to mean that certain of my experiences are more accessible **for me**, than others. If it makes sense to talk of "observing experiences in ourselves" at all (which I doubt) to observe in myself the occurrence of an experience of a table - i.e. to "observe" myself seeing it, touching it, smelling it, etc. - is no less accessible for me, than to observe the occurrence of my feelings of pleasure or

pain. The point is, I have equally accessible privileged access to "all" of my own mental states. And I do not have this type of awareness of the mental states of others. (We will consider the plausibility of the claim to privileged access, in detail, in Chapter Two.)

Starting from the subjective viewpoint, Russell then is faced with the problem of justifying the claim to knowledge about the experiences of others; this is to say, the justification of claims to know that other human beings remember, reason, feel pleasure, pain, or have any other experiences like myself. The point here is important and worth stressing. According to Russell, if I say 'I am thirsty' I can verify this statement by observing my own experiential states. But how am I to understand this statement when it is made by another? If you say 'I am thirsty' why should I believe that you are undergoing anything like my experience when I utter the statement? Since the referent is essentially private, is it possible to make knowledge claims about the experiences of others? There is, as we noted above, another side to this coin. How can another person know what I am experiencing if the only warrant for knowledge of mental states is first-person awareness? When I discuss these feelings you may appear to know what I am talking about. You may even say that you have had 'like feelings'. But how can you know that we are referring

to the same experiences, when you cannot have direct access to my mental states?

Russell suggests that the rational warrant for such claims can be found by a form of analogical argument. He writes (ibid:32)

> It is clear that we must appeal to something that may be vaguely called analogy.

What Russell has in mind here is the form of inductive reasoning where one bases an inference to an unknown case II by drawing on its likenesses with a different, resembling, established case I. The properties which I and II exhibit have to be parallel in all important respects and since a generally conceded conclusion follows from I, the same or relevantly similar conclusion may be drawn in II. We might put the above inference schematically:

> If all Cs which are Bs have A as a cause ..(case I)
> then we may infer
> Any non-C which is a B has A as a cause ..(case II),
> (where C is one's own case, B is a bodily act, and A is a conscious state).

Using this form of argument Russell maintains (1972:34/35)

> From subjective observation I know that A, which is a thought or feeling, causes B, which is a bodily act ... I know also that, whenever B is an act of my body, A is its cause. I now observe an act of the kind B in a body not my own, and I am having no thought or feeling of the kind A. But I still believe, on the basis of self-observation, that only A can cause B; I therefore infer that there was an A which caused B, though it was not an

A that I could observe.

Russell is claiming that through subjective observation, I notice that for every occurrence of my behaviour there has been a mental cause that preceded it; e.g. I decide to kick a ball and my leg moves, hence it is reasonable to infer that the cause of the kick is the preceding thought. In order to be able to make judgements concerning the conscious states of others, Russell says, one infers analogously from one's own case. When he observes, say, another body kicking a ball, knowing he (Russell) is not experiencing that decision (to kick the ball) and using his knowledge from private introspection, that an antecedent conscious state is the cause of his acts of kicking, Russell suggests it is reasonable to infer analogically that a conscious state is the cause of this event. Even though the mental item is something which he is not able to observe. From this inductive argument, Russell concludes that he is justified in claiming that there are other minds. He writes (ibid:35)

> On this ground I infer that other people's bodies are associated with minds, which resemble mine in proportion as their bodily behaviour resembles my own.

According to Russell then, since I do not observe another human being's mental states, I can justify my claims about such states only by inference from what I observe. I observe a causal connection between my own mental states

and my own bodily behaviour. I observe another individual behaving similarly and infer, analogously, that she or he must be feeling, thinking, deciding, etc.

Russell's argument can be faulted in a number of ways. Firstly, the analogical argument concerning other minds differs fundamentally from the ordinary type of analogical inference. In the ordinary cases, direct evidence can be obtained for the truth of the inferred conclusions. For instance, in most cases of analogical arguments in science we can verify the inferred conclusions. If we reason, for example, from the many similarities between two animal bodies and the presence of a heart in one of them to the presence of a heart in the other, this conclusion is clearly open to direct verification. In contrast while a person C, on the basis of the regular concomitance of her own mental experiences with certain aspects of her behaviour, may infer similar mental experiences as concomitant with another person D's behaviour, she cannot verify the truth of her conclusion: Certainly not in the manner that she can know the truth of the conclusion of a normal analogical argument. I take this to be Feigl's point when he writes (1958:979)

> The analogical argument concerning other minds thus differs fundamentally from the ordinary type of analogical inference. In the ordinary cases

> **direct** evidence can be obtained for the truth of the conclusion.

Another way in which Russell's use of analogy is unsatisfactory, when compared with usual analogical arguments, is that the former is based upon a single case, namely, one's own experience of a causal connection, and then an inference is made to the indefinitely large class of other cases, (viz other minds). In the established case, the experiences and the correlated behaviour all belong to the same person. While this results in a vast number of correlations between instances of behaviour and experiences, they are all associated with the **same** individual's body and the **same** individual's experiences. R.I. Sikora notes (1977:139)

> ... the class of actions where I have observed this correlation is only a minute fraction of the class of actions about which I want to make an inference. My sample class is far too small to allow me to have anything like the confidence that we are entitled to have about the existence of mental states in other persons.

In other minds contexts the sample class does not include anyone who is not myself. Whereas in the normal uses of the analogical argument, to argue for a conclusion for all like cases, we need more than a single set, no matter how extensive the correlations within this set. Otherwise, our argument may be faulted as a weak induction.

There is also a problem concerning the nature of the

analogical comparison. In the standard kinds of analogical inference, the features to be compared, between the different cases, are clearly identified. But it is not at all clear to me that Russell's "bodily behaviour (that) resembles my own" is an adequate basis for comparison. In the case of pain, for instance, what counts as a relevant type of behaviour, for the analogy to work? Are we just to say that people in pain behave the "way" I do when I am in pain? If so, the "way" must cover a multitude of items of behaviour and styles expressing such acts. For pre-analytically, it seems that people in the same "mental" state often behave very differently indeed.

It has been claimed that a defender of the argument from analogy, need not be troubled by the problems above, viz the fact that the analogy is non-standard. He might argue that an analogy is valid so long as **no** features can be identified, in each analogical case, that would count as the basis for the analogy being false. As A. J. Ayer writes (1967:363)

> If, per impossibile, we could test for all the properties that he (the other human being) possesses, and found that they did not produce a counterexample to our general hypothesis, ... our knowledge would be in this respect as good as his: there would be nothing further left for us to discover.

Ayer seems to have lost sight of the purpose of the argument from analogy. For the test he describes makes

the assumption that the other human being possesses rememberings, reasonings, feeling pleasure, feeling pain, etc., that we can check. But the other minds problem is about whether other human beings do possess such states. Ayer's argument, this is to say, appears to be an ignoratio elenchi.

There is, however, a counter-example which suggests a more serious objection to any version of the analogical argument. It arises from the assumption that there is not a conceptual or logical connection but, at best, only a contingent causal connection between my mental states and my behaviour. This causal connection, however, is weak. For example, I can behave as though I am in pain, yet not be in pain. Let me stress this. While I observe a number of correlations between my own mental states and behaviour, I also know that there are a small but significant number of occasions where, for instance, I exhibit pain behaviour but do not feel pain. I might assume that others too can feign experiences they do not, in fact, have. This points to a radical difference between my own and other cases. In the first place, only in one's own case is there a direct check of the causal connection. Secondly, how can I be sure, merely by observing their behaviour, that there is any connection between it and mental states? Just as I may act as if I am in pain but yet do not feel

any sensation at all, they may behave as if they have mental states, yet not have them at all. This objection must seem plausible, even to someone who agrees with Russell.

In fairness to Russell and other advocates of the thesis, the analogical argument is buttressed by the recognition that, as well as the overt behaviour, other significant evidence for the conclusion is available. On hearing the statement 'I'm thirsty' from another, Russell writes (1972:34)

> ... I assume that some one else is thirsty. I assume this the more readily if I see before me a hot drooping body which goes on to say 'I have walked twenty desert miles in this heat with never a drop to drink'.

We might, charitably, take Russell to be saying here that I need not limit myself to correlations between behaviour and mental experiences. In the case of pain, for instance, I can also consider correlations between my experience of pain and pain stimuli. Indeed, with certain kinds of pain experiences (e.g. the pain which results from a hammer hitting one's thumb) there is a far greater correlation between, on the one hand, one's being subjected to the stimulus and feeling pain, than there is, on the other hand, between one's exhibiting pain behaviour and feeling pain. I can be stoical and hide the pain that I am feeling. But it still hurts. The point is, other features apart from bodily acts, are

also overt factors in the analogical comparison. So that, if I observe a hammer hitting someone else's thumb, this constitutes for me the observer, a causal connection with a mental state, irrespective of their ensuing behaviour. To see the hammer hit his thumb is (by analogy with my own case) normally justification enough for me to know that he is in pain, without first having to observe his behaviour.

The analogical inference is strengthened still further, if the surrounding circumstances (in which the bodily behaviour or the immediate external stimulus occur) are appropriate to a certain kind of mental state. For example, a typical context in which I hit my thumb with a hammer and exhibit pain behaviour, is where I am attempting to bang a nail into the wall so that I can hang a picture on it. Or let us suppose for example, that a person, in the dentist's waiting room, is clutching his jaw and groaning. The context in which the behaviour occurs, counts as a relevant factor in the analogical inference that he is suffering pain. Whereas when, in the theatre, an actor displays the same behaviour, the context in which the behaviour occurs is evidence for the non-occurrence of a genuine sensation of pain. If, in the analogical comparison, we only regard a person's behaviour, and the immediate stimuli, we have removed the context in which the behaviour and stimulus have

taken place.

The above example, however, where the context is a dentist's waiting room, illustrates only the most overt and easiest of cases. In contrast, in more difficult cases, the bodily behaviour of another, or the emotions they express, can strike one as quite inappropriate to the context. For instance, some individuals behave aggressively, or in a jealous manner, in circumstances where someone else would be friendly or happy (e.g. at another's success); someone may say that they feel this or that emotion, in a given context, where another person could be quite baffled by the emotional state expressed. It is obvious too, that I may think such-and-such about a certain event, e.g. that a certain type of T.V. programme is boring, whereas you may think quite the opposite about the same event. If this is so, we cannot let the "circumstances" in which a given mental state typically occurs, for one individual, be decisive in an analogical inference to the same mental state in another.

The point here is that neither individually nor taken together, do behaviour, stimuli, or circumstances provide us with adequate criteria for the claim that other human beings experience the same or similar sensations. The fact remains that despite all the correlations in behaviour, stimuli, or surrounding circumstances, it is possible that other human beings

experience different sensations, emotions, thoughts, to those that I experience. Or no sensations at all! The analogy from one's own case, this is to say, seems too weak a foundation on which to base our claim to knowledge of another's experiences. As H. Feigl says (1958:978/9)

> The philosophical trouble with inferring another person's mental states consists in the impossibility of an independent, direct check-up. There seems to be no criterion, in the sense of necessary and sufficient conditions, which would enable one person to convince himself conclusively of the actual occurrence of mental states on the part of the other person.

Furthermore, all arguments from analogy depend upon the observed behaviour, stimuli, or context. The comparison between putative like cases is based upon observable, external features. A paradigm, based upon such examples, will not justify claims to knowledge where the memory, thought, emotion or sensation has no overt behavioural counterpart. How exactly are we supposed to behave when, say, we are remembering? What are the typical bodily acts (stimuli or contexts) when one is "thinking", say, about things that one has to do tomorrow? Does one, in fact, behave in a certain way when one is feeling pleased with oneself? and so on. No matter how we widen the argument from analogy, I do not see how it would licence our claim to know such thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, in the case of other human beings. And any acceptable resolution to the other minds problem, needs

to deal with this aspect of the sceptic's doubt.

Let us try, briefly, one more attempt to defend the analogical argument as a method of inference. Other persons often infer analogically that I am in pain from my behaviour whereas I have direct knowledge of my pain. So I can check the validity of the analogical argument by inferences made about me. This is a defence which S. Hampshire employs. He writes (1952:4/5)

> ... each one of us is constantly able to compare the results of this type of inference with what he knows to be true directly and non-inferentially ...

Others make analogical inferences about my mental states based on observations of my behaviour which I can check.

Unfortunately, this strategy fails in much the same ways I suggested Ayer's fails. As A. Plantinga points out the other minds problem is the problem of whether (1970:198)

> ... human figures other than oneself do, among other things make observations, inferences, and assertions.

In other words, the defence Hampshire gives of the argument from analogy begs the question.

What have we established in the discussion thus far? Russell has told us that there is a problem of other minds. This is due to the fact that one establishes knowledge of minds by virtue of the knowledge-acquaintance

one has of one's own mental states, i.e. the privileged access doctrine. This is a controversial assumption which needs to be argued for. Nevertheless, it is one with which I am in broad agreement. (More of this shortly.)

We have seen that the problem it gives rise to is: How can I claim to know that others have minds, (or that their experiences are anything like my experiences)? Russell has told us that a solution to this problem is possible by using an inductive argument, the argument from analogy. We have identified a major limitation of Russell's putative solution. In a nutshell, it is a false analogy. By a false analogy we mean an argument which attempts to establish a conclusion that goes beyond that which is warranted by the legitimate comparison of the similarities between one case and others. To the best of my knowledge this objection applies to all analogical arguments for knowledge of other minds. They fail to see that, in the established case, the experiences and the correlated behaviour all belong to the same person. The causal connection in the paradigm case is associated with the same individual's body and the same individual's experiences. The conclusion in the paradigm case is verified by the experiencer. The analogical conclusion can never be verified.

Verification (of the analogical conclusion) would be possible only if one could have the experiences in

question. But if this were possible, of course, the experience would not be of "another" mind. So the flaw in the analogical argument is very serious.

Perhaps we need a different inductive rule, which does not demand parallelism between cases (as does the argument from analogy) but which, nevertheless, would entitle us to infer from particular cases to more general claims about mental states. We will return to these matters in Chapter Three.

Let us return to Russell's claim that we are immediately acquainted with our own mental states. I want to emphasise three points that are suggested by this claim. Firstly, (i) it is immediately evident to the person who has a sensation that he is experiencing such-and-such a sensation. When I make a claim regarding my present mental state, I do so, not through the application of an external criterion. For most of my mental states, anyway it would be very odd to suppose that external criteria were necessary in order to ascribe a first-person psychological state to myself. The aforementioned criteria are at best the tools I use for the ascription of mental states to others.

Secondly, (ii) I cannot be mistaken about my own mental states. We do not think a person is making a mistake when he says, 'I am in pain' any more than we think that a child cries by mistake. When I make this

kind of verbal expression, like natural pain behaviour, I express something about which I cannot be uncertain or mistaken. If you wish to respond that I may be lying when I say I am in pain or a child could be pretending when he cries, you have missed the point. The point is, a person cannot be mistaken about his own psychological states. He can deceive us but he cannot deceive himself in this regard.

One may think that such statements can be false, even when the claim is sincere. Not because the experience is itself fallible but because we have misidentified it, or of course, incorrectly formulated it in words. Concerning the first point we need to make the distinction, between judgements about the sensation itself and judgements about its causes. Thus one might say 'I don't know whether I've got toothache or not' and upon further questioning reveal that what is in doubt is not the sensation itself but the judgement or diagnosis that one is making concerning the sensation. The pain I am experiencing may be due to a decaying tooth or it may be due to an infection of the gum. No mistake is being made concerning the sensation itself, the question is to do with the **cause** of the pain.

Thirdly, (iii) Russell seems to be claiming (and is generally reckoned to claim) something stronger, by the phrase of "subjective observation". He is claiming that

only I am directly acquainted with my mental states. Only I know their contents. Such knowledge is exclusive to me. If this is so, then necessarily every third-person psychological statement must fall short of "knowledge", (at least the standard by which all such knowledge is measured by me). Let us call the three claims above the "privileged access" argument; viz: One is directly aware of the sensation, the knowledge one has of it is incorrigible, and it is in an important sense exclusive to the experiencer.

In the last thirty years or so, many philosophers have objected to the notion of privileged access, arguing that there is a prior problem to the one to which the argument from analogy offers a solution. The problem, as they see it, is: If I know only from my own case what pain, tickling, remembering means, then, how can I mean anything by statements like 'There are feelings, e.g. of pain, unfelt by me'? If we call the traditional problem a **knowledge** problem of other minds, this other problem can be called the **meaning** problem. Speaking generally, the Wittgensteinian's claim is that the privileged access argument faces a meaning problem and that it has to be solved before we can tackle the knowledge problem of other minds. Indeed, some philosophers, such as N. Malcolm, go further than this, they

claim that a solution to the meaning problem will show that the knowledge problem does not exist.[11] We need to investigate Malcolm's claim in detail, for if he is correct, we do not need to find a solution to the knowledge problem of other minds.

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[11]See, also, Vesey, G. (1973).

Chapter Two

Malcolm's Attack on Privileged Access

In this chapter we will begin by examining Malcolm's claim that the belief that we have privileged access to our own mental states is fraught with intractable meaning problems. Firstly, it commits us to a type of essentialism. When learning a language every term that one uses to refer to one's psychological states would necessarily include a self-referential property, 'that it is mine'. Secondly, Malcolm claims that a commitment to the privileged access view leads ineluctably to a belief in a private language. Finally, we will examine Malcolm's positive thesis for the third-person ascription of mental states.

