

CHAPTER 4:

Private Language Argument and the Problem of Other Minds

The problem of other minds is an age old predicament in the history of philosophy. It existed during the time of Plato and still remains a quandary in philosophical discussions at length. We find in Plato's *Theaetetus* the question: "Are you quite certain that the several colours appear to a dog or to any animal whatever as they appear to you? ... Or that anything appears the same to you as to another man?"¹¹⁵ This problem is a kind of other minds dilemma.

The problem of other minds is found in Wittgenstein's philosophy too. As far as Wittgenstein is concerned, the problem arises due to the self-centred perception of knowledge. When one thinks that he can have knowledge of his own psychological states and on that basis he constructs the world from his own private experiences or sense data, problem of other minds take place. This is a major issue which Wittgenstein strikes to resolve. This issue originally came up from the *Cartesian Meditations* where Descartes takes his own self as the being to doubt, by his method arrives at the conclusion that one has the best possible access to his own private self. Wittgenstein believes that it is a

¹¹⁵ Benjamin Jowett (tr.), *Plato's Theaetetus: With Introduction and Analysis* (Rockville, Maryland: Serenity Publishers, 2009), p. 102.

false idea to construct the world view in this way. His private language argument is related to the problem of other minds in a quite integrated way. Norman Malcolm says, "The idea of a private language is presupposed by every program of inferring or constructing the 'external world' and 'other minds'. It is contained in the philosophy of Descartes and in the theory of ideas of classical British empiricism, as well as in recent and contemporary phenomenism and sense-datum theory."¹¹⁶ The problem basically takes its course in the realm of one's own sensation and its outward expression. When I have a pain, I express it to others, but at the same time I have a feeling that other person is not really able to understand the pain I am having. On the other side of the coin, I can only believe that someone else is in pain, but I *know* it if I am in pain.¹¹⁷ The other minds problem starts from an egocentric predicament that encourages one to employ private rules. When I have a pain I go through certain experiences, experiences which lead me in future to assume how another person would feel when he has the same kind of pain that I have. But the notion 'same' is something of which I am the sole arbiter, only I have the authority to proclaim whether the pain is same as mine or not. But Wittgenstein would say, the meaning of 'same'

¹¹⁶ Norman Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*", in Harold Morick (ed.), *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 46.

¹¹⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), §303.

can be taught to someone else. If he has mastered the technique of the rules to understand the 'same' colour for example, then the conceptualisation of private practice of rules will be annihilated. Wittgenstein establishes in his argument that there can be nothing like a private rule as language is governed by a rule which is always under public check and it must have the criteria that is publicly observable to convey meaning. The significance in Wittgenstein's criterion based approach to meaning is that he contrasts 'criterion' with 'symptom' taking up both words in technical perspective.¹¹⁸ The falling barometer is a 'symptom' of raining, its looking like *that* outdoors is the 'criterion' of rain. This relation between 'symptom' and 'criterion' can be learnt by experience and it can also be taught.

In Wittgenstein's language, there is no point on saying that "I know that I am in pain" or "I am not sure whether I am in pain or not" because pain is bodily felt and one has to look into the grammar of the sensation. There is no 'ego' when one has toothache and another person also has the same. The development of Wittgenstein's philosophy and his transition has a lot to do with his dealing with the problem of other minds. He has given a theory of language that comes before a challenge from the world of phenomena. In both his *Philosophical Investigations* and *Zettel*, he has

¹¹⁸ Norman Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*", p. 63.

maintained that it is stupid for someone to suggest that the content of experience is incommunicable. In his period of philosophical transition he had some sort of association, although not entirely a close one, with the *Vienna Circle*. Wittgenstein at this point tried to explain how A and B achieve communication between them about their bodily sensations with keeping the idea that all these languages can be translated into one another, it was a kind of intercommunication between at least two persons. The second assumption he made was that each of them started by making context-free references to his own bodily sensations and their types. It also made their achievement of intercommunication inexplicable.¹¹⁹ Schlick and Carnap shared the idea with Wittgenstein that language must be a single system of communication correlated with an integrated field of phenomena. Carnap and Schlick were more fundamental than Wittgenstein as they believed that the split between language and correlated phenomena need to be unified, they have imposed a more radical unification process from both the internal and external perception. They chose physical objects and the physicalistic language to explain that it was the only way to epitomize the communication between one another.¹²⁰ But the problem with Schlick-Carnap's theory is that they have adopted such a radical use of scientific

¹¹⁹ David Pears, *The False Prison: A Study of the Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy* [Vol. II] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 305.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

language that has given a mutilated picture of human life. Wittgenstein was never at home with this over-preoccupation of factual language, he was looking for a more humanised form of description of the world.