What exactly is the meaning problem? In a nutshell it is this: We are told, by those who are troubled by the other minds problem, that statements which refer to mental experiences have meaning, for me, in virtue of my having learned to associate experience-words with **my** own experiences. How, then, can I attach any meaning to a statement which refers to the experience of another person? And in particular how can I attach meaning to statements which refer to the feelings of others, like 'she is in pain' or 'she is sad', when feeling words

have meaning by being the names of things that are essentially private to me?

According to Malcolm, the other minds problem arises out of this mistaken assumption. He argues that if this form of private awareness is an essential property of one's mental states, in the way that the analogical argument suggests, then one could not extrapolate from one's own case to sensations of others. Malcolm writes (1962:81)

> ... the assumption that once I know from my **own** case what pain, tickling, or consciousness is, then I can transfer the ideas of these things to objects outside myself ...

is nonsense. The point here is worth stressing. According to Malcolm, holders of the argument from analogy argue: I am directly and exclusively aware only of my own sensation of pain. In this way, I know what 'pain' means from my own experience of it. I am able, then, to reason analogically from my behaviour, its associated mental states, and the behaviour of other persons, to their mental states.

But Malcolm says this cannot be done. For if, when learning the meaning of terms like pain, private awareness and exclusivity are necessarily associated with the term's meaning, one could not then understand the meaning of the term when it is applied to others. He writes (ibid:81)

> If I were to learn what pain is from perceiving my own pain then I should, necessarily, have learned that pain is something that exists only when **I** feel pain. For the pain that serves as my paradigm of pain (i.e., my own) has the property of existing only when **I** feel it. That property is essential, not accidental; it is nonsense to suppose that the pain that I feel could exist when I did not feel it. So if I obtain my **conception** of pain from pain that I experience, then it will be part of my conception of pain that **I** am the only being that can experience it. For me it will be a **contradiction** to speak of **another's** pain.

One of the problems Malcolm is identifying, here, has to do with the process of our learning, as infants, the words for mental processes. (We will examine this point in more detail shortly.)

Let us first consider the other problem he points to, in the quoted passage above, concerning essentialism. Malcolm's suggestion is that if I learned what the term 'pain' means from my own case then my paradigm of pain has the property of necessarily existing-only-when-I-feel-it. In other words, if 'exclusively mine' is a property which is associated with my initial use of the word 'pain' then 'that it is mine' is conceptually necessary to my learning and then understanding the word 'pain', whenever it is used. Hence I could never make an intelligible reference to the pain of others, or, <u>mutatis mutandis</u> to any other of their mental states. We can take Malcolm's argument further. If I cannot

make an intelligible reference to any mental states of other persons, due to the 'exclusively mine' feature of my use of experiential words, then a fortiori I cannot know that other persons have similar, or the same, mental states as my own. If my conception of the word 'pain' is that I am the only being that can experience it, then I do not know how to establish that another person has the same or a similar pain to mine. So if Malcolm's general point is correct - if the meaning of experiential words are learned in the way that Malcolm says that holders of the analogical argument suggest - we seem to be forced back into the solipsism, from which the argument of analogy is supposed to have rescued us.

S. Kripke challenges Malcolm's claim that if we learn a concept in such a way that it includes essential properties then each further use of the term entails these properties. Kripke claims that one can argue from grounds based on one's own experience (which contains certain essential features) to the more general non-essential application of a concept. He argues that if I see some ducks for the first time in a park and learn my concept 'duck' from these paradigms, certainly some essentialist claims do seem to follow from this experience. For instance, Kripke writes, (1982:116)

> ... it is impossible ... to suppose that these very ducks could have

> been born in the fifteenth century ... (or) ... that these very ducks could ... have come from different biological origins ...

These are necessary entailments which associate with my use of 'duck'. Kripke argues further, this does not mean that I cannot extrapolate from this experience to other types of ducks in other places and in other times. In other words, while there are certain essential truths unique to my paradigmatic experience, I can abstract a concept of 'ducks' from the place and time that the concept is learned. Kripke implies that similar considerations apply to one's learning of a concept like pain. There might be essential features associated with one's learning of the concept but one can extrapolate a perfectly general concept from this paradigm. One can mean something by the term 'pain', when applied to another person, by virtue of some of the accidental, though important, features of the paradigmatic use.

Kripke's so-called essential properties of a duck, seem a bit odd. If it is an essential property (which I doubt) 'not having been born in the fifteenth century' is a thoroughly general essential property, true of every sentient object on the duck-pond. But is it, and are Kripke's other examples, genuine essential properties? Certainly they do not seem to be essential in

the Aristotelian sense, i.e. a property without which the object would not be the object it now is.12 Whereas the property of pain 'existing-only-when-I-feel-it', would be essential in the Aristotelian sense, and Malcolm says holders of the analogical argument are committed to this.

Can we say that Malcolm's mistake is in thinking that a property that is essential (in the Aristotelian sense) for some object A cannot be also contingent for another object B? Malcolm insists that if I learn my conception of pain from exclusive and private experiences of pain, then each subsequent use of 'pain' has the property necessarily 'existing-only-when-I-feel-it'. In other words, Malcolm seems to think it impossible that a property can be necessary for some uses of it (when it refers to my states) while only contingently true, when I apply it to others. Clearly this is not so of every essential property. Some full-bloodied properties can be had by some objects necessarily, while other objects have this property but only contingently. For example, we might say that water is necessarily liquid whereas paint is only contingently so; i.e.'liquid' is necessary when applied to water and accidental when applied to paint, so that some references to paint may lack the property entirely. Or we could say that my cat is

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12See Aristotle's Metaphysics, Bk. VII Section 1 1028A.

necessarily cat-shaped whereas a plasticene model of my cat is only accidently so; i.e.'cat-shaped' is necessary when applied to my cat Mildred whereas it is accidental when it is applied to plasticene. So that most of one's uses of the term 'plasticene' do not presuppose the cat-shaped feature. Or, finally, to borrow an example from Quine,13 a mathematician is essentially rational whereas a bicyclist is only contingently so, or could lack the property entirely.

The same consideration applies to the pain that I presently feel. It is a necessary yet trivial property of my present headache, that 'I feel it now'. However reference to my past pains lack this property. The pain that I had when I broke my arm last year does not have the property 'necessarily-that-I-presently-feel-it'; neither does my present reference to it. (Although as we shall see some other essential property might hold these different references to pain together.)

How does this point undermine Malcolm's claim about my conception of pain existing only when I feel it? The point that emerges here is that **some** of my uses of pain can have the property 'necessarily-existing-when-I-feel-it' whereas other of my uses of pain may lack this property entirely. It is possible, in other words, that

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13Though Quine (1960:199/200) uses this to make a very different point.

there are some necessary entailments which associate with my use of pain, when I use this word to refer to **my** experiences of it, i.e. exists only when I feel it. This does not mean that I cannot extrapolate from this to a more general concept of pain - the sort had by others - in which pain does not have the essential property. So much then for Malcolm's objection that, according to the privileged access argument, the meaning of experiential words entails 'essentially mine', for **each and every** use. Even if it is correct (which I will dispute later) that the privileged access argument is committed to the claim that experiential words are learned in this way - we learn it as a property which exists only when I feel it - subsequently, such characteristics might be essential for certain uses while they are contingent, or do not apply, in other uses of the term.

One further point that is worth making in passing here. We could agree with one point in the spirit of Malcolm's objection, namely that 'existing-only-when-I-feel-it' is a decidedly odd property. If we are to take seriously the notion that there are essential characteristics of pain, it is doubtful, to say the least, that anyone would cite 'existing-only-when-I-feel-it' as being one of these characteristics. We might say, perhaps, that 'suffering' or 'hurt' are necessary conditions for the concept of pain to apply; if no-one

had ever experienced pain or ever did experience it, 'hurting the bearer' would still be one of its essential characteristics. But that any particular person is experiencing it, at best, seems to be an accidental property of pain. The rebuttal remains, however: Malcolm is not correct when he says that the privileged access view of the concept of pain is committed to such a curious essential property on each occasion of its use.

A second fundamental error of the philosopher who believes that one must know what mental states, like thinking, fear or pain, are "from one's own case", Malcolm argues, is that this is to commit the sin of presuming the possibility of a private language. This is to say, a private language is implied if the meaning of experiential words are learned in the way in which Malcolm understands the privileged access argument to present the matter. He claims that (1962:75)

> The idea of a private language is presupposed by every program of inferring or constructing the 'external world' and 'other minds'.

What is a private language? We are told that the words of a private language cannot be understood by anyone other than the speaker. So a language is private if the meaning of its terms can be known only to one person.

Wittgenstein is said to have argued[14] that a person could not have such a language. His rejection hinges on the claim that there could not be genuine rules (genuine in the sense of distinguishing between correct and incorrect applications) for the use of expressions of the private language; so that whatever seems right to the user in the private situation will be right simpliciter.

Why should Malcolm think that the privileged access argument does entail the possibility of such a private language? The privileged access thesis, according to Malcolm, seems to be this (ibid:157)

> ... one supposes that one inwardly picks out something as thinking or pain and thereafter identifies it whenever it presents itself in the soul.

On experiencing a sensation for the first time I bestow a name on it. The term thus refers to the private sensation of the user. The words referring to private sensations acquire their meaning by linking them to the experiences themselves. The meanings of the terms, therefore, can be known only to the user. Thereafter whenever he or she experiences the same sensation the user refers to it by the name which he or she gave it on the first experience of it. How is this a "private" language? Part of what is suggested here, I take it is, as Wittgenstein writes, (1963:para.243) that the

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[14]See Vohra, A. (1986:38).

words of this language

> ... refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations.

If the meaning of some of the words of a language, depends simply upon references to what can only be known by the language user, this is a private language. Hence Malcolm accuses the privileged access argument of postulating such a language. It contains words which have meaning by standing for objects only accessible to the language user.

One of the things which is said to be wrong with a commitment to a private language, as we noted, is that there is no way in which the user can be sure that he has correctly identified the term in question. Malcolm writes (1962:157)

> He feels sure that he identifies correctly the occurrences in his soul; but feeling sure is no guarantee of being right. Indeed he has no idea of what being **right** could mean. He does not know how to distinguish between actually making correct identifications and being under the impression that he does.

If the language-user identifies the emotion of sadness as the sensation of pain neither he nor anyone else could know about this mistake. Perhaps he makes the error everytime. As Malcolm would put it: He has no criterion on the basis of which he can justify such identification. This Malcolm believes indicates we are

talking nonsense. He writes (ibid:157)

> We have no standard, no examples,
> no customary practice, with which
> to compare our inner recognitions.

There are several points that can be made here. First, a minor point. If Malcolm's accusation is correct and the privileged access argument is so committed then a private language would seem to have a utility. Consider, for instance, my 'gobcon' experience. Since this is a term in my private language, comprising of names whose meaning depends wholly upon their being bestowed on my exclusive experiences, then necessarily no-one else can understand it. (If the meaning of a word is something which is only meaningful for me, presumably any name I bestow on the experience will do.) But then, Malcolm might ask, what point is there for me to know that such-and-such a sensation is a "gobcon"? What purpose would a language containing such terms fulfil? Perhaps a perfectly plausible answer is that there are a number of "inner" experiences for which there are not, nor could there be, public words. Nevertheless I am aware of these experiences and when they recur, I have some system of symbols with which to re-identify them. So I can say to myself 'I am having my "gobcon" again' and only I know the meaning of the words with which I label this and other sensations. Furthermore, this does not mean that I cannot know

whether or not the identification is correct. There are plenty of psychological states adjunct to my "gobcon" experience, e.g. nausea prior to it, spots before the eyes during it, relief subsequent to it, which count as independent criteria for correct identification and re-identification.15 Contrary to Wittgenstein, Malcolm et al, all of this seems to me to be a priori plausible. However, I am not concerned here with the question of whether such a language is possible but rather with the accusation that the privileged access argument commits such a sin.

In defence of Russell and the rest, there is nothing I can find in their accounts that commits them to the view that the meaning of words a person uses to refer to his sensations can be known only to him. The whole point of Russell's position is that a person can meaningfully say that **someone else** is in pain by recourse to the analogical argument. Though a person's immediate sensations can be known only to him, the sense of the words that he uses to refer to his own mental states can be applied equally well to others. To stress the point: There is nothing in Russell's position to show that he

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15M. Vermaak suggests that 'gobcon' would be an inarticulate grunt. I do not see why my private language could not be rule following, contain other features, just like a public language, even if the features are only accessible to me. (Unless these things are ruled as not being a language by fiat.)

believes in, or is committed to, the possibility of a private language. On the contrary, words about the experiences and mental states of others are meaningful and can be known to be so, by virtue of the analogy.

It might be maintained by Malcolm that, whether Russell likes it or not, since a person's immediate sensations can be known only to that person, this commits Russell to the view that the words used to refer to those states can only be meaningful to that person. It certainly is the case that other holders of the analogical argument are committed to the view that one's knowledge of one's own mental states is private. As Ayer writes (1967:349)

> It is a convention that any feeling one has is an experience which is private to oneself. And so it becomes a necessary truth that one person cannot have, and therefore cannot strictly know the experiences of another.

Similarly, Russell's analogical position does require that a person has privileged access to his own sensations and no-one else has such access. Moreover, his knowledge is incorrigible, a person cannot have the mistaken belief that he is in pain. However, I do not think that this commits Russell to more than the claim that one knows one's own sensations in a different way from the way one knows the mental states of others, and that this difference follows from the fact that one has knowledge-

acquaintance of one's own mental states.

It does not follow from all of this that no-one can meaningfully refer to the mental states of another. Russellians may even agree (with the Wittgensteinians) that for language to be understood by others, words must get an important part of their sense publicly by being attached to publicly accessible conditions that allows their application. Otherwise how can Russell understand the utterances of the poor soul who says to him, 'I have walked twenty desert miles in this heat with never a drop to drink'. He must understand the statement, or he would not be able to draw a comparison between the similarities of behaviour. Hence Russellians might agree that the words have a public sense, and this is why we can understand what a language-user is saying to us. There is nothing (in his 'Argument from Analogy', at least) that would prevent Russell from accepting all of this. For what he wants to claim is that I use words, albeit publicly learned, to refer to mental states to which I alone have access. In other words, terms which owe their sense to public criteria refer to private states.

According to S. Blackburn (1984:94) a sense-reference distinction in this context fails. He writes

> The distinction is at its most visible when we take phrases which can be fully understood (i.e. whose sense can be fully apprehended) when it is not known

> to whom or to what they refer. Thus I perfectly understand many sentences containing definite descriptions ... although quite ignorant of who or what it is that they refer to.

Blackburn claims this is why I can understand a statement like 'Economists do not know who is the richest man in the world'. The sense of this sentence is a function of the individual words occurring in the descriptions. It is quite independent of one's knowing whoever happens to be the richest person in the world. But Blackburn says 'pain' does not function in this way. He writes (ibid:94)

> There is no understanding of the term by people who do not **know what pain is.**

Why not? Are we to say, following Blackburn, there is no understanding to the term 'starving' by people who have never starved? (And, presumably, he would have to say there can be no understanding of the sense of the term 'rich' by people, like me, who have always been poor.) Yet, paradoxically, Blackburn would have to say that I can understand the sense of the sentence 'Doctors do not know who in Transkei, is the person in the greatest pain'.

Of course I can know the sense of the word 'starving', even though I have never starved; as I can know what depression, terror, reverie, ecstasy, etc. are even if I have not experienced them. There is no contradiction in the proposition that Jones knows what pain is but has

never experienced it. I can know the sense of the term 'pain' even if I have only experienced minor aches or twinges. Similarly my child can know the referent of pain even if she does not know the sense of the term. We can, this is to say, separate the two processes: On the one hand learning the sense of the term 'pain', 'starving', 'rich', and, on the other hand, learning what they refer to.

In other words, why shouldn't the holder of the privileged access argument help himself to a sense-reference distinction? What the first-person psychological statement "refers" to is the inner sensation that I am presently experiencing. It is this (the referent) that is private. It is directly accessible only to the person making the first-person psychological statement. This is not to deny that the **sense** in which the statement is understood is public. It is the public criteria which provide a concept with which I label the sensation. However, others cannot be aware of the sensation itself, they can have only indirect knowledge of it, i.e. through the pain experiencer's communication of his mental state by language. So we learn of the private experiences of others through a public language, but the referent is known only to the person who is experiencing it. To paraphrase a well-known philosophical example: I have a beetle in a box which necessarily you cannot see, but

which I can tell you about because I have learned the language used to express this kind of state.16

We have seen how Malcolm thinks that the privileged access doctrine is committed to a spurious form of essential properties and to some form of private language. But Malcolm has a third, stronger objection.

The nub of this objection (which is the one we made against Russell) is that the analogical argument does not solve the other minds problem. The analogical argument holds that words like 'pain' get their meaning (i.e. referent) by referring to my inner experiences. There is only a contingent causal connection between **my** mental states and **my** behaviour, not a necessary conceptual link between the two. How, then, can I claim to know that others have experiences, or refer to the experiences of others? Let me repeat this point, Russell et al, want to argue (i) that, in one's own case, mental states and observable behaviour are only contingently or, at best, causally connected, not conceptually connected. As Malcolm puts it (1962:75)

> At bottom it is the idea that there is only a contingent and not an **essential** connection between a sensation and its outward expression ...

At the same time, Russell and the others want to argue that (ii) we can know that another person 'has a pain'

16I owe this way of putting the matter to M. Vermaak.

and many other sorts of mental states. Malcolm claims that one cannot hold (i) and (ii) simultaneously.

Why not? On the analogical argument, the link between one's own mind and behaviour is known to be tenuous and private. No proposition about a sensation entails a proposition about one's behaviour. As Malcolm suggests, the connection between sensations and behaviour is "merely contingent". So one could never really be sure that, in attributing an experiential state to another, one was talking about the same or a similar state that one experiences oneself. Malcolm writes (ibid:96)

> For the behavior that is, for me, contingently associated with 'the sensation of pain' may be, for you, contingently associated with 'the sensation of tickling'; the piece of matter that produces in you what you call a 'metallic taste' may produce in me what, if you could experience it, you would call the 'taste of onions'; my 'sensation of red' may be your 'sensation of blue'; we do not know and cannot know whether we are talking about the same things ...

Clearly, as we argued earlier, this is an important limitation to the analogical answer to the other minds problem. Malcolm argues, I think correctly, that a philosopher finds himself in this difficulty because he does not know how to make a transition from his own case to the case of others. What we must do to overcome this difficulty, Malcolm suggests, is to free ourselves from

the mistake in thinking that the only mental phenomena we are genuinely acquainted with are those of "one's own case". How are we supposed to do this?

Malcolm contends, that on the privileged access account, we have no criteria for establishing that another's behaviour does entail that he is having certain mental states. He writes (ibid:152)

> ... you give me a criterion for saying that someone **has** the same as I have. If you can do this you will have no use for the argument from analogy: and if you cannot then you do not understand the supposed conclusion of that argument.

With independent criteria to establish the connection between mental states and behaviour, the link between the two might could be shown to be conceptual and there would be no need for any argument for other minds. Malcolm offers us such criteria: "circumstances, behaviour and utterances".

Malcolm's major thesis is that the criteria for the correct application of mental terms to others are just **different** from those which one applies to oneself. In a typically Wittgensteinean fashion, Malcolm suggests that we "look and see" how such mental terms are actually applied in everyday discourse; we must look and see the criteria we actually use for the application of mental terms to **others.** The misguided philosopher should stop theorising and (ibid:157)

> ... look at the familiar facts and to acknowledge that the circumstances, behavior, and utterances of others actually are his **criteria** (not merely his evidence) for the existence of their mental states.

'Circumstances, behaviour and utterances', we are told, are the criteria for the application of mental terms to others. These are the criteria by virtue of which we learn the expressions for, and correctly ascribe mental states to them. Thus when I state that someone else is sad, I am not referring to, what she would be referring to, if she said 'I am sad'. I am referring to her 'circumstances, behaviour and utterances'; the fact that she is sitting on her own in the corner, her face is downcast, her body slumped, she is crying, etc. Whereas she would be referring to her sadness. (Surprisingly, in his various articles on this subject, Malcolm does little by way of expanding this claim.)

It is worth emphasising here, what Malcolm is **not** claiming. 'Circumstances, behaviour and utterances' are not just evidence for the correct ascription of mental states to others. They are the **criteria.** If they were just evidence he would be saying that 'circumstances, behaviour and utterances' can be used to back-up or justify such ascriptions, but priority might then still be given to 'one's own case'. Neither does he mean that the (criteriological) evidence provides sufficient empirical support for statements about the minds of

others. For then the reasoning is inductive, for instance, perhaps we would then need the argument from analogy. Can 'circumstances, behaviour and utterances' be taken to entail conclusions about mental experiences? But in this case, by maintaining that our observations of the physical condition of other persons, logically or conceptually (or in some other way) entails the experiences we attribute to them, Malcolm seems to be committed to a form of behaviourism, which he eschews. So what exactly is envisaged by the claim that 'circumstances, behaviour and utterances' are the criteria on the basis for which we attribute mental experiences to others? Malcolm does not say.

The unwelcome fact remains, moreover, that despite all the correlations in 'circumstances, behaviour and utterances', it is possible that other human beings experience different sensations, emotions, thoughts, to those that I experience. Or no sensations at all! Furthermore, Malcolm's criteria will not readily justify claims to meaning, or knowledge, where the memory, thought, emotion or sensation of the other person has no overt behavioural counterpart. How exactly is one supposed to behave when, say, one is remembering? What are the typical circumstances when one is thinking about, e.g. things that one has to do tomorrow? Does one, in fact, use a certain form of utterance when one

is feeling pleased with oneself? and so on. No matter how Malcolm unpacks his criteria, I do not see how it would licence our claim to know the thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, of other human beings. And any acceptable resolution to the other minds problem, needs to deal with this aspect of the sceptic's doubt.

Another problem with which Malcolm is now faced is this: If he is correct to reject privileged access what is the meaning of one's own psychological statements about oneself? What do I mean when I say 'I have a pain'? The answer can not be, surely, that in the appropriate circumstances, I observe my behaviour and utterances, e.g. I observe myself clutching my stomach and groaning; viz first-person, psychological statements are verified by self-observation. This is a mistake, Malcolm thinks, made by privileged access theorists and behaviourists alike. He writes (ibid:157/158)

> The philosophy of "from one's own case" and behaviorism, though in a sense opposites, make the common assumption that the first-person, present-tense psychological statements are verified by self-observation.

They are not verified by any form of self-observation. Neither are first-person psychological sentences **reports** of an observation. The use of first-person psychological sentences have 'nothing to do with recognising or identifying or observing a state of oneself'. Neither

are they **descriptions** of one's mental states. One is not now uttering a proposition describing one's mental states in order that the existence of the private state can be communicated to others. It is not a description of pain. For 'I have a pain' to become a description of pain further constituents need to be added to the proposition. What might these be? Perhaps we make some remarks about the intensity of the pain or about the frequency and duration of the pain. These sort of additional features in a proposition would turn the statement into a description of pain as opposed to merely a proposition referring to a sensation. If 'I have a pain' is not a report or a descriptive proposition, what kind of proposition is it? How are we to understand such sentences?

Malcolm's solution is to think of first-person psychological sentences in an entirely different light. We are to see them as similar to the natural, nonverbal, behavioural expressions of psychological states. In other words, he wants us to accept Wittgenstein's suggestion that the utterance of, say, 'I have a pain' is similar to the "primitive natural expression of pain". To support this claim, Wittgenstein asks us to consider how a child learns the meaning of the names of sensations. He suggests that it is something like this: When

a child cries someone, probably his mother, responds with care and tenderness. He sees when his brothers and sisters cry out, they too receive care and attention. He hears others in similar circumstances talk of pain. In time he learns to do the same. Instead of crying he says 'I've got a pain'. As Wittgenstein puts it (1963:para.244)

> A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences.

This strikes Wittgenstein as an intelligible account of how the child comes to use the word 'pain'. In learning to use the psychological words, reference to private sensations do not occur. When the child says 'I am in pain' there is nothing here to suggest that the child is referring to a mental experience. Similarly, when the child's sister says 'I am in pain', he does not think that she is referring to her inner experiences. They are not a report on a mental experience but more likely, an appeal for help. Or suppose that the child is told by his mother 'I am angry with you'. She is not telling him about her inner experiences. She is warning him; telling him what to expect. All this gives the words 'pain', 'anger', and so on, the meanings they have.17

Malcolm also thinks that the first-person verbal

17See G. Vesey (1974:156) for a sympathetic elaboration of this view.

expression of pain is a substitute for the primitive, non-verbal expression of pain. So a first-person utterance of pain is merely a replacement of what was, hitherto, pain behaviour. The adult avowal of pain is a substitute for the manifestation of pain; i.e. I say 'I have a pain' instead of crying or groaning.

Even if we were to accept that a first-person verbal avowal of psychological states replaces preverbal behaviour, in what sense can this be said to be our "criterion" for understanding the meaning of first-person psychological statements? Malcolm suggests we should look and see how words serve as the criteria of the child's feelings. Initially, the circumstances and the child's natural behaviour, tells us that he is in pain. When he learns his mother-tongue, it is no longer the non-verbal expression to which one only responds. Malcolm writes (1962:83)

> ... other persons will react to the child's mere words in the same way that they previously reacted to his non-verbal sensation behavior ...

The verbal expression evokes the same response in others as does the non-verbal expression. Presumably, in a similar way, one's own avowal of pain, since it replaces natural preverbal behaviour, is the criterion for the meaningfulness of one's first-person utterance.

There are many shortcomings to this aspect of

Malcolm's positive thesis. First of all, clearly, Malcolm is wrong when he claims that the first-person verbal expression of pain is a substitute for the 'primitive, non-verbal expression of pain'. This may be one of their uses but it is only one type of use. There are many cases where 'I have a pain' patently does **not** replace behaviour, but informs. Perhaps one wishes to have another person make some judgement concerning it. For instance, Z says to the doctor 'I have a pain' not to replace the natural expression but with the expectation that he will diagnose what is causing the pain and with any luck prescribe something to rid her of the pain. Or, G says to her mother, 'I have a pain' not to replace pain behaviour but in the hope that by making her mother aware of her inner state, she will be permitted to stay away from school. Another use of this utterance might be to give others a reason as to why one's disposition has been less than satisfactory. The business executive who has been rather short-tempered all day, says to her secretary, 'I have a pain, in fact I have had it since this morning'. Here the utterance is not replacing pain behaviour but rather explaining her unpleasant conduct. One could imagine many other uses of the proposition in question. We may say, then, that the verbal expression of one's pain has many functions, one of which is to replace the natural

pre-verbal behaviour. So Malcolm is wrong; there is no single function, not even a paradigmatic function, of 'I have a pain'.

Even in those cases where we might say that the utterance is used to replace preverbal behaviour, we need to distinguish between the voluntary and the involuntary behaviour. When he says the verbal expression of pain replaces the natural expression, we must presume that Malcolm is talking about the "voluntary" natural expression of behaviour. An involuntary natural expression, like "Ow!", normally occurs when pain either takes one by surprise so that one has not "braced" oneself for it and therefore emits an involuntary cry. For example, the other day I did not see a tennis ball coming straight at me. It hit me hard in the stomach. I let out an involuntary cry. Or perhaps the intensity of pain reaches such a degree that one cannot control oneself. In the film Q.E.D. the hero has a gangrenous leg. The gangrene was spreading so rapidly that his friends could not take the risk of waiting the five to six days it would take to reach a hospital. One of the friends took a saw and cut the leg off. Naturally the hero, having no form of anaesthetic, could not control himself and let out an involuntary cry. In fact, he yelled and yelled. It would be odd if the hero had merely said 'I have a pain'. The point is: the utterance 'I am in

pain' typically occurs as a voluntary replacement of the natural expression: Hence, it is reasonable to suppose that the statement is being made for some purpose. Perhaps to inform other persons of the sensation that I am presently experiencing.

More importantly, I fail to see how most first-person psychological statements could possibly reduce to an account based upon natural preverbal behaviour. How are utterances like, to paraphrase Malcolm, 'this tastes of onions', 'this seems to me to be red', supposed to be replacements of natural preverbal behaviour? And if they are not, what has Malcolm said that would rule out the sceptical conjecture that the piece of matter that produces in me what I call 'the taste of onions' may produce in you what, if I could experience it, I would call 'a metallic taste'; that my 'sensation of red' maybe your 'sensation of blue', etc. And how do I know, when my intention is to inform, to report, or to describe, my present psychological state to you, that my present sensation of pain may not be for you the sensation of tickling? We do not know and cannot know whether we are talking about the same things; at least, not as a result of anything that Malcolm has said.

A second major problem that I have with Malcolm's positive account of how psychological statements, about

oneself, are meaningful, concerns the importance that he attaches to our **learning** of the words for mental states and processes. He does not tell us why the way we learn something is essential to a philosophical analysis of the thing once learned. Even if one does acquire experiential words in the way Malcolm claims, this still may not be the ground for holding that belief in other minds is rational. And as Plantinga writes (1967:194)

> Strictly speaking, the analogical position need say nothing at all about the conditions under which a person can or must learn what pain is.

There is no contradiction in the proposition that Smith knows what pain is but never learned what it was, either because he has known it all his life or that he acquired the concept in some way other than learning.

Why should an empirical account of how we come first to attach meaning to words like pain be part of the analysis of the term once learned? We would not think that a description of how we came to learn the use of moral words constitutes an analysis of our understanding of what a moral judgement is. Why would an account of how we come to attach meaning to words like 'pain', 'anger', and so on (even if Malcolm is correct) constitute a sufficient account of what a first-person experiential judgement is?

Certainly, Russell does not think that the way we

learn psychological terms provide the grounds for one's belief in other minds. He says quite explicitly that he is not interested in the history of how we come to believe in other minds. He writes (1972:33)

> I am of course not discussing the history of how we come to believe in other minds. We find ourselves believing in them when we first begin to reflect ...

As we saw, Russell sees the problem of other minds in another way, namely: How can I claim to know that other minds exist? I experience certain sensations, emotions and other mental states. As a matter of logic I can have only my experiences. Clearly there is no such thing as having another person's experiences. Isn't it possible that other beings which seem to be like oneself, are instead complex automata? Or less sceptically, is it not possible that if I could have access to your mental states I might find something quite different to my own? To establish this sort of scepticism, it is **not** necessary to argue, as Malcolm thinks, that words like 'pain', 'anger', would have meaning simply by being names conferred on my private mental states; that one would not extrapolate to the 'pains' 'anger' etc., of others. One might readily accept that such words have a publicly learned sense. However, it seems to be generally conceded that the referents of these terms is private.

Let us sum up: Malcolm believes that the other minds problem arises through ignoring how words like 'pain', 'anger', etc., actually function in our lives. The mistake is thinking of them as names which are bestowed upon private experiences. Malcolm's positive thesis is that the criteria for the correct application of mental states to others are **different** from those which one applies to one's own case. I can meaningfully say 'he is in pain' when, in appropriate circumstances, another person exhibits pain behaviour and the appropriate utterances. Whereas I can meaningfully say 'I am in pain', when the utterance is a substitute for what hitherto was the manifestation of pain behaviour in infancy. On this account, Malcolm seems to think he has demonstrated conceptual links, what he calls "criteria", between psychological statements and observable material conditions. So that there is no opening for the so-called other minds problem.

We have found a lot of problems in Malcolm's account. I think that we must conclude that his attempt to undermine the subjective character of mental experience does not succeed. Whereas the cardinal point in his positive thesis, i.e. his criteriological claims, are hopelessly underanalysed.

We found that the argument from analogy is an

unsatisfactory basis for establishing knowledge claims that others have minds. Now we find that Malcolm's criteria do not entail statements about the experiences of others. What other possibilities are there? We might try to show that there can be a relationship between physical and mental states which is neither inductive, nor does the former criteriologically entail the latter, and yet it is in some other sense a logically adequate relation. This is what Strawson attempts to show. In the next chapter we will investigate Strawson's claim.

Chapter Three

Strawson's Criterion of Logical Adequacy

Strawson's account[18] can be understood as an attempt to rid us of the twin evils of Russell's postulate and logical behaviourism,[19] by designating the concept of a person as primitive. The concept 'persons' cannot be analysed into further, more basic constituents.

On the other hand, a material body Strawson calls a "basic particular". Material bodies are basic to our schemes of identification and re-identification. In this sense we can identify and re-identify a material body without having to make a reference to anything else but the material body. Many of the terms which we apply to material bodies, Strawson adds, we also correctly apply to persons. A person, however, is to be understood as something more than a body. I remain the same person even though my body changes dramatically through age or illness. Yet neither is a person an immaterial entity, i.e. merely a consciousness (or pure ego). Nor in Strawson's view can it be maintained that a person is

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[18] See Strawson, P.F. (1959:Ch3).

[19] We are taking Russell's postulate to represent what Strawson calls "the Cartesian position" and logical behaviourism to represent what Strawson calls "no-ownership theory".

a compound or a product of the material and immaterial; the one which possesses physical attributes, the other possessing mental attributes. On the contrary, the subject to which we attribute physical properties and to which we attribute the properties which imply the presence of consciousness, just is "a person". A person has states of consciousness as well as physical states and is not to be identified with either one, or the other, or both. Persons, Strawson insists, are not reducible to these other things. It is a primitive concept.

There are, however, two aspects of a person: the mental, to which psychological predicates (P-predicates) apply, and the physical, to which material predicates (M-predicates) apply; neither of which has primacy over the other. Strawson writes, of persons, (1959:102)

> ... (It is) a type of entity such that **both** predicates ascribing states of consciousness **and** predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, ... are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type.

M-predicates apply to both persons and other kinds of material bodies, e.g. '...weighs ten stone'. P-predicates, on the other hand, apply only to persons. They include descriptions of mental states like '...is in pain', '...is remembering' and also descriptions of actions, which apply to persons only because they have bodies, e.g. '...is going for a walk'. P-predicates

cannot be ascribed to anything that cannot have M-predicates ascribed to it. Both P- and M-predicates are necessary to our concept of a person.