Wittgenstein had to face an intellectual dilemma about private language in the early 1930s when he did not accept the radical physicalisation of language promulgated by Carnap and Schlick. His context-free reference to experience could have given rise for a private language had he not reject it later. He was even optimistic about the possibility of a private language when he began to search for a non-hypothetical, phenomenological language from which our conceptual journey could start.¹²¹ His motivation was driven by the general agenda of looking for the words and their reference while his picture theory of meaning was still as a framework. His transition in philosophy mainly took its course when he thought that the philosophical confusions lie not in the metaphysical trajectory, but elsewhere. It arises when the linguistic misrepresentations occur due to the presupposition that we look for the sensation to transfer meaning to the language. The question "Do I know other selves?" is retaliated by Wittgenstein in the form: When I look at another person, do I look at his soul? Do I need to look at all? Whatever I

¹²¹ Keld Stehr Nielsen, *The Evolution of the Private Language Argument* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), p. 40.

perceive is from his expressions, his facial and bodily gestures. If only I have the access to my pain, others only surmise it, and then in whatever way I express they won't understand it. But Wittgenstein is convinced enough that under no circumstances I can claim that the other person cannot know about my pain.

How do I know that there are other minds? There are other persons who cry, laugh, think about objects, if there was no mind except of myself then how could we believe in their behavioural dispositions? The intricacy between private language with the problem of other minds is stretched out to the claim that "I know the sensation only from my own case", the own experiences of a private linguist, and others knowing about pain only from their own experiences, gives rise to the issue where no one would be able to know what 'pain' stands for. As a result, there will be a failure of communication.¹²² But I cannot know 'pain' as the name of a sensation, otherwise I would have been able to teach the use of 'pain' by an ostensive method, just like I teach someone in the case of 'red'.¹²³ 'Pain' is not the name of a sensation, as when I feel it, I express in utterances like 'Ouch!' or 'Oh!' and these utterances make another person understood about my pain.

¹²² Ashok Vohra, *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mind* (London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 56.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

The scepticism about other minds:

The other minds problem starts from the assumption that whether I believe in the existence of mind in another person or not. It is not possible in common sense belief to assert that there is no mind other than me. It cannot be said of me at all that I am the only sufferer of pain and no others as every person in the world has suffered pain. But let us suppose, someone is inside a park watching children play. But if he thinks that only he has the mind and not the children, because children are mentally vacuous automatons as he thinks or like robots who behave like they have mind, but their mindlike behaviour does not come from the state of mind, but from something else. But Thomas is convinced that only he has one genuine mind in the whole world. From a common sense attitude Thomas's belief about the non-existence of other minds is completely unacceptable.¹²⁴ We will easily dismiss Thomas as crazy, absurd sort of person. But at the same time, it unveils another question, how much we know about other minds? Do we know it at all or presume the existence of other minds? Do we human beings only have minds, or there are animals that have minds? Or does a computer believe? Many questions arise in the philosophy of mind and most of them still remain unsolved. The problem is a complicated one which needs to be addressed

¹²⁴ George Graham, *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction* [2nd ed.] (Malden, USA: Blackwell, 1993; 1998), p. 43.

with a greater philosophical investigation and it really has contributed a great deal to the philosophy of mind.

While we do any research or study or analysis in depth we must use our mind to a very concentrated level, otherwise the job at hand will not be possible to accomplish. It is the mind which directs us to various tracks and which make us aware of our past, present and also make us conscious about our future course of actions. Philosophy of mind is a branch which has many parts and ramifications that lead us to think over different areas of philosophy, e.g. philosophy of action, philosophy of language, cognitive science etc. Philosophy of language is totally a different branch of study but it has a close association with philosophy of mind as both of them are, in many respects, complimentary with each other. Philosophy is a subject which makes a comprehensive and systematic study of the most fundamental areas of human experience. It is comprehensive in the sense of its width of a broad area and covering of a huge ground of study. When it comes to the depth, philosophy makes its way into the ground which it covers.¹²⁵ Philosophy may probe deeply into matters beyond the experimental and clinical data. It does not necessarily mean that philosophy confronts with the physical data given by scientists or psychologists; it adds to their study and reopens some

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

areas with the probability of fresh insights. Philosophy offers a broad spectrum of fundamental human concerns with the aim for systematic and comprehensive understanding.