Strawson goes on to claim that to ascribe P-predicates to oneself, one must also be able to ascribe them to other persons. This is crucial to Strawson's account. P-predicates are of the same logical kind irrespective of whether we ascribe them to ourselves or to others. He writes (ibid:99)

> ... that it is a necessary condition of one's ascribing states of consciousness, experiences, to oneself, in the way that one does, that one should also ascribe them, or be prepared to ascribe them, to others who are not oneself.

Strawson's point is that one can apply such a predicate to oneself only if one knows how to ascribe predicates of this sort to persons generally.

On the face of it, this might not seem to be correct. I identify other things as persons by their bodily appearance. I would not use this criteria to identify myself as a person. Strawson admits this. The basis on which we ascribe experiences to others is different from the one which we use to ascribe experiences to ourselves. To know how to apply a P-predicate to others, Strawson tells us, it is also necessary to know the criteria for correctly applying them. I ascribe '...is in pain', '...is angry' to others by associating the predicates with the behaviour of those

to whom the predicates are ascribed. As Strawson says, behaviour is "a logically adequate criterion" for determining the correctness of statements applying P-predicates to others. If a person says she is in pain and is not exhibiting pain behaviour, then we would have to say that "She is pretending" or "She is lying". The point is that the criterion of behaviour is logically related to the ascription of '...is in pain', and one can know when another is in pain by appealing to his behaviour to show the correctness of the P-predicate ascribed.

In the case of other persons, then, we apply predicates on the basis of criteria concerned with their physical appearance and behaviour. (But, as we shall see, we do not simply mean by this merely that they are in such-and-such a physical condition, or that they are behaving in this or that way.) In our own case we do not use these criteria. Our knowledge of our own states is not obtained by observation. Yet Strawson emphasises that this does not mean that the states we ascribe to ourselves are in any way different from those we ascribe to others. On the contrary, as we noted, a necessary feature of P-predicates is that, as Strawson writes (ibid:108)

> ... they have both first- and third-person ascriptive uses, that they are both self-ascribable otherwise than on the basis of observation of

> the behaviour of the subject of them, and other ascribable on the basis of behaviour criteria.

Finally, Strawson does not deny interaction between the mental and physical aspects of a person. There are, he claims, causal relations between the two. He writes (ibid:92)

> ... for each person there is one body which occupies a certain **causal** position in relation to that person's perceptual experience ...

Our perceptual states depend upon the efficient workings of our bodies. If the organs that I require for sound, touch, taste, vision, smell, are not in good working order, my perceptual experiences will be limited or even non-existent. For example, for one to perceive that a noise is emanating from an object, one must be able to hear; if one is to experience, say, that silk is soft, one must have a sense of feeling; if the milk is to taste sour, one's taste buds must work properly; and so on. So P-predicates of this sort depend upon the proper functioning of bodily states, which in turn suggests a causal relation between the two.

By identifying 'persons' as a primitive concept, Strawson hopes to overcome the problem at the heart of Dualism, in which two entirely different substances are identified and in which mental substance is given a priority. He writes (ibid:102/103)

> ... the concept of the pure individual consciousness - the pure ego - is a concept that cannot exist; or, at least, cannot exist as a primary concept in terms of which the concept of a person can be explained or analysed. It can exist only, if at all, as a secondary, non-primitive concept, which itself is to be explained, analysed, in terms of the concept of a person.

Persons, not consciousness or the pure ego, are basic.

More importantly, Strawson's claim, that statements made about the experiences of others are not to be analysed in a different way from those that one makes about oneself, has important consequences for the other minds problem. A dualist, as we saw, is faced with the problem of other minds if he begins with the view that we learn how to ascribe P-predicates in "our own case". He then wonders how we can know how to apply them to others. If my knowing how to apply P-predicates to others is a necessary condition for my being able to ascribe them to myself, then talk of mental experiences does not start with "one's own case". And Strawson insists that to know the correct use of a P-predicate, such as '...is in pain', is to know how to apply the predicate to others as well as to myself. I cannot ascribe 'pain', or 'anger' to myself unless I am able, or I know how to, ascribe it to others. So there is no problem about my knowing that other minds exist. For their existence is a pre-condition for my applying P-predicates correctly to myself.

Strawson also hopes to overcome the logical behaviourist thesis.20 On this account to say 'Smith is in pain' is to say 'She is behaving in certain ways; in her facial expressions, gestures, etc.' Strawson calls this a 'no-ownership' doctrine of the self. The view which this doctrine tries to establish is that all of our references to mental experiences are dependent upon bodily states. Pains and other so-called mental states need not be ascribed to anything more than a body.

In response, Strawson asks the Behaviourist to say why both bodily and mental characteristics should be ascribed to the same thing? His point is that by saying 'I am in pain', I am ascribing mental as well as physical characteristics to the one thing, i.e. **myself.** Behaviourists do not explain why I should have the concept of myself at all. But what exactly am I referring to by "myself"?

Wittgenstein seems to have adopted a Humean position on the 'self'. Wittgenstein thought, Strawson tells us (ibid:95)

> ... (in) 'I have a toothache' ...
> the 'I' **does not denote a possessor,**
> that no Ego is involved in thinking
> or in having toothache ...

From this, it seems that 'What is the self?' is not a sensible question. The notion of 'self', a la Wittgen-

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20See (1959:95) footnote 1, where Strawson claims this is at the centre of Wittgenstein's analysis.

stein, is a "linguistic illusion". It is the grammatical role of words like 'I', 'myself' in sentences that confuses us into thinking that there is some such entity. As Wittgenstein writes, (1963:para.116), the philosopher's task is

> ... to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.

Is Wittgenstein's account of everyday use correct? The pain that Smith is experiencing, she would say, belongs to something she refers to as 'myself' or 'I'. Or, in everyday usage, would she be taken, by the first person reference, simply to be making a grammatical reference? Surely not. We would say, more plausibly, 'Smith is making a statement about **her** mental state, namely, the pain that **she** is suffering'. If we agree that a mental state is occuring it seems equally reasonable to suppose that it is Smith's mental state. As Strawson writes (1959:97)

> ... such particulars (conscious states) cannot be thus identifyingly referred to except as the states or experiences **of** some identified **person.**

A conscious state is not some free-floating entity that can be predicated of any thing or subject. There cannot be 'pain' taking place independently of someone being the experiencer. Any particular experience depends for its identification upon the subject who is experiencing it.

One further criticism of logical behaviourism can be made in passing. Are we just to think that by her utterance 'I am in pain', Smith merely makes a behavioural point? Clearly not. If logical behaviourism of this sort is correct then Smith must observe her own behaviour to find out whether or not she is in pain! But she knows this, quite apart from an inspection of her physical behaviour.

Strawson's point is, then, that 'I' (and 'you') refer to the person to which P-predicates and M-predicates can be properly ascribed. So persons, viz: either oneself or other persons, are identified as the basic objects of reference. This effectively rules out the no-ownership theory. It rules out scepticism that there might not be other persons who are subjects of experiences.

There are lots of problems with Strawson's account. I will concentrate on two of the more important ones; viz the notions of 'logically adequate criteria' and the claim the concept of 'persons' is basic.21

My criterion for self-ascription of P-predicates will consist simply in my being aware of the state which I ascribe to myself. But this cannot be my criterion for ascribing the same P-predicate to another person. How

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21See Williams (1973:120/1) for a more general criticism of Strawson's position .

do we know, then, that it is correct to attribute a particular P-predicate to another person? As we have noted, Strawson's answer is that physical appearance and behaviour are "logically adequate criteria". Our observations of the physical condition and behaviour of other persons is a logically adequate basis for the P-predicates that we attribute to them. But what exactly is meant here by calling this relationship "logically adequate"?

Does Strawson mean that a statement about the bodily condition or behaviour logically entails a statement about that person's experiences? Clearly not. As we noted it is possible for me to observe another person behaving as though he is in pain although he is not in pain. Does he mean that a statement about their behaviour provides sufficient empirical evidence for an inductive claim about their mental states? He cannot mean this. For this would seem to require the additional support of an inductive rule like the argument from analogy, (or the support of some other form of inductive argument). So what exactly does he mean by "logically adequate"?

Strawson seems to think that there is, in some sense, a relationship between statements about behaviour and mental states that is neither a deductive nor inductive form of reasoning. He illustrates what he means by "logical adequacy" in the following way

(ibid:110)

> If one is playing a game of cards, the distinctive markings of a certain card constitute a logically adequate criterion for calling it, say, the Queen of Hearts; but, in calling it this, in the context of the game, one is ascribing to it properties over and above the possession of these markings. The predicate gets its meaning from the whole structure of the game.

We recognise a card like the Queen of Hearts by its appearance, or its markings. When we identify this card, however, we are saying more than that it has a particular appearance. We are saying, also, that it stands in certain relations to other cards, that it occupies a particular place in one of a series that makes up a suit, etc. In the context of a game like Beggar-Your-Neighbour, to identify the Queen of Hearts is to identify it as a card which is outranked by the King and which outranks the Jack of Hearts. Its appearance is a logically adequate criterion, we might say, for a card serving as the Queen of Hearts and also for these other functions. Given one's understanding of these conventions, we do not need to discover for ourselves that this card plays such a role. Its appearance just is a logically adequate criterion for its many and various functions. In the same way, presumably, behavioural criteria just are logically adequate for the ascription to other persons of any number of predicates

which imply the presence of mental states.

But is Strawson's card analogy acceptable? Is the connection between the bodily behaviour of another and the associated mental state on a similar footing with that which is conventionally established between the appearance of a token, like a card, and its function in a game? Clearly not. Once again, there would be no inconsistency in saying that a person's facial expression is characteristic of a person in pain and yet claim that the person does not feel pain. The facial expression and the sensation are logically separable, whereas a card's particular appearance and its function in a game are not. In the former case, but not the latter, it is always possible that one exists without the other.

I have a further problem with Strawson's notion of logical adequacy. Does another person have a logically adequate criterion for the correct ascription of predicates to my mental states, by observing my behaviour? From what Strawson says, it would seem so. He gives as an example the predicate '...is depressed'. As we have noted, according to Strawson, I know that the feeling of depression I have, is not the only, or the main, explanation of the correct ascription of the predicate. The depressed behaviour of others: viz their sad face, their slow walk, their sagging shoulders, etc., has an equal part to play in my knowledge of the predicate. For

these criteria are logically adequate for my claim that I know that others are depressed and mutatis mutandis that others know that I am depressed. In other words, it is fundamental to the understanding of the concept of 'depression', says Strawson, that it is both self-ascribed, ascribable to others, as well as ascribable to me by others. We cannot have one aspect of the use of P-predicates without the others. So the adequacy criterion, for others to know how to apply the predicate '...is depressed' to me, is by observing my behaviour.

But do they have a logically adequate criterion for applying the predicate '...is depressed' to me, merely by observation of my behaviour? They see the product of my depression; my miserable disposition, the sad looks, despondent talk, and so on? But they do not "see my depression". Otherwise it would be like "seeing me run", where they observe the act itself. Indeed their check that I am running (if it was needed) is adequately grounded in public criteria, we all have, as to what constitutes running as opposed, say, to walking. But, it is just not clear that by observing my behaviour, others have logically adequate criteria for applying the P-predicate to me. After all, the behaviour is not the state itself. I could be feigning; or it could be, say, that I am simply deep in thought, and not at all depressed. Does this not lead us to have two different

meanings of depression? Strawson insists that it does not. He writes (ibid:110)

> It is not that these predicates have two kinds of meaning. Rather, it is essential to the single kind of meaning that they do have, that both ways of ascribing them should be perfectly in order.

But they seem to be quite different. When I ascribe '...am depressed' to myself, I am experiencing a feeling of depression. I know what this state is like. And I am referring to it. When depression is ascribed to me by the other person, on the other hand, it is done so on the basis of my behaviour. In the passage above, Strawson insists that 'it is not that these predicates have two kinds of meaning'. But what, apart from his insistence, are the grounds for claiming that they have the same meaning, in the light of the radical difference of the referents? Moreover, Strawson is still having to acknowledge that we understand what first-person ascription means 'from our own case'. But this is precisely the point at which Russell and others see the need for an additional criterion to show, for instance, that your ascription of P-predicates to me is rationally warranted. Behavioural criteria, in other words, cannot be regarded as logically adequate, simpliciter, for the ascription of depression to me. The point is: unless he can tell us exactly why or how behavioural criteria are "logically adequate", to give them this epithet is

nothing more than a persuasive device to shield such criteria from further investigation.

The other problem that we raised earlier, concerns Strawson's claim that 'persons' is a logically primitive concept. Strawson does not think it necessary to show why a certain entity should be given 'person' status. He is content merely to assume that certain things are persons. Only given this assumption about Smith can we attribute certain P-predicates or M-predicates to Smith. And, as we saw, by assuming a generally shared intuition of what a person is, and from this, attributing P- and M-predicates to him, Strawson thinks that he has circumvented the other minds problem. But is the concept of persons as primitive and obvious as Strawson thinks?

Surely, in certain cases, there is a need to argue in advance for the attribution of person status to a particular individual? Are all human beings persons? J. Locke believed that 'person' and 'man' are quite distinct concepts: 'Person' has to do with the rational self and 'man' with physical shape.22 In more recent times P. Singer exploits the same distinction. He writes (1979:97)

> Some members of other species are persons; some members of our own species are not.

22See Locke (1964:210/3).

The point is, whether or not a human being is a person, is sometimes disputed.

Consider, for example, the human being who is incapable of making choices; the newly born baby, the senile man or woman. What our usual understanding of the concept 'person' requires is that while we do not dispute such individuals are human beings we do not call them persons. The baby gradually becomes a person. There is no fixed point at which we may say that the baby assumes person status. We see her slowly developing an awareness of her past and present; we see there is an increasing desire to manipulate and control her environment. Similar things may be said about the senile, although the process has been reversed. Gradually he loses control over his actions and his environment, he becomes less able to make choices, he loses a sense of the past, present and future. He becomes less and less of a person. In such contexts we do not appear to be using 'persons' as a primitive concept as Strawson does, but rather as a descriptive term.

Or consider cases where both P- and M-predicates are ascribed to non-persons, e.g. some other higher primates? What would Strawson make, one wonders, of the things in the children's television programme V where so-called human beings are merely lizards in disguise? Should person status be withdrawn when the

charade is discovered? If so, this would be done purely on the grounds of their being non-human, for all the appropriate M- and P-predicates seem to apply to the lizards. But this highlights an important point: In certain cases we seem to require further independent criteria for attributing, or not attributing, person status to entities. Or do we just make arbitrary decisions here? As Abelson writes (1977:85)

> ... if their behaviour is strikingly like ours, we may reasonably include them in our club, or we may refuse to do so. Logic and language alone cannot decide the matter for us.

No doubt Strawson's response is simply that one must identify the subject as a person first. In the case of lizards, presumably, if they don't look like human beings, one does not ascribe all of the relevant M-predicates to them. But in the case of higher primates and human beings, physical similarities are far closer; the number of M-predicates they share are considerable. Similar considerations apply to P-predicates. At what point are we to say that a higher primate or a machine that simulates mental skills is or is not a person? Strawson would say, no doubt, that it would be semantically inappropriate to apply psychological predicates to machines. But higher primates (and some other animals) fall into a grey area. I don't think that many would feel it is 'semantically inappropriate' to ascribe

psychological predicates, say, to gorillas. Must the gorilla be able to self-ascribe, make a first-person avowal, before person status can be attributed to him? If this is the case, what about young babies and other human beings who are unable to do so? What about an individual who as a result of a car accident is in a deep coma for a long period of time? Does this individual cease to be a person during this time and on regaining consciousness become a person again? (It would seem an odd sort of view which allows individuals to pop in and out of personhood.) Strawson, as we noted, does not address himself to these questions, viz of the status of young babies, or the severely mentally handicapped person, and others who are unable to either self-ascribe or other-ascribe. Are they, or are they not, persons?

But we have a more serious objection. To show the concept of persons is "logically primitive" Strawson seems to believe that all that is required for him to do is to describe the ways in which we use this concept. After all, if persons are unanalysable what else is there to do but to show that P-predicates and M-predicates are properly ascribed to persons? By calling 'persons' a primitive concept, however, Strawson has attempted to give the concept a privileged status. 'Persons', for Strawson, is not subject to analysis or attack. But, as we have argued, there is no justification for this

assumption. What a person is, is often problematic. So, on the least generous interpretation, Strawson's claim that it is a primitive concept might be seen to amount to a device for shielding the concept from further analysis.

Strawson seems to be aware of this objection. Elsewhere he writes (1959:112)

> ... it is easier to understand how we can see each other, and ourselves, as persons, if we think first of the fact that we act, and act on each other, and act in accordance with a 'common human nature'.

But what is this 'common human nature' to which Strawson refers? He spends a considerable length of time telling us what it is **not**, namely, "a community nature" or "a group-mind". We must not see ourselves or others as an entity within a group which can act only in accordance with the will of the group. Some philosophers would object that sometimes an individual does take on a group identity. One's individuality is subsumed into the group or into the role that one's occupation within the group requires one to play. Sartre cites the Parisian waiter, who sees himself as a waiter and not as a person, as a prime example of this.[23] This is what Sartre calls living in 'bad faith'. One has given up one's authenticity, the desire to be one's own person, and is living

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[23]See Sartre, J.P. (1966:101/3).

at the level at which one is seen by others.[24] Strawson acknowledges that sometimes we do have to live life at this level. Fortunately not very often. Or, he suggests, one would lose one's identity; or at least the sense of one's worth. The objection again, is that Strawson does not tell us what this 'common human nature' might be. (From what he says that it is **not**, we might see human nature as something to which benign P-predicates such as '...hopes', '...dreams', and '...aspires' can be attributed.