Now let us ponder over mind. A person who has mind must be feeling pain when he is hit by an iron rod; pain is often classified as a 'sensation'. He must be angry when someone talks to him in a malicious language continuously; Anger is classified as 'emotion' by many philosophers. When I talk to someone with a conviction about the mistake he has made to me, I must have a belief; belief is something also very close to mental occurrence and is classified as 'thought' or 'propositional attitude' in a more technical sense of the term.¹²⁶ If someone is not a minded being, he cannot have those feelings like 'pain', 'anger' or 'belief'; it does not mean that creatures having pain, anger, belief are the only who have minds, but such capabilities and events are only possible for minded creatures.¹²⁷ Therefore, philosophy of mind can be defined, as far as George graham proposes it, in this way:

*Philosophy of mind is the area of philosophy which strives for comprehensive and systematic understanding of that which thinks and experiences, namely the mind.*¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

The mind has wide implications in terms of its activities. Mental acts are not always philosophically defined. But one theory which has a great philosophical attraction is scepticism about other minds. It poses a basic question, "Do other persons have mind?", and a radical sceptic would answer that there is no mind except my own. But is it philosophically feasible? This question challenges about the knowledge of other selves. It is a basic characteristic of our life that we know there are other figures with human shape that can talk, walk, think, and have minds. They have sensations, feelings, thoughts and they can interact like me. In the common sense, there is no reason to believe that they are not minded beings. But in the philosophical nous, the complexity and pervasive character of mind poses a great challenge. Let us assume certain propositions:

- (a) Only I can know about my own sensations. Because I have a direct access to my sensations.
- (b) Our experiences are always named by a private ostensive definition. They appear in certain conditions and 'stand for' some particular behaviour, e.g. pain-behaviour.
- (c) The pain which happens in my body is a necessary and sufficient condition for knowing of my pain.
- (d) Another person cannot be directly aware of my pain.

The above assumptions bring out the traditional problem of other minds. It reminds us that the way I know my mind, another person cannot know. The sensation which refers to my body cannot remain in another body in the same way. We will examine about the potential of being correct about these propositions. It is a kind of scepticism about other minds. To solve this problem we have to discover the criteria or verification process which could carry out the task. Either we can make it through the 'direct discovery' like sensory perception or some sort of intuition. Otherwise we can take the channel of 'indirect discovery' meant by inference.¹²⁹ Assumption (a) takes it for granted that I have direct access to my sensations, therefore the level of knowledge about my sensation cannot be matched by someone else. Assumption (d) is the obvious outcome of assumption (a). Assumption (c) talks about the condition of the knowledge of pain, also states that one must have the private mental object i.e. pain to know whether he has the immediate knowledge of that object, i.e. pain. Assumption (c) in a way also fulfils the condition of (b), as to say that if I do not know about the private object then how I can give it a name by private ostensive method. Going by the virtue of these assumptions we can clearly expect that it is not possible to have a direct knowledge about other person's sensation, thoughts and feelings nor can we know it by intuition; because if direct

¹²⁹ Ashok Vohra, *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mind*, p. 96.

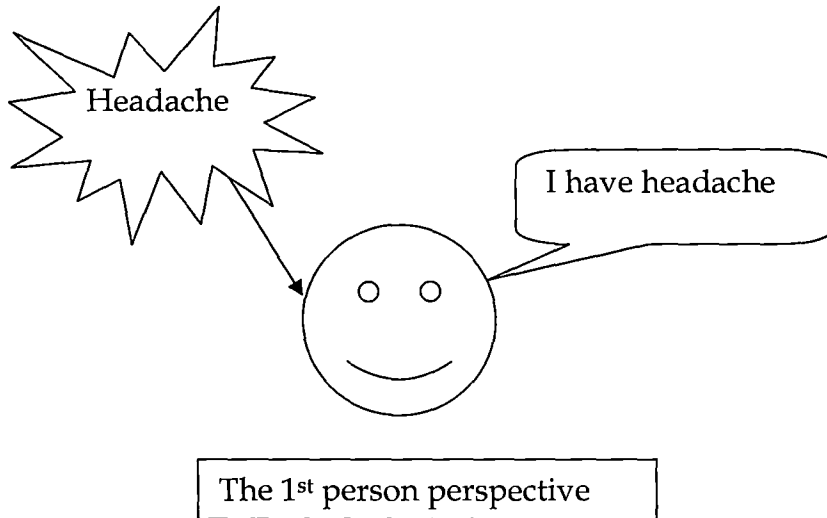
knowledge is not enough then intuitive faculty also cannot work. So the only option left is inference about the existence of other minds, their feelings and sensations etc. What we can do is to infer from their behaviour and expressions of their bodies, whatever they exhibit is in front of us. Descartes and other empiricist philosophers have supported the plausibility of such inferences, which state that I can know from my experiences what sort of feelings or sensations others might have when they have a particular pain. This is called the 'argument from analogy'.¹³⁰ The problem of other minds tells about the subjective justification about our own mental terms. The source of the claim about the knowledge of one's own mental events comes from the egoistic attitude towards the sensations in a person. The person starts to think that because he has it, he only can know it; it becomes a privileged access for the person in the epistemic sense of the term. When it goes to the extreme level, it creates the possibility of solipsism as one is never ever sure about the happenings of other persons' mental images. Coming back to the 'argument from analogy', A.J. Ayer remarks that even if we accept that there is the problem of the knowledge of other minds, some philosophers may admit the argument from analogy. They may say that when I observe certain features of my own behaviour that are associated with certain experiences, we may apply the same features upon seeing other