But there is an even stronger reason for rejecting Strawson's claim that 'persons' is a primitive concept. What does Strawson mean by 'primitive' here? He cannot mean, that a person is merely an entity to which predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing coporeal characteristics are equally applicable. If this was all there is to the primitiveness of the concept, H. Frankfurt (1982:81) is correct when he writes

> It does violence to our language to endorse the application of the term 'person' to those numerous creatures which do have both psychological and material properties but which are manifestly not persons in the normal sense of the word.

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[24]Similarly, M. Heidegger (1962:164/5) writes of the "undifferentiated they".

To do justice to commonsense, as well as language, the primitiveness of the concept must involve more than being the subject of P- and M- predicates.

An alternative would be to accord the status of primitive to persons, because it is held to be self-evident. For it to be so, it would need to be uncontroversially so. But some philosophers claim to analyse persons into more basic constituents, while others espouse a more primitive concept than persons. Consider, for example, what Descartes writes (1969:375) of both mental and material substances

> ... they are primitive, and each can be understood only in terms of itself.

On the other hand, for Heidegger, 'Dasein' is the fundamental or primitive concept, not persons.25

In defence of Strawson's claim, H. Ishiguro tells us when we say that a concept is primitive we are not saying that it is self-evident or simple but that it is indispensable as a concept. He writes (1980:64)

> ... the important point is that the concept of a person is primitive relative to the concept of mind and to the concept of a body.

These are the very same claims that mutatis mutandis Descartes would make in support of the primitiveness of mental substance, and Heidegger in support of Dasein. Descartes, too, argued for the indispensability of minds.

25See Heidegger, M. (1962:27).

After all, it is the paradigm of a clear and distinct idea beyond the possibility of doubt. Furthermore, as Frankfurt suggests, there are many entities, besides persons, to which the concepts of mind and body are indispensable. The point is, we do not justify a concept as primitive or indispensable by defining it to be so. Strawson's claim needs to be supported in substance.

Let us take stock. In this chapter we have considered Strawson's claim that persons are not reducible to other things, and that P- and M-predicates apply to persons. We went on to consider his argument that statements about another person's behaviour are logically adequate criteria for knowledge claims about her mental states. We noted that if all of this is correct, it rebuts the privileged access argument, (as well as the no-ownership theory of behaviourism). We have challenged the view that statements about behaviour are in fact logically adequate, claiming that this notion is under-analysed and prima facie wrong. We have challenged, also, Strawson's claim that 'persons' is a primitive concept. As I have pointed out, other philosophers may equally insist that some other notion is fundamental. A solution to the other minds problem eludes us. Perhaps what is needed is a quite different approach.

The other minds problem, as we saw, arises from a logical impossibility of apprehending directly, another person's experiences. If we allow this to be our starting point, knowledge of other minds can only be achieved indirectly, by some form of inference. But why make this our starting point? In recent articles on the subject, attempts have been made to locate descriptions of mental states as empirical hypotheses, of a wider and scientifically compelling theory. Let us consider some of these attempts.

Chapter Four

The Empirical Realist's Justification of Other Minds

In recent times it has been argued that the existence of other minds can be known to us on empirical grounds. This is the position advanced among others, by P. Ziff (1965) and H. Putnam (1975).26 Putnam calls the position 'empirical realism'. He defines (1975:342) the general theoretical approach of the empirical realist in the following way. It is the

> ... position that the existence of the external world is supported by experience in much the way that any scientific theory is supported by observational data.

At first blush this is an attractive approach to the problem of other minds. It suggests that what makes one's belief in other minds plausible, or the best explanation of the matter, is that this belief is supported by an entire body of empirical theory.

Let us begin with Ziff's attempt to use the empirical realist's approach, as the correct way with which to establish the existence of other minds. He gives two arguments. He calls one the via negativa and the other

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26A.J. Ayer has given this solution his stamp of approval. He writes (1976:133/4) 'The right answer to this problem, I now think, is the one recently given by Professor Putnam ...'

a positive thesis. We will consider them in turn.

Ziff claims that the way in which the other minds question is posed: 'I have a mind, do others?' does not get us to the heart of the problem. The way Ziff poses the problem is 'Am I unlike other creatures in having a mind?' He writes (1970:177), I think quite reasonably that

> If only I have a mind, then I am
> a uniquely unique being.

Ziff does not seem _prima facie_ to be that unique. Like all other human beings he is a creature with a head, a trunk, a spinal cord. We may assume that he has certain vital organs, a heart, lungs, digestive system, a brain, central nervous system, etc. He is similar to the rest of us in his blood and lymph circulation, his oxidative phosphorylation, his citric acid cycle, the way he synthesises protein, his ionic levels and bodily defence system, as well as in hundreds of other biochemical processes. These are the material conditions by virtue of which one identifies Ziff, as well as millions of other objects, as a member of the species, _homo sapiens_. It is by virtue of some of these physiological conditions that Ziff is identified and re-identified as a human being, as distinct from any other object. This is, of course, open to public check. Whether another individual and Ziff are members of the same species, that we call

human beings, is something that can be scientifically determined by an examination of the physiological make-up.

The demand for a "differentiating feature" to establish Ziff's uniqueness, as a being who alone has a mind, is not to be identified in terms of the uniqueness of his genetic make-up. This is a general characteristic which each individual has uniquely and so would not seem to be a relevantly differentiating feature between himself and others which accounts for him having a mind and others not having one. If only he has a mind, Ziff claims, there must be some uniquely differentiating and relevant feature between himself and other human beings. The question is what counts as a relevantly differentiating feature?

Ziff asks us to consider the hypothesis that he has a twin identical to him in all of the physiological ways outlined above as well as possessing the same type of character traits, the same skills, the same capacities, etc. The only difference between Ziff and his twin is that he has a mind and the twin does not. The question now is 'Could this be the only difference?'

One possibility is that Ziff has a mind completely independent of his body? Is this plausible? If we answer, 'yes' he writes (ibid:179)

> Do minds just come and go in the universe? Did one just happen to

> light on my head? Is there no bait
> for this bird?

This Ziff dismisses, with surprising insouciance, as a "fantastic state of affairs". (Evidently he does not regard the notion of a disembodied mind, a notion that has a considerable amount of literature, as amounting to much.)

More importantly, if we were to affirm that his mind could be disembodied, as well as be the one and only mind, then one needs a "conceptual scheme" to support this claim. By which Ziff means that one needs to support it with a theory which is consistent, coherent, complete and the simplest between the competing alternative hypotheses. By coherence I take it Ziff means at least that the conceptual scheme must be consistent. It cannot commit one to propositions of the form P & -P. And it must be possible to deduce further confirmatory facts from the favoured hypothesis. We are told that completeness is largely a matter of filling gaps, with supporting and subsidiary hypotheses. And the view that the preferred scheme must be the simplest hypothesis which fits the facts, is an orthodox view dating back to William of Ockham. (Though as we shall see, Putnam rejects this requirement.) It is Ziff's contention, that by these criteria, there is no theory, nor is there likely to be one, which establishes the mind as being

independent of the body.

If we discount the disembodied mind view, then there must be a further relevantly physiological differentiating feature between Ziff and his twin. Perhaps his uniqueness is in Ziff's having the particular brain that he has. Nobody else has exactly the same brain as he has. Perhaps this would account for the view that he alone has a mind. But still we are faced with the question, 'What is the difference between Ziff's brain and all other brains that results in him having a mind while others do not?' Ziff cannot think of any. He concludes no relevant physical difference can be found. Thus no sound alternative theory (coherent, complete, and simple) concerning his uniqueness in having a mind, based on physiological differences, is possible.

A. Plantinga, however, offers what purports to be just such an alternative theory. Plantinga asks us to consider the possibility that (1970:191)

> There are just two minds, mine and Descartes' Evil Genius. The latter takes perverse pleasure in practical jokes of cosmic dimensions and has created me expressly to deceive me.

Isn't it logically possible that Descartes' Evil Genius created Ziff as the only human being with a mind? All other "human beings" (sic) are dummies created without minds but behave in such a way that Ziff is deceived into thinking that they are like him in having a mind. (We

could complicate the account, still further, by positing an Evil Genius who arbitrarily endows only some human beings, but not others, with minds.) Plantinga claims that his theory meets all of the canons of a "complete scheme" proposed by Ziff. It explains the facts. It is, Plantinga claims, "simple" (my quotation marks), coherent and plausible. He sees no reason why supplementary hypotheses cannot be added to it to make it complete.

No doubt, Plantinga is right if he claims that the Evil Genius hypothesis is a logical possibility. In Ziff's defence, however, we could object that, without probing too deeply into the matter, as an empirical hypothesis Evil Genius-type claims are less simple than other-human-beings-have-minds theory. At best, the notion of an Evil Genius is nothing more than a device to illustrate logical possibility. However, can it be seriously challenged, from an empirical point of view, that although Ziff and others have the same essential physiological make-up, Ziff might nevertheless be unique in that only he has mental states? If this is so, then Ziff is radically different from all other members of the human species. In fact this would be to claim that, despite their physiological similarities, in some inexplicable way, Ziff is so different, or all others are so different, that he, or they, cannot be classified as a human being at all. That he, or they, are a member

of some rogue species which is a human look-alike! This does not look too hopeful a candidate as a basis for a theory which is consistent, coherent, complete and simple.

Plantinga takes Ziff's argument that we must be different in some relevant respect to task in another way. He asks, 'Why, on all of the available evidence, is it unlikely that I am unique in having a mind?' Plantinga points out that each individual has unique features, for instance, fingerprints; only Ziff can feel Ziff's pain; and so on. Why, on the basis of the evidence, are such things causally irrelevant to Ziff alone having a mind? I think that Ziff would reply that these are thoroughly general characteristics which each individual has uniquely, (to which we might add 'having existed for a such-and-such a period of time','having so-and-so spatio/temporal location', and so on). Though unique to each of us, none of these characteristics would seem to be a relevant differentiating feature which accounts for Ziff having a mind and others not having one. The question is why such differentiating features would be relevant to Ziff and nobody else having a mind? This brings us to Ziff's positive thesis.

Ziff suggests there is a more viable alternative, namely, the conceptual scheme, within which the true proposition that he is not alone in having a mind

centrally occurs. He has a brain. His brain stands in a significant relationship, moreover, to his mind; or what Ziff's considers to be a "more careful" claim (1970 :180)

> ... there are relations between ... mental states and neurophysiological states.

To this hypothesis, he thinks it plausible to add that his mind and his brain do not have this relation because it is **his** mind but because of what minds and brains are. He can conjoin with these facts the proposition that like himself, others have a particular type of brain; and other beings have minds, or, what amounts to the same thing, mental states.27 Evidentally, Ziff thinks he is on his way to developing an altogether more realistic empirical conceptual scheme with which to justify a belief in other minds.

Let us consider, briefly, the sort of additional hypotheses which Ziff might put forward to support his scheme. As we saw, Ziff treats as axiomatic in the scheme the proposition that he has certain bodily and mental states; more importantly, his physical and psychological characteristics are causally related. For example, when he decides to type a word, or sentence, on his typewriter, he can cause his fingers to select

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27Talk of minds, for Ziff, is only talk of mental states. The relation between mind and brain is just the relation between mental states and neurophysiological states.

the appropriate keys. His psychological intention is manifest in a piece of behaviour. When the typewriter jams, he becomes distressed. This is exhibited, perhaps, in utterances. He knows that when he is in a mental state of distress, his body hunches, his face is downcast, tears appear in his eyes, and so on. That there is a causal relationship between Ziff's mental and bodily states is, for him, a self-evident truth.

Ziff claims then to build on to the axioms, a series of empirically testable propositions, each of which is a conjunct within the scheme and each of which is supported by appropriate evidence which in turn supports the entire system. Ziff claims, thus, that no hypothesis that survives investigation is alone. There have to be other hypotheses which hold up each other. Numerous observations and experiments support the scheme, i.e. a theory to the effect that there are other brains and minds that are related to each other. For instance, the use of drugs like mescal in order to enjoy a hallucinatory experience or, less controversially, aspirin to relieve headache. Ziff has a headache. After taking an aspirin his pain ceases. This, in turn, lends credence to the claim that there are other minds. How is this? If Ziff is struck on the head, this is causally connected with the sensation of pain which he experiences, together with certain behaviour, etc. Other human beings exhibit

these, or similar, characteristics, when they are struck on the head. This supports the hypothesis that others have headaches. Furthermore, Ziff can translate stated intentions into appropriate behaviour. If Ziff decides to take an aspirin he acts in ways which are causally connected with his decision; other human beings in similar circumstances talk and behave in relevantly similar ways. They, too, can translate stated intentions into appropriate behaviour. This provides Ziff with evidence to support the claim that they experience mental states.

A consideration of the outcome of experiments on animals also shows, not only other human beings have minds, but that animals have them too. Ziff mentions experiments where animals have demonstrated some ability to problem-solve and to repeat particular strands of behaviour. But this sort of evidence can be seen in everyday life. My cat makes different noises in various situations. For example, it purrs when I stroke it. This can be taken as a sign that my cat is having a pleasurable experience. My cat shows some ability to carry out plans of its own devising. At least it acts in ways which suggests the appropriateness of such a description. When trying to catch a bird, to avoid detection, it lays in hiding at a distance from its prey. This is a singular and repeated strand of behaviour. Ziff writes

(ibid:180)

> (to the above hypotheses) I conjoin the hypothesis that among the others that have minds other animals are to be counted.

Ziff cannot be saying here that the mental experiences of animals are of a qualitatively similar nature to his own. At best, all that he can assume from animal experiments, is that many creatures are conscious besides human beings. And this seems right. I assume, for example, that my cat possesses conscious states. But I would add that my cat is not self-consciously aware of these states. I assume, not unreasonably, for instance, that its mental states do not include self-conscious awareness of its own existence.

From examples like the above, Ziff believes he has shown how we can construct, or rather how we are confronted by, a complex conceptual, empirically real, scheme. He concludes (ibid:181)

> The fact that there are other minds is an integral part of the scheme and at present essential to it.

Ziff's second argument, then, is that there there is a conjunction of empirical hypotheses, one conjunct of which is that I am not unique in having a mind, which establish a conceptual scheme in which others have minds; in other words, there is much confirming evidence for a coherent, complete and simple, conceptual scheme in which others have minds.

In Putnam's analysis of the matter, we are offered more general support for the claim that empirical realism provides the best answer to the problem of other minds. We are offered, also, some interesting criticisms of the details of Ziff's account. Let us consider two of these.

Putnam observes that Ziff is wrong to suggest that the denial of the existence of other minds implies that only I have a mind. Rather, it need imply only that **some** other people do not have minds and some people do. This seems correct. To show it, however, Putnam commits a false analogy. Suppose, Putnam suggests, that he has discovered a mole under his left arm and suppose that he is unable to investigate whether or not other people have moles in the same place. He writes (1975:343)

> If I concluded anything at all - and why should I? - I would very likely conclude that I and perhaps **some** other people have or have had moles under their arms, but that it is not necessarily the case that everyone has a mole under his arm.

If he were to draw a conclusion, then it would be that he, and some other people, have moles. Not that all have moles or that only he has a mole. In the same way, just as he has a mind, why not conclude that some others, but not all others, have minds?

But why should Putnam suppose that because he has

one, then some other people have moles? It can only be because he has antecedent evidence of the contingent nature of mole-having. He would be much less confident to conclude that because, as a result of an X-ray, he discovers he has a heart and kidneys, and he is unable to investigate whether or not other people have these things, that some people have them and that some do not. Anyway to conclude anything at all about the condition of others, on the basis of one's own condition and no other evidence, is of course, a hopelessly weak induction.

A second criticism Putnam has of Ziff is the latter's view that the hallmarks of a sound theory are completeness, simplicity and coherence. Putnam thinks (ibid:357)

> ... (these) are today just words
> that we use to cover our ignorance.

Putnam implies that actual science does not employ these criteria. Now, as we shall see, empirical realism as an account of other minds, amounts to nothing if we cannot put our confidence in the empirical (scientific) mode of explaining behaviour, so we need to be clear about what the method is.

Putnam asserts that actual science balances two desiderata (ibid:357/8)

> ... on the one hand, we try to put
> the accepted theory under maximum
> strain, that is to say, we try to

> maximise a priori plausibility and probability; (on the other hand) theories that seem to us too wildly implausible, we do not even bother to test.

Concerning "wildly implausible theories" Putnam tells us that scientific belief would be arbitrary (ibid:358)

> If scientists simply ranked hypotheses in some arbitrary way, and then accepted the hypothesis highest-ranked no matter what observations might tell them ... (or if he) ... proceeded to accept the highest-valued hypothesis which was not yet falsified by empirical data, but he did not make any special attempt to gather falsifying data.

Putnam is right, of course, such practices would be silly.

On the other hand, as Putnam admits, most actual science does not proceed in accordance with the desiderata he identifies. When we consider the basis upon which scientists give priority to the ordering of hypotheses it seems that their actual priority-ordering is, at best, intuitive and obscure, if not arbitrary. So why put such confidence in theoretical desiderata when, in its actual and successful ways of proceeding, it can be, and usually is, completely at odds with a preferred methodological paradigm?