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

persons behaving in similar ways, and by analogy we may be able to infer that they are having the same experiences.¹³¹ But the argument from analogy is not so strong to solve the problem of other minds. The four assumptions we made few paragraphs back shows that the argument from analogy fails to meet the justification. Since the assumptions have claimed about the direct access to our sensations, it is not sufficient to infer about the behaviour of some other persons. If another person does not have the access to my mental incidents, then how can I claim to have the same about another person? Others cannot be in a position to claim knowledge about my mental behaviours, they are exclusively my own. X is not warranted to make a statement about the experiences of Y, as Y has the knowledge of its own mind from the first person perspective. X only has the third person perspective, X cannot directly know the experiences of Y plainly because X does not have them.¹³² The figure in the following page depicts that it is the person who is having headache can say that I have headache because he has the first person perspective, another person is not in the position as he is. Let us have a glance at the following figure about the first person perspective:

¹³¹ A.J. Ayer, *Philosophical Essays* (London: Macmillan & NY: St Martin's Press, 1954; 1969), p. 192.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Illustration 4.1:

It is about the possession of the experiences that matter. Then one may question, does telepathy have the character to link the gap between the first person and another? Because telepathy is something by means of which a message is transmitted without any physical attributes. But to say that telepathy is a communication in which two persons share the same experiences is not right. Ayer in his essay "One's knowledge of other minds" makes the point that although telepathy is a transmission of message from one person to another, it is not the sharing of experiences between them. Ayer believes that telepathy therefore does not fulfil the condition to solve the problem of other minds. He says:

There is the experience of the person who makes the communication and the experience of the person who receives it. These experiences are necessarily different, since they are the experiences of different persons, and this remains

true no matter how the communication is made. In this respect telepathy is no better than the telephone.¹³³

It is very much evident that we are still not able to solve the problem. The problem is quite a persistent one as it does not leave room for the philosophers to offer a solution neither by the argument from analogy, nor by telepathy. It is because the two persons are always different, in terms of their mental images, propositional attitudes, sensations, feelings, in every respect. Their personalities are different; their experiences must also be different. It is hardly possible for anyone to presuppose about the mental states of other persons, the difference in the properties of pain will always be different, irrespective of my guess about someone else. The qualitative character of experiences, i.e. the qualia remains as the differentiating point between two persons as far as the feeling is concerned. 'Qualia' is the plural form of 'quale'. Qualia is the built-in quality of experience, it is the how-it-is-like facet of phenomenal consciousness. If we want to have the knowledge of phenomenal properties, we need to have *irreducible, propositional, phenomenal information*.¹³⁴ 'Qualia' is often used to name properties like redness and painfulness. Qualia itself is a sticky issue as it seems indisputable that we

¹³³ Ibid., p. 196.

¹³⁴ Jesper Kallestrup, "Private Language and Mind-Body Dualism." (<http://www.wittgenstein-network.dk/home/papers/PrivateLanguageandM-BDualis.pdf>).

have experiences with properties like redness and painfulness. It means that qualia exist. But, what are qualia? If they are physical properties of the brain, then what sort of physical properties are they? Even qualia may be non-physical properties caused by the brain but which do not themselves cause anything. Therefore, the possibility of their being epiphenomenal properties also brings in more problems to the issue.¹³⁵ If we believe in qualia then the possibility of knowing other minds become even more distant. We must be feeling the crisis in resolving the problem.