What does the desiderata "maximising a priori plausibility and probability" amount to? Putnam's answer is Khunian in flavour. Plausibility and probability have a lot to do with the accepted science and

metaphysics of a given time. He writes (ibid:358)

> Teleogical explanations seem plausible to an age that is steeped in teleogical philosophy; mechanistic explanations will seem plausible to an age that is steeped in mechanistic philosophy.

Putnam suggests that to understand the "plausible and probable" hypotheses (and hence how the priority ordering of hypotheses are reached) we need to understand the metaphysics of the age.

It is easy to talk of the metaphysics of the age in retrospect, as an explanation concerning how one hypothesis was accepted over another. But it is unclear to me how we identify the plausible and probable explanations of the present age, in the current scientific climate, in anything but an unsophisticated way. How are we to assess the import of sociological considerations in present day natural sciences or biological considerations in present day social science? How can they be said to affect the priority ordering of hypotheses in modern science? The point is, if the preferred general empirical thing-theory, which explains and underpins the belief in other minds, is itself highly contentious then a fortiori so are the theories (etc.) that depend upon it, including its support of other minds. I will return to this point shortly.

Incidentally, the desiderata Putnam identifies do not seem to be an advance on "completeness, simplicity

and coherence". Consider a theory that is so absurd that no other scientist would countenance the absurdity. This suggests that we do demand coherence in some form or other from a scientific theory; meaning by this, that the theory, in the problematic context, must "fit" with the body of established knowledge. Or consider the rejection of a theory in which, to paraphrase William of Ockham, "the existence of entities beyond necessity" is postulated, when a simple explanation fits the facts. This suggests that a gross failure at the level of simplicity is grounds for rejecting a theory. Clearly there is a difference between a bona fide scientific belief and arbitrary belief that is captured by the ideas of simplicity and coherence. And it would be odd not to suppose that completeness is not to be equated with "putting an accepted theory under maximum strain".

Let us see how Putnam's reflections on the empirical (scientific) basis of other minds help to illuminate the problem. Putnam grants that the Evil Genius hypothesis represents a logical possibility. He writes (ibid:359)

> It is perfectly imaginable that other people should be mere 'dummies' controlled remotely by some intelligence I know nothing of. But I do not grant this hypothesis is 'in the field'.

For the hypothesis to be "in the field", i.e. worthy of

serious consideration, two further conditions must be met. These are as we saw (i) that the hypothesis must be worked out in some detail so that questions concerning it can be answered, i.e. "tested to its maximum strain"; (ii) it must not be a "silly" hypothesis.

In terms of (i) the Evil Genius hypothesis has not been elaborated upon in much detail. No doubt it could be. We needn't bother to elaborate it here; let us accept that it is possible that the demon has constructed the mindless people in such a way that the hypothesis cannot be shown a priori to be false. In terms of (ii), however the Evil Genius is a silly hypothesis. What Plantinga does, Putnam writes (ibid:360/1)

> ... (is to) remind us that the scientific method depends on regularities in what we all consider to be silly hypotheses, in what we all consider to be ad hoc hypotheses, in what we all consider to be plausible hypotheses; in what we all consider to probable.

It is an a priori truth, it seems, that the Evil Genius could never be believed rationally.

Let us now turn to the burden of Putnam's article: His attempt to improve upon Ziff's version of empirical realism.

Underlying Ziff's conceptual scheme is the empirical realist's belief that "material objects exist" and that this is supported by experience in much the same way

that any scientific theory is supported by observational data. Putnam responds that the claim "material objects exist" is not a hypothesis that explains anything. What does explain a host of phenomena is something Putnam calls "thing-theory". Thing-theory is a conjunction of all the theories, hypotheses, empirical laws and ordinary statements that we accept and use in explanation. Putnam writes (ibid:344)

> Thus part of the empirical realist case is correct: these individual bundles connecting thing-events with 'sense datum' events, do stand in the relation of **explanation** to various phenomena.

Putnam's empirical, realistic, "thing-theory", in other words, allows for a great variety of empirical investigations each helping us to understand what exists. We may in the end have many thing-theories competing with each other to be the most acceptable explanation of the phenomena in question.

Putnam's point seems to me that merely to affirm that material objects exist, in one's theory, would limit the range of explanations which can be given. There are other generalizations based upon observations of non-material items, behaviour, psychological dispositions, and these reveal factors which affect the way in which we understand certain material things. So Putnam argues we must not ask whether, or not, material objects exist, but rather ask how they behave. From our

observations, laws and hypotheses will be formed which will provide us with a satisfactory explanation about the behaviour of phenomena.

Putnam then contrasts his sketch of the attenuated thing-theory with the rival no-thing theory. He suggests that no-thing theory cannot explain any phenomena that are presently accounted for by thing-theory. In other words, if we posit "no material things exist", how are we to account for the actual material phenomena we encounter in the world? As Putnam writes (ibid:345)

> ... no one has ever seriously propounded and elaborated in the detail that a scientist would require an explanation of a set of phenomena based upon the hypothesis that no material objects exist ...

Putnam claims that this serves as a rebuttal to the sceptical question: Is thing-theory more probably true than the theory that there are no material objects? If we give up the claim 'material objects exist' we would have to give up all the laws, statements, etc. that imply material objects exist. But what alternative explanation would we have of the phenomena in question?' The inability to think of an alternative explanation is the best justification for retaining the established explanations.

How does his account of thing-theory explanation connect with the issue of 'other minds'? We need to start with the point that (ibid:345)

> We say that other people are on occasion egotistical, angry, suspicious, lustful, tired, sad. The question is not: Do other people have minds? but: Are other people ever egotistical, angry, suspicious, lustful, tired, sad?

In other words, what is needed is an explanation of these indefinitely many facts of behaviour. P u t n a m claims that we can explain the behaviour of other people as well as ourselves by reference to psychological theories concerning character traits, wants, wishes, preferences, etc. Psychological statements explain behaviour.

Let me stress the point above. Putnam maintains that psychological theories are the empirically based explanation of egotistical, angry, suspicious, lustful, etc. behaviour. They are part of the thing-theory; the part which provides explanation for behavioural facts. Thus statements about Smith's mental states can be made to explain his behaviour. Putnam makes this point when he writes (ibid:348/9)

> The fact that psychological statements are used to **explain** behavior is at once obvious and completely neglected both by the traditional philosophers who talk about an 'inference by analogy' and by the contemporary philosophers who believe that the existence of mental states can be logically (or

> linguistically) inferred from that of behavior.

Putnam finds the explanatory aspect of psychological statements obvious. One context which shows this is so is where a certain mental state will explain why someone is behaving in a certain way. When I say 'Smith has a headache' I may not be making a report about his interior states rather I am explaining why Smith has been short-tempered all day. If the report is about Smith's interior states, e.g. a brain tumour, the doctor who has made a study of psycho-physiology would know much more about the nature of the headache than Smith does. As K. Wilkes writes (1984:240)

> ... a psychiatrist who has remained sane throughout a life devoted to the study of schizophrenia knows more, and better, about what it's like for the schizophrenic to be schizophrenic than does the lay sufferer ...

Putnam is correct when he says we can and do explain such behaviour by psychological theories. Further, he is right to say psychological theory has been tested against alternative psychological theory not against no-mind theory. Moreover, no-one has ever seriously propounded, in the detail required by science, an explanation of a set of phenomena based upon the hypothesis that no person is ever tired, angry, sad, lustful, and so on. Just as our reasons for accepting material objects exist are not just as a result of an

ordinary induction so are our reasons for accepting that others have mental states. It is a consequence of a host of specific hypotheses, theories, laws and ordinary statements. It is implied in the various explanations that we give of behaviour. To give up the proposition would require giving up all of the theories, statements, etc. that provide plausible explanations of the phenomena. If I say that other people do not have minds, I say that other people are never angry, suspicious, lustful, etc. I would have to give up all these explanations.

Putnam argues that it is therefore up to the objector in the case of the no-mind thesis to provide an explanation for the behaviour of other people. He contends that the fact that no such alternative explanation is in the field, together with the explanatory power of the accepted psychological theories, which constitute the real inductive justification for the acceptance that others have mental states. As Putnam writes (1975:347)

> It is therefore up to the objector, in the case of the thesis that others have mental states, to provide an alternative explanation for the behavior of other people.

W. Hyde (1979 (1)) attacks Putnam's empirical realist's solution of the other mind problem, I think with some success. In essence, Hyde's charge against

Putnam, and for that matter empirical realism in general, is that Putnam gives scientific theory priority over phenomenal experience. Hyde (1979 (2):73) puts the matter succinctly

> What would it be like to discover that **what** a person in another tribe has is **pain**, when that person is behaving in ways significantly other than our standard pain-behaving ways?

In other words, we come across a society where the behaviour associated with pain is quite different to our norm of pain behaviour. How would we discover that a member of this group is, in fact, experiencing pain? We might link the behaviour to pain if some further behaviour is displayed from other members of the group which we recognised as being part of our response to a person's pain. For instance, showing concern; sympathy. But what if these responses were "abnormal" as well? Hyde concludes that we would not be able to "find our feet" with these people. He writes (ibid:73)

> ... the sense in which we cannot (in a logical sense) "find our feet" with such people is the sense in which the concepts in question are logically tied to behavior "not individually but ... as a corporate body."

Now I take it that Hyde is not confusing Putnam's position with the one adumbrated earlier that we attributed to Malcolm. Hyde wants us to imagine an entire family of mental states where the behaviour of the

sufferers is incommensurate with our own. His challenge to Putnam is for the latter to say how our thing-theory, with its array of theoretical underpinnings to our behaviour, would ever get a purchase on totally different, even opposite, traits of behaviour.

Putnam's response is that this too we might find out from science, i.e. that the person was experiencing pain. To put the matter crudely, all we need do is consult science to find out what pain is. If the person displays the conditions which medical or neurophysiological science tells us he must have, for pain to be experienced, then that tribesman is suffering pain. In this way, it does not matter what the associated pain behaviour is. Particular items of behaviour are not logically connected to the mental experience.

Hyde then asks us to suppose that science has advanced to the degree Putnam suggests is possible. Hyde writes (ibid:73/4)

> Let us assume that science has discovered a certain micro-state of the cerebral cortex, call it M-S1 which has a complete bilateral correlation with pain-behavior. On Putnam's view, M-S1 will be **pain** what pain names or means.

So someone will be in pain if M-S1 is occurring in the cortex. We are asked also, to assume that the micro-state M-S2 is joy and that the correlation between behaviour and micro-states have been confirmed in the way that the

correlation between the phenomenal qualities of water and the micro-structure of water have been demonstrated.

Hyde maintains that this line of reasoning does not take us very far. The problem is just pushed elsewhere. Now instead of a tribe with odd behaviour there is a tribe with odd micro-states. The people of this tribe are like us in all respects except, Hyde writes (ibid:74)

> Examination reveals that people exhibiting the "signs" of pain, in the usual pain-circumstances, are found to be in M-S2 ("our" joy); and people who exhibit the "signs" of joy, in the usual joy-circumstances are found to be in M-S1 ("our" pain).

Hyde claims that such a tribe is logically possible. His point is that a scientific account is not all there is to the phenomenal account of an item. If, per impossibile, we were to discover a quantity of stuff that had a molecular structure of H_2O but which wasn't wet then we would be reluctant to regard the stuff as water. Not because of a resistance to give priority to the scientific description but because water describes paradigmatically a phenomenal item. Similarly, Hyde argues we would not be able now to adequately describe the mental experiences of such a tribe because although behaviour, utterances, etc. are not (logically) necessary for the ascription of particular mental states to others, they are not totally irrelevant either. As Hyde puts it (ibid:74)

> Their logical relevance ... is just the extent to which it is **these outward "signs"** which prevent us from describing the example ...

It is by taking the outward signs and the micro-structure together which gives a thing its identity, i.e. what it is. So, for water to be water, it has to be both the wet, clear, odourless, liquid as well as H_2O. Both of these descriptions must be true of it. If one were not, then we should be reluctant to identify it as water. Similarly, in the case of mental states, for pain to be pain, a true description would be both M-S1 and the occurrence of the appropriate outward signs. Hence, regarding mental states, there are limits as to how far we can go in making so-called scientific evidence the coping-stone. These limits are set as much by outward signs as by the findings of science.

There is a second charge we must consider against Putnam's endowing scientific theory priority over phenomenal experiences: If we take reality to be the world as described by the natural and social sciences, we omit the irreducibly subjective character of conscious mental states.[28] Putnam's commitment to thing-theory explanation leads him to omit the subjective character

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[28]It does not matter whether or not a close relationship between mental states and the physical operations of the brain has been established.

of mental states. Similarly, even if Ziff's proposition "there are minds other than my own" is shown to be one true hypothesis amongst many in a complex conceptual scheme, his so-called 'objective' empirical account has been at the expense of the subjective. His empirical (scientific) explanation just gives us third-person ascriptions of mental states, analysed as part of an explanatory theory of observable behaviour. As C. McGinn writes (1984:137)

> ... what is needed is a conception of pain which is quite independent of its mode of presentation in the first- and third-person, a conception that is somehow **neutral** between these two epistemic routes onto the state of pain.

A way must be found to overcome the subject/object dichotomy. Nagel suggests a way to do this. So let us turn to Nagel's proposed solution to the other minds problem.

Chapter Five

Nagel's Subjective/objective Account of the Mind

We will consider one further strikingly different, albeit abstruse, attempt at answering the sceptic to be found in the recent writings of T. Nagel. The challenge Nagel sets himself is to give an objective, neutral, account of mental phenomena. Minds, like matter, he claims, may be thought of as general features of the world. Thus, if his account works, like Ziff and Putnam, Nagel can pose the other minds question in a different form. He would not need to ask: How do I know that others have minds? i.e. How do I know that they have toothaches, blue experiences, rememberings, etc? Rather, for Nagel, the question is: (1986:19/20)

> ... How I can conceive of my own mind as merely one of many examples of mental phenomena contained in the world.

Nagel sees this to be a matter of showing how to combine the perspective of a person's awareness of her own mental states, what he calls "the subjective standpoint", with the objective view of the same phenomenon, "the objective standpoint".

Now this appears to be an important departure in two respects. Firstly, minds are to be regarded as

general features of the world. And secondly, for Nagel, the subjective element is just as much a constituent part of an analysis of mental states as objective factors. Indeed he would accuse Putnam, et al, of overrating the importance of objectivity. He writes that objectivity (ibid:5)

> ... is overrated by those who believe it can provide a complete view of the world on its own, replacing the subjective views from which it has developed.

Mental states cannot be reduced to a purely neutral, objective (i.e. "physicalistic") theory, without leaving something essential out of the analysis. Any understanding of the phenomenon has to be done by means of, and has to include an account of the subjective character of consciousness, i.e. the perspectival awareness by the subject of her own mental states. It is for this reason, Nagel writes (ibid:7) that a physicalistic account

> ... is bound to leave undescribed the irreducibly subjective character of conscious mental processes, whatever may be their intimate relation to the physical operation of the brain.

So we would not be closer to an understanding of the phenomenon even if we were able to reach a completely physical apprehension of things. However, Nagel does not want to say that such objectivity is unimportant. Objectivity, like subjectivity, is an essential constit-

uent of our understanding of this world. The problem is to develop a strategy which will take into account both perspectives.

It might be helpful here to make the distinction between subjective and objective, as clear as possible. By 'subjective' Nagel means the conscious qualitative aspect of mental experiences which are individual-specific. There is a subjective character of any mental state. It is what distinguishes my mental experiences from yours. The scent of a flower is pleasing to me and not to you; the flame of a candle is yellow to me, white to you, and so on.29 Not only our sensory experiences are unique in this respect, our perceptions of events and the responses to them can vary widely from person to person. For instance, I find soap operas on television boring, you find them interesting, and so on. Likewise, if I am remembering a past event in my life, a unique history has gone into making it my memory. There is an obvious sense in which what is remembered, of this or of any event, cannot be similar to the memories of others, since my remembering includes my (private) responses and thoughts about the event or situation in the past.

29The idea that no two percipients can have the same sensation, or perception, of the same object has a history that dates back to Plato's Theatetus 151E-160E See F.M.Cornford (1960).

Similarly, the use of my imagination, reasoning, etc. is individual-specific.

My view becomes more objective the more independent it is from my peculiarly individual standpoint; my particular history, my spatio-temporal position in the world; my physiological make-up; my traits of character, etc. As Nagel writes (ibid:5)

> A view or form of thought is more objective than another if it relies less on the specifics of the individual makeup and position in the world, or on the character of the particular type of creature he is.

Also, Nagel claims, the larger the number of individuals to which a form of knowledge is accessible, the less reliant it is on specifically subjective characteristics, and so the more objective it is. But objectivity here refers to facts which are species-specific.

What distinguishes your and my experiences from those of a bat.[30] After all, it is reasonable to assume that bats have conscious states, (whereas tables and chairs do not). Unlike the bat, however, we are self-consciously aware of these states. We can monitor our conscious condition. We are aware of our own wants and needs. We can make plans about the future. We can have regrets about the past. We can think about counter-factual pasts, presents, hypothetical futures, and so

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[30]Nagel (1979:166 passim) makes this point.

on. We are rational creatures. We can decide on some objective or end which we want to accomplish or avoid. We can formulate schemes to achieve these goals. Also we are moral rational creatures. In personal relationships, I can decide on certain ends which I would be willing to legislate for everyone including myself. Another set of distinctive conscious conditions which I would include in what it is distinctively like for you and I, non-subjectively, is our emotional states. We experience distinctively human pleasures, pains, etc. We care and have loving, bonding relationships with other human beings. In these and other ways, these conscious experiences describe what it is like for you and me, and anyone else, to be a human being and we assume that things are different for a bat.

So far then, following Nagel, there are subjective and non-subjective elements which need to be included in a comprehensive phenomenological account of mental phenomena. This brings us to another sense of objectivity, which Nagel conflates with the species-specific category above, this is objectivity divorced from the standpoint of any species, i.e. what Nagel calls a "view from nowhere".

Nagel argues that objectivity in its purest form is to be found in the direction of a strictly neutral account, well away from the phenomenal experience

undergone by human beings. He writes (ibid:7)

> An objective standpoint is created by leaving a more subjective, individual, or even just human perspective behind ...

A more accurate view of the nature of things will be achieved when we eliminate, or at least reduce, our dependence on individual or species-specific points of view towards the phenomenon being investigated. He writes (ibid:4)

> To acquire a more objective understanding of some aspect of life or the world, we step back from our initial view of it and form a new conception which has that view and its relation to the world as its object.

We get closer to an understanding of how things "are in themselves" if we detach ourselves from our own particular viewpoint and try to place ourselves in a more neutral position. What this seems to amount to is to see oneself just as one being amongst indefinitely many beings and things in the world. And particularly, the less we depend upon a specifically individual or species viewpoint of minds, the more objective our description of "the mental" will be.

Nagel cautions, however, that this objective conception of the mental may not be achieved. There are things about ourselves that cannot be adequately understood from a maximally objective standpoint. He claims (ibid:7) that the attempt to give a complete

account of the world in objective terms, detached from the perspectives of an individual-specific and a species-specific point of view

> ... inevitably leads to false reductions or to outright denial that certain patently real phenomena exist at all.

So we need to avoid the kind of reduction that leads to physicalistic (empirical realist) accounts of the mind.

Nagel illustrates these stages, each of which allegedly gives a more objective picture than the one before, with the example of sense-perception. Our own sense-experience provides the evidence from which we start. This means thinking of the physical world from our own perceptual point of view; e.g. the scent of the flower is pleasing to me, etc. According to Nagel, however, we know that our perceptions are caused by the actions of things, in the physical world, upon us through their affects upon our bodies. This leads us to the next step which is species-specific. Here we realise that the same physical properties which cause perceptions in us also produce effects in others through their bodies. This is to think of perceptual experience from a more general point of view; thinking how it looks, feels, smells, tastes, or sounds, to human beings rather than to bats. Of the third objective stage, Nagel writes (ibid:14)

> ... (we) try to form a conception of

> that true nature independent of its appearance either to us or to other types of perceivers.

We are told that this means the secondary qualities are deleted from our idea of the external world and the primary qualities, such as shape, size, weight and motion are "to be thought of structurally". While the things in the world have properties, these properties are now free of the individual and human sensory aspects. Nagel believes that this is an immensely positive strategy. He claims that it allows us to describe, explain and make predictions about the external world with concepts which are not bound to the specifically human perceptual standpoint.

Nagel, nevertheless, recognises that from the paradigmatic objectivist viewpoint, the account is incomplete. It leaves us saying nothing of the individual-specific perspective. He writes (ibid:15)

> The subjective features of conscious mental processes ... cannot be captured by the purified form of thought suitable for dealing with the physical world ...

The question that needs to be answered then is: How are we to include the subjective mental constituents in our objective account?

We can find the answer to this question when we turn to Nagel's view of "mental substance". As we noted, he writes (ibid:19)

> I want to think of mind, like matter,

as a general feature of the world.

According to Nagel there is an objective feature, the mental, which is not reducible to the physical. The mental is part of the objective world; our mental states are part of the world. Our minds, as well as our bodies, can be thought of from the outside. If this is possible, we can have a concept of mind in which individual minds are merely instances, and in which we do not have to give priority to the individual perspective we have of our own mental states, or assume that this should occupy a central position. Furthermore, with minds as a general feature of the world, we would not need to think of human mental states as being necessarily central to the account. Thus he writes (ibid:18)

> We must think of mind as a phenomenon to which the human case is not necessarily central ...

An objective concept of mind would involve the ability to view one's own experiences, and human minds generally as, so to speak, merely a particular instance of the more general stuff.

Finally, let me indicate how all of this relates to the other minds problem. As we noted earlier, Nagel sees the question as a conceptual problem: How can I conceive of my own mind as being just one of any number of mental phenomena in the world? The first step is to

detach myself from my mental experiences, so that I am able to conceive of mental states of which I am not the subject. I must conceive of my mental states as just being one instance amongst indefinitely many others. However, when we conceive of the minds of others, we cannot abandon the essential factor of "a point of view". We may achieve this by thinking of one's own as one point-of-view among others. So Nagel writes unhelpfully (ibid:20)

> The first stage of objectification of the mental is for each of us to be able to grasp the idea of all human perspectives, including his own, without depriving them of their character as perspectives.

An objective conception of minds begins by one's viewing one's own experiences (individual-specific) as events in the world. Others, too, can apprehend these events. Likewise, one can apprehend the experiences of others as events in the world. We are told that all that is required for such a (baffling) external conception of one's own and others' mental states, as events in the world, is "the imaginative use of this point of view".

The next step in Nagel's method is even more strange. He tells us that it is possible for us to "think of experiences that we can't imagine". He writes (ibid:21)

> ... the pretheoretical concept of mind involves a kind of objectivity which permits us to go some way

> beyond our own experiences and those exactly like them.

How could this work? Nagel claims that this is no more difficult than it is to "represent an objective spatial configuration by imagining it visually". We do not need to imagine the experience in the same way and to the same extent as those who have such experiences. All we have to do is to represent it in terms of some general features of subjective experience, i.e. some of the familiar features from one's own experiences. This, according to Nagel, allows us to perceive of experiences we have not had.

The last step in Nagel's method is to transcend the human viewpoint and general forms of human experience, to develop a concept of mind beyond the human perspective. Nagel is not sure whether or not this step is possible. He writes (ibid:21/22)

> But the possibility that there is such a concept would be sufficient motivation for trying to form it.

The ultimate aim is to place these particular perspectives in an account of the concept of mind from no particular point of view.

What are we to make of all of this? In the first place, many of Nagel's key concepts are vague and underanalysed. How are we to understand, for example, exactly what Nagel means by 'objectivity'? At one point

(ibid:9) he cautions us against thinking of objectivity in terms of "scientism", i.e. the approach to be found in empirical realism, for it lacks the subjective character of mental processes. But these are the very processes he appears to want to bracket out to arrive at an objective conception of the mental. An objective standpoint, we are told, (ibid:7) is created by leaving a subjective human perspective behind. Let us take it that by "an objective conception of the mental" Nagel does not want an account which embraces the full resources of Putnam's thing-theory but, rather, Nagel hopes to encompass the Kantian notion of the thing-in-itself. Kant's noumena31 can be seen as the external source of experience that Nagel describes. But we cannot then overlook the fact that noumena are not themselves knowable, in principle, and can only be inferred from experience of phenomena. The point is: Just what does Nagel have in mind by a wholly objective standpoint? He needs to say much more than he does.

Talk about one's understanding being "more or less objective" does not help. Also, it is odd. It suggests that we have criteria with which we can know which subjective/objective combination has the more and the less accurate correspondence with reality. In the first place it is difficult to see how Nagel can claim that

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31See Critique of Pure Reason (1973:268/275).

any one account can be more or less near to the objectively true account, without presupposing his antecedent knowledge of the true account. Of course, we can discard, as based upon bad reasoning, an account that is inconsistent, incoherent or silly, incomplete or failing to meet the desiderata of maximum strain; (i.e. for the kinds of reasons Ziff and Putnam advance). But these are formal, or negative ways of showing non-objectivity. Nagel seems to be seeking a positive account of "the objective view". He describes the distinction he seeks as (ibid:5)

> ... the distinction between more subjective and more objective views is really a matter of degree ...

I doubt that objectivity comes in degrees. Either an account is objective or it is not. However, we can be more or less neutral.

What Nagel seems to mean by "objectivity" is a neutral account of the subjective/objective combination. One's view of things becomes more neutral the less it depends on the individual-specific standpoint. We can say of 'neutrality' that (ibid:5) "the wider the range of subjective types to which a form of understanding is accessible", the more neutral it is. The questions remain, however: 'Just what neutral overview does Nagel think is possible?' and 'Why should neutrality be concomitant with what is the case?' He does not say.

More importantly, how is it possible for finite human beings to have a so-called objective or neutral conception of their own mental states? As Kant pointed out, even if the objective (noumenal) description of mental states is intelligible, I, as a finite sensory creature, am not going to be able to acquire it. In Nagel's terms, my description of the universe will, of necessity, incorporate how the universe appears to me. Or, at best, I, inevitably, have to look at it from a species-specific viewpoint.

We are looking for another way of obtaining an understanding of the mental at the optimum neutral level, from which we may derive the species-specific perspective, as well as fixing our ordinary individual-specific intuitions? Where do we start?

In a recent book, Z. Vendler claims that such an account must start by showing that I can conceive of other subjects besides myself. Vendler tells us not to use our sense perception to show this because the senses cannot give us any information about 'subjects of experiences'. All that senses can give us are objective data. Vendler claims, also, that mental experiences, such as pain, are wholly subjective. The only reality pain has is to a subject. However we are told (1984:10)

> ... being a subject ... is not necessarily tied to having the

experiences I actually have.

How is this possible?

Vendler suggests that I can conceive of the notion of having experiences when I am not the subject, because of (ibid:11) "the possibility of intersubjective transference" in imagination. If one wants to conceive of the pain of another, one has to imagine being that particular subject. How exactly do we do this? He tells us that there are two ways of using the imagination. We can conjure an image of an individual and its situation using the data of our sense experiences. This has to be disregarded. For it would be to imagine what an object and its parts look like from the outside. The second way, is to imagine **being that subject.** What it must be like, in other words, to be that subject undergoing the experience. This is something that could not be perceived by the senses.

Vendler illustrates this second way by asking us to consider what it is like to be a cat that has had its tail trod upon. What this amounts to, we are told, is imagining (ibid:7)

> ... what it must feel like being on the floor, with a small furry body, and a tail stepped upon by a huge and hefty creature. By imagining being that animal one approaches its pain and other sensations and sentiments subjectively, the only way they can be approached.

Apparently, it is through this second way of imagining that we are able to ascribe mental states to other beings. Vendler points out that in imagining that he is another subject of experiences, no different world has to be created. All that is required is the imaginative viewing of this world from a different perspective.

For our purposes the first thing to note in response to Vendler's suggestions is that the order he proposes from the specific to the general is the converse of what I take Nagel to be suggesting. Nagel understands the problem to require an objective, or any way species-specific sketch of minds, in terms of which the individual-specific can be regarded, so to speak, as an instance. It is not clear that I will be able to conceive of my own mind as merely one of many examples of mental phenomena in the world, starting from the viewpoint which Vendler proposes. This is not, of course, a criticism of Vendler.

What is unsatisfactory in his account is Vendler's assumption that the subjective character of the experiences of a cat can be known by exercising our human imagination. The subjective character of aspects of human experience, we know from our own case, is highly specific, and includes an enormous amount of detail. We do not possess the vocabulary to describe much of it. So

it defeats me why Vendler suggests we can imaginatively put ourselves in the place of a cat, vis a vis its subjective experience. He offers no argument for this, other than an implication that it is a shared intuition. An argument based upon intuition of the knowledge one has of subjective states, is not, as K. Wilkes claims, a "rather blank argument".32 It breaks down completely when two or more individuals claim, quite reasonably, to have different opposing intuitions. The affirmation of a conflicting intuition, directed at an argument based on intuition, takes away the very foundation of the latter.

Much more puzzling is Vendler's move from individual-experience to a putative objective conception. I may be able to imagine what it would be like to be a small furry creature lying on the floor and having a part of my body stepped on by a large heavy foot. But I do not think that this allows me to say that I have imagined what it must be like, for the cat herself, undergoing the process. It seems to me all that has been achieved here is a glimpse of what it would be like for **me** to be in the cat's place. This does not deal with the problem. I want to know what it is like for the **cat** to have her tail trod upon. We can call on Nagel to give emphasis to this criticism. In discussing 'What is

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32See Wilkes (1984:240).

it like to be a bat?' Nagel writes, (1979:169) I think correctly

> ... if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task. I cannot perform it either by imagining additions to my present experience, or by imagining segments gradually subtracted from it, or by imagining some combination of additions, subtractions, and modifications.

Picturesque as Vendler's proposal is, I have no guarantee that my imagined experience would be anything like the experiences of a cat.

Let us try again. In Nagel's words, we must look for another way of obtaining an understanding of the mental at the optimum neutral level, from which we may derive the individual-specific perspective. We must begin the attempt to objectify the mental, as we noted, by grasping "the idea of all human perspectives, without depriving them of their character as perspectives". A first response to this requirement is that it commits a category mistake. Whilst we may attempt to give a general description of mental phenomena from the standpoint of all human perspectives, it is not at all clear that "all human perspectives" could be said to have a subjective character, which seems to be a predicate that could only apply to an individual's perspective.

Leaving this to one side, we are told to start our

account of an objective concept of mind by viewing one's own experience "from outside". But how exactly do we do this? What we seem to have to do is to give a picture of the species-specific world, and then show how to interpret it from the subjective point of view. Using an analogy borrowed from Wilkes (1984:241)

> Just as a subway map often helpfully has an ancillary arrow stating 'YOU ARE HERE' ...

we need to give that is, the subjective 'YOU ARE HERE' to a species-specific account. We need an objective phenomenological description to which one could give a subjective fix. Perhaps the following sketch may be a start.

Human beings have certain species-specific characteristics in common. We look similar in our physical appearance. This is one reason why we can identify and re-identify things of this appearance as human beings, as distinct from other material bodies. At a different level, neuroscientists support the trustworthiness of the presumption that we are physiologically relevantly similar. Psychology and other behavioural sciences, too, confirm relevant species similarities in human nature; from similarities in our psychological maturation, to our affective behaviour, gestures, etc. And we, too, confirm the prima facie likeness.

In our dealings with each other, we exhibit prima

facie similar characteristics, like aches and pains in our bodies. We are self-conscious creatures as opposed to being merely conscious. We are aware of our own mental states. At the individual-specific level, I know that I have a pain in the back of my head. Human beings make avowals concerning their self-conscious states; at the individual-specific level I say 'I have a headache'. We need to be cautious here. My experience of the pain is subjective. It is individual-specific. It is **my** experience, not **yours.** I can describe the headache to myself, but in ways no different from how I would describe it to others. There may be other aspects which qualify as "knowledge" of my mental states behind or beyond the descriptions I would give like the one above. If so, the residue is inexpressible even for me, the subject. So while I may have some purchase for a subjective description, it is not a total one. Let us continue then with our partial sketch, remembering that, at the individual-specific level, this is the part of my knowledge of my mental state that I can express to myself and to others.

Human beings have a conception of their own pasts and futures. Again at the particular level, I remember my first sight of Transkei from the window of an aeroplane. Human beings make statements about their remembered pasts. 'It was raining the day that I arrived in

Transkei'. Qua species-specific beings, we can think counterfactually about the past, or about a possible or hypothetical future, and so on. At least we speak and we act in ways which suggests the appropriateness of such descriptions. Each human being has a sense of his own identity, in the sense that he is able to distinguish himself, physically and mentally, from other prima facie similar human beings. I experience this individuality and express it in sentences like 'I am thinking', 'I am tired', 'I want to be alone'.

Human beings are rational creatures. We can calculate or try to reason about the best way to achieve a desired state of affairs or how to avoid an unwelcome one. We can sometimes act accordingly. We are capable of formulating plans, and of making complex choices in a wide range of circumstances. We have a conception of ourselves as initiators of actions that make a difference to the course of events. Each of us can choose for ourselves and are able to carry out those decisions without undue reliance on the assistance of others. In other words, we are self-determining. Human beings, through their avowals, distinguish themselves from the things in the world, which are simply the subjects of happenings, things which are just carried along by the tide of events. We suggest, in what we say, that we are aware of ourselves as initiators of events which will go

differently, sometimes, if we decide to do this rather than that. Further, nothing corresponding to this is discernible in the behaviour of other entities. So though I might say of some non-human beings or entities that what it did made a difference to the way in which the world went - as one might say when describing the iceberg that sank the Titanic - I cannot think that this means that it made a difference because the iceberg preferred, judged, etc. that it should. Its causal agency would not be of the kind that can be attributed to human beings. We think of them as being able to make decisions, as entertaining goals, of having projects, of engaging in enterprises. We express notions of success, achievement, failure; we assess our projects, purposes, etc. as important, unimportant, and so on. Human beings are prima facie alike, also, in so far as they all take social roles, i.e. parents, colleagues, taxpayers, etc. and discharge social functions. For all of the species-characteristics above I can view my own experiences as instances.

We have noted that spoken language has a role in our species-specific mental description. Spoken language is one way in which species-specific communication takes place. Nonverbal messages are another mode of communication. Human beings send messages to each other, which are expressive of their mental states, by their gestures,

their facial expressions, and their tone of voice. At the individual level, I wave to say hello to a colleague; I smile to express pleasure; I frown when I am displeased; I shrug my shoulders, when I am exasperated, and so on.

In addition, we have the ability to govern our conduct by moral rules of our own devising. We argue, praise or admonish one another's conduct, in a way that suggests that we can make moral choices. Qua species-specific properties, human beings have distinctive feelings and emotional attachments. We have quite complex likes and dislikes. We have the capacity to love and be concerned about others. We have a conception of what is good for the person loved. At least, once again, we act in ways which suggests the appropriateness of such a description. In Nagel's terms, these are shared human perspectives including one's own. At the same time, I have tried to show their character as perspectives.

It may be objected that I have not characterised the subjective point of view. Those aspects of my experience of which I am directly aware, but which are inexpressible and known only to me, the subject. I do not deny that I have subjective knowledge of this kind. But this is not all that is involved in my individual-specific experience. I am arguing that there are

aspects of my experience, and a substantial amount at that, which I can describe myself to myself, but in ways no different from how I would describe it to others. I am not denying that I am aware of features of my mental states behind or beyond the descriptions I would give. But because some aspects of experience defy description this is not to say that there is nothing that can be described. The tail must not wag the dog.

If this account is not as significant as Nagel would have it, then the burden is Nagel's, not ours, to fill in the gaps. For without such an account, as far as the other minds problem is concerned, it seems to me that Nagel is guilty of begging-the-question. Nagel is only entitled to his re-formulation of the other minds question into: 'How can I conceive of my own mind as one of many examples of mental phenomena in the world?' if he can offer a more objective conception of mental phenomena. Otherwise he cannot go beyond the traditional subjective problem.

Let us assume that my sketch meets some of the species-specific requirements. How do we move from here to an even more objective conception of mental? According to Nagel the same approach must allow us "to think of experiences we can't imagine". How might we do this? To think of experiences we can't imagine, we are told,

is no more difficult than it is to "represent an objective spatial configuration by imagining it visually". This looks like a false analogy. I can summon a visual experience of, say, a triangle. This is not difficult. (I imagine a three-sided closed figure, the sum of whose angles is equal to two right angles, and its greatest side subtends its greatest angle.) But this does not compare with the complexity of representing my perceivings, rememberings, imaginings, etc. where I would find difficulty in saying exactly what it is I am required to represent. Take my present perceptual experience. How do I represent it? Does it include only sense-datum, e.g. colour patches, sounds, smells, tastes, etc? When does the percept begin and end? The complexity here is of the order of imagining, not a triangle, but a thousand-sided figure. Following Nagel, all I have to do is to imagine it visually. Yet, I could not discriminate between it and an imagined thousand-and-one sided figure. (Or for that matter a nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine sided figure.) The point is, it seems reasonable to say that most mental experiences cannot be imagined visually. So by what process exactly are we supposed to represent them in order to arrive at an objective viewpoint?

Let us pursue the matter. If we allow that my

sketch meets some of the species-specific requirements. The same approach allows us to move to the even more objective conception of the mental. It allows us "to think of experiences we can't imagine". This seems to take us to levels beyond Vendler's second way. But does it?

Consider the case where another human being is experiencing something that I could never experience? For example, what it is like to be congenitally blind when, as a sighted person, I could never experience this. At first blush one might be tempted to think that a relevant representation in my own case would be going around with my eyes permanently shut, touching objects in order to experience them. Clearly it cannot be like this. When I shut my eyes and try to visualise things, I cannot disabuse myself of the actual experience I have of seeing them. I have seen the colour of objects near and at a distance. My visual experience is holistic. A second stab, might be to describe the state analogically. There is no analogical parallel, however, I can think of, that a blind person can use to relate his experience of objects to me. As Nagel writes in an earlier paper (1979:179)

> The loose intermodal analogies - for example, 'Red is like the sound of a trumpet' - which crop up in discussions of this subject are of little use. That should be clear to anyone who has both heard a trumpet and seen red.

So Nagel admits there is an incommensurability between the experiences of the congenitally blind and my own. Indeed in the earlier article he writes (ibid:169)

> Our own experience provides the basic material for our imagination whose range therefore is limited

which is the converse of the claim that we can think of experiences we can't imagine. I cannot find any evidence of Nagel recognising his conversion concerning this point. His later suggestion (1986) is obviously defective, if the only features, which I can draw from my own experiences, are those which do not take me nearer to imagining what it would be like to be congenitally blind.

A similar point could be made about other experiences that I have which other persons do not. I can think of no way of describing what it is like for a mother-to-be to experience her baby kicking in her womb. My imagination is limited even when I try to articulate to you what it is like. It seems to me, contra the later Nagel, we must be content here to say that you and I do not know, indeed we cannot imagine, what some experiences of others are like.

But it would be foolish to deny the reality or significance of these experiences, which I cannot know or imagine. We might support this point by making a similar claim about facts. Facts must exist beyond the reach of human understanding and no doubt always beyond

the reach of human understanding. It would be silly to deny this. Also there must be numerous facts that we could never know due to the limits of human understanding. This is the same mutatis mutandis for experiences.

I have attempted to show how it might be possible to take up a species-specific point of view so that one's knowledge of experiences, such as 'pains' is not limited to one's own case. However, Nagel's attempt to develop a concept of mind beyond the human perspective, as he admits, is fraught with difficulties. The question arises: Do I need to detach myself and see the universe from an objective viewpoint, even if I could? While this may be a desirable state-of-affairs and serve some purpose for the underpinnings of physical science,[33] it is not clear to me that it is necessary in searching for a solution to the problem of ascribing mental states to other human beings. To solve this problem, we do not need to detach ourselves, that is if it were possible to do so, from our species-specific point of view. After all the problem we are looking at concerns only our own species, so why would it be advantageous to look at it from a purely objective viewpoint?

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[33]Although even this is a contentious point. See Nagel (1986:16).

Chapter Six

Arguments for Other Minds

Let us now review the various "solutions" to the other minds problem that we have been considering.

The first difficulty we encountered was to be clear about what the other minds problem is. For some philosophers (e.g. Russell) it is the problem of justifying knowledge claims that other minds exist. A different version of this problem is posed by Ziff: Am I unlike other creatures in alone having a mind? Other philosophers regard the problem as essentially a meaning problem: If I learn how to apply the concept of pain essentially in my own case how can your statement 'I have a pain' mean anything to me? Still others see the problem as finding a scientific explanation for psychological reports. This we attributed to Putnam's empirical realism. Yet another way of presenting the problem is to ask, as Nagel does: How can I conceive of the subjective character of my own mental states as merely one example of mental phenomena? Associated with all of the above are problems concerning privileged access, private language, criteria of logical adequacy, and so on. As a result of our investigations we may conclude that there is not one single problem of other

minds; rather, there is a cluster of problems subsumed under the heading "the other minds problem".

We recognised that central to the various formulations of the other minds problem, is the claim that mental states are subjective. Seeing a red patch, tasting a sweet liquid, feeling a twinge of pain, being angry, embarrassed, etc., are mental states with which an individual is immediately acquainted. They are **my** mental experiences. Whereas it is logically impossible for me to apprehend another's subjective experiences. If this is so, the sceptic asks: How do I know that others have subjective states? We concentrated on this problem.

The argument from analogy, given by Russell, was the first answer to it we considered. Russell, we saw, accepts that one has direct and privileged knowledge of one's own mental experiences. How can I know, then, other persons have minds? Russell's answer is that I have certain bodily states corresponding with my mental states. I feel sad and I cry tears, I feel happy and there is a smile on my face. I see similar bodily states in others, i.e. tears and smiles, and I infer, by analogy, that they not only have mental states but that we have similar mental states.

The initial attraction of the argument from analogy

is its simplicity. However, I argued that the analogical argument is not satisfactory for a number of reasons. One major flaw, we noted, is that mental states and physical behaviour are only contingently, not logically or even always causally related. I can pretend to be in pain but not feel pain and vice versa. I must assume, other persons, too, can successfully feign to be experiencing pain. This is always possible. So from their behaviour, how can I claim to have knowledge of another's mental experiences? A further weakness that we noted, is that even if a reliable causal connection could be established, the analogical argument would only work for mental states that are causally linked with overt bodily behaviour. What are we to say on this account of the numerous mental states e.g. remembering, understanding for which there is no associated behaviour?

A different kind of criticism we raised is that this use of analogy yields a weak inductive argument. It is generally agreed that in a sound inductive argument, the sampling cannot be based upon biased or selected instances. However, the analogical argument relies on a single case, a causal link between my own bodily states and mental states, to establish a generalization concerning an indefinitely large class of cases. In the established case, the experiences and the correlated behaviour all belong to the same person. While this

results in a vast number of correlations between instances of behaviour and experiences, they are all associated with the **same** individual's body and the **same** individual's experiences.

The weaknesses that we have identified, I argued, are fatal. At the same time, I argued that one feature of the analogical argument that should not be discarded is the claim that there can be knowledge of mental states to which the subject alone has privileged access.

This we saw is just what Malcolm denies. If when learning the meaning of a term like 'pain' my private awareness and exclusivity are necessarily associated with the term's meaning, he claims, one would not be able to understand the meaning of the term when it is applied to others. Furthermore, his claim involves an odd sort of essentialism, in which my every use of a mental predicate entails my having it essentially. This I rejected as a misunderstanding of essentialism.

Malcolm's second criticism of the analogical argument we also rejected. He believes that the other minds problem arises through the supposition that all talk about mental states must start from "one's own case". He claims that this is to suppose that there could be a private language, which he says is implausible. If one starts with one's own case and identifies

a particular sensation, e.g. pain, then one has no criterion on the basis of which one can justify the re-identification of that sensation, as a pain. I rebutted this claim. I argued that there is no a priori implausibility to the idea of a private language and, anyway, holders of the analogical argument need not commit themselves to a private language.

We considered then Malcolm's positive theory that there are criteria with which to establish knowledge claims about the mental states of others. We saw that he argued that we use different criteria to ascribe mental states to others from those we use for first-person ascription. The criteria for the ascription of mental states to others are 'circumstances, behaviour and utterances'.

We have no grounds, from anything Malcolm says, for supposing that the list is exhaustive and in other ways adequate. Malcolm's account of first-person claims concerning mental states is quite odd. It is clear that I do not know my own sensations by appealing to my behaviour. From considerations concerning how we learn language, Malcolm tells us that expressions like 'I am in pain' are best understood as replacements of preverbal behaviour, such as crying. I showed that, at best, all that Malcolm can claim is that one minor function of such utterances is to replace infant behaviour. We also

questioned the belief that how we come to attach meaning to words should be criterial in an account of the term once learned.

From the above, we may conclude that Malcolm has not disposed of the subject's privileged access. The conscious qualitative aspect of conscious states has not been discarded. No doubt his criteria of circumstances, behaviour and utterances, are in part correct for the ordinary ascription of mental states to others but independent arguments are needed to show this.

We, then, considered Strawson's criteriological arguments. Unlike Malcolm, we saw that Strawson does not deny the subjective character of first-person mental experience, or that we have privileged access. For Strawson, however, these are side issues to the question of our knowledge of other minds. Strawson claims that 'behaviour' is a logically adequate criterion for determining the correctness of other minds statements. I can know that another is in pain by observing his behaviour, determining that he is using the words correctly, and so on. Strawson's claim is that the sensation and overt behaviour are logically related.

We challenged this; the claim that statements about another person's physical condition or behaviour are "logically adequate" criteria for the truth of

statements about his mental experiences. We said that the notion of logical adequacy being used is not one of entailment. There would be no contradiction in identifying a man's sad face as one which was characteristic of depression, and yet denying that he felt depressed. His behaviour and mental states are logically separable. So what does Strawson mean by "logically adequate"? What kind of logical relation is it? He does not say.

We challenged, also, the underlying claim of Strawson's thesis, that "persons" is a primitive concept. I pointed out, other philosophers equally insist that some other notion, like mental substance is fundamental. Since the intuition is denied, the so-called primitive notion needs defending in detail.

Again, we do not want to deny that behavioural criteria are important, but must conclude that Strawson's claims of logical adequacy have not been established. The other minds problem survives.

The other minds problem, as we saw, arises from a distinction between mind and body and the logical impossibility of apprehending directly another person's experiences. Once this position is adopted, all knowledge of other minds must be achieved by inference, that is indirectly. To avoid the implications of this approach

- scepticism and even solipsism - we might try to describe mental states as part of a well-developed psycho-physical theory. This we took to be Ziff's and Putnam's "empirical realist" approach.

Ziff, we saw, re-states the other minds problem in the terms of the supposition that 'I do and others do not have a mind'. To establish this assumption, he asks us to consider, as a hypothesis, a mindless twin, relevantly similar to Ziff in all ways except one. Only Ziff has a mind. There is no scientific, experiential, or intuitive support he can find for this hypothesis. So Ziff thinks he is entitled to embrace an alternative hypothesis, 'Some other things, like him, also have minds'. This latter assumption is supported by a vast array of empirical observation and scientific data. It is part of our ordinary conceptual scheme and supported by scientific theory.

This position is open to a number of attacks. We saw Plantinga challenge Ziff with a simple, coherent and complete theory which allows the logical possibility of a mindless double created by an Evil Genius. We found Ziff's account suggestive but lacking in arguments and analysis.

Putnam seemed to provide the required support. He

accepts Ziff's general view, arguing that knowledge claims about other minds are best understood in terms of a wider psycho-physical "thing theory". The hypotheses that we find here meet the desiderata of being subjected to "maximum strain" and "a priori plausibility". Evidently psychology and the related neurophysical sciences can best explain mental events. Put another way, it is in psychology and science that we will find the most plausible explanations of phenomena like pain, sadness, anger, suspicion. In contrast, no one has ever elaborated, in anything approaching scientific detail, an explanation of the hypothesis that there are no other minds.

One serious problem, we noted, was that Putnam's proposal is so rooted in third-person criteria of scientific explanation, that it removes the first-hand knowledge I have of my own mental states, from the central position it requires. We require an account which does justice to both the subjective as well as the objective aspects of mental phenomena.

Nagel's phenomenological approach to the matter appeared to deliver the kind of compatibility thesis we are seeking. He maintains that by thinking of mind, like matter, as a general feature of the world, it is possible to have knowledge of mental phenomena directly. It is

the general view of mental phenomena which allows me to conceive of my mind as merely one of many examples. Although Nagel does not tell us, in any detail, how this is to be done: 'Each of us', we are told, 'has to grasp the idea of all human perspectives, including our own, without depriving them of their character as perspectives'!

Vendler contends that a general perspective of mental phenomena is possible by using our imagination. We have to put ourselves in the position of the other individual, that is, with all of his characteristics, abilities, etc., and imagine how this would be. I showed that, even if imagination is the key to an objective conception of mental phenomena, it cannot be employed in the way that Vendler suggests. Neither is it possible through our imagination to extend our subjective perspective to things we cannot imagine, in the way in which Nagel hints.

I concluded my discussion on a more speculative note. I suggested that an objective/subjective bifurcation of some sort, can be given along the following lines. Along the lines of Putnam, we can say we know that human beings share the same psycho-physiological structure. Our avowals and other utterances, Malcolm suggests, also are grounds for the presumption of like

mental experience. We speak in a way which suggests similarity of sensations, feelings, etc. We can all use our reason, make calculations, plan, determine means to ends, and so on. We all claim to have similar remembered pasts, posit hypothetical futures that are alike. Our behaviour is prima facie alike in most situations as Ziff suggests. These are the kind of general descriptions that we would employ as a sketch of human mental states. Whether they could have a subjective content at the general level seems to me to be doubtful, if not a category mistake. I suggested that this is the basis for a significant kind of subjective, individual-specific, knowledge that I have of myself. I can describe some of my mental states to myself and equally to others using descriptions which draw upon the above conditions. I have pains; I remember this or that event. In some cases there seems to be nothing more to my subjective account of a particular experience.

I do not pretend, however, that the general conditions constitute a sufficient description for all mental states. There are many where the subjective element predominates. I cannot propositionally describe, over and above the complex physical factors, the complexity of the baby kicking in the womb. No doubt ineffability and privileged access are the important constituents of one's knowledge here.

The same kind of descriptions and limitations apply mutatis mutandis for other individuals. In other words, from the comprehensive and consistent similarities of our descriptions of some mental experience, it is rational to accept that like me, other human beings have minds. And that they have mental experiences similar to my own. While this would not establish a full-blown claim to knowledge, the sketch above would begin to justify the claim that, in some of its aspects, my mind can be understood as one of many examples of mental phenomena in the world. The lack of a subjective perspective, in a general account, would explain, also, the limitations there are in our understanding of those cases where we cannot imagine fully, and sometimes we cannot begin to imagine, what a particular mental state or condition is like.

All of this is no more than speculation. There is nothing that I have read in the current literature, or can offer from my own thoughts on the matter, which suggests that we have a solution to all of the other mind problems. Each of the theories considered offers important insights. The solutions offered, however, by emphasising one salient feature, neglect another. A proposal which seems to close one door, opens up others for further discussion.

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