Human beings are always cognising some thing or the other. While cognizing they refer to objects and mean them by their own understanding. Their reflection on the object helps them in making judgements and while doing so they are more often or not in some conceptual confusions. Philosophy of mind deals with these confusions, and time and again we succumb to certain metaphysical intricacies, and the problem becomes a profound one instead of being resolved. Hence we need to look for the solution which would enable us to have a better understanding of the problem and take a proper route. Wittgenstein very rightly observes that philosophers do not look to get solution, rather they

¹³⁵ Ian Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide* (NY, USA: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 161.

make it more problematic. He says that once the confusion is rooted out, the problem disappears. But we bring in metaphysical inputs to cover up our own conceptual confusions. Wittgenstein thinks that the whole 'cloud of metaphysics' is squashed into a 'drop of grammar'. The conceptual confusions, according to Wittgenstein, become a philosophical problem, when language goes on holiday. The entire issue lies at the heart of human presupposition that (i) only I have the direct access to my mind, (ii) I have an exclusive mental realm that is beyond the reach for other persons, (iii) therefore the mental activities which occur in me cannot be known by someone else.

We have already mentioned that this attitude invariably leads to the solipsism. The other minds' problem can never be solved if we stick to this position. It is still a problematic issue because of its intrinsic characteristic of inviting temptation not to become convinced about the mental acts of a person. The probable solution to the problem of other minds lies most probably in the behavioural criteria. The criterial justification could be the most viable option to deal with the problem of other minds. The other is seen distinctively as a persona from another person. The scepticism which surrounds the doubt regarding the existence of other minds lacks criterial satisfaction; if the satisfaction is fulfilled then the problem can look better. This problem also has its root

in Descartes' theory of mind-body dualism. Descartes introduced a highly debatable use of body. In Descartes it has to be understood at all times in the context of his distinction between *himself* and his body.¹³⁶ When we say that "He was found dead" or "He has a strong body but no brains" we see different uses of body in different contexts.¹³⁷ These statements and others make a wide array of contextual circumstances. His emphasis on 'body' generates the problem of other minds in a more sceptic manner because here "my body" and "others' body" come into the context.

The search for criterial justification:

To solve the problem of other minds we have to look for the behavioural criteria. But looking only at someone's behaviour would not be enough unless his sensations are disclosed. Now if it is about disclosure of certain sensations, then we necessarily need the help from other persons. Because when someone asks me about my sensation e.g. "How are you feeling now?" all that he expects from me is an answer which could give some clue to him. But it is me who has the authority to provide clues to another person; but then one may ask that if it was not possible to know about other minds, then how could a doctor diagnose a problem of a

¹³⁶ John W. Cook, "Human beings", in Peter Winch (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 123.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

patient? The problem of other minds generates from the conscious thoughts and feelings which are directly or immediately given.¹³⁸ I require no support from others when it comes to the access to our own minds, but I have to look for the help of others if I want to know about their minds. This help can be observed by the evident behaviour of the other.

The problem gets trickier when we take the other minds completely different from our own and apply an isolated world to them. Then it becomes almost impossible to judge the other selves as there is no way to put forth the idea of identity between two persons. But this is a mystical outlook to approach a philosophical matter; we must look forward to go beyond mysticism if we really crave for resolving the problem. Stanley Cavell puts it: "What hides the mind not the body but the mind itself – his his, or mine his, and contrariwise".¹³⁹ It is a myth about mind that it is a property of an individual in the exclusive sense of the term. This is a fragmentation of truth in saying that what is internal is concealed from us, it brings us to nowhere. We can unlock the truth in other's mind if we channelise our experiences to others, the most powerful vehicle in doing this job is language. Another aspect of this problem as far as we have

¹³⁸ George Graham, *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction* (2nd ed.), p. 48.

¹³⁹ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (NY & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 369.

observed lies in allowing others to let them know about me. One thing may be observed in this regard that how much we allow others to know about my mind may be helpful in assuming about my knowledge of other's mind. My assurance of letting the other know about my behaviour, experiences, and cognitive development could mark the way for a better and more comprehensive understanding about other minds. The problem arises the moment we deem to believe that my idea of pain is totally different from others. A sceptic would question in this way as George Graham puts it:

Isn't it conceivable that my concept of pain just does not apply to others? Isn't it possible that I have private mental concepts which enable me to know my mind without applying those concepts to others? Isn't it possible that the writing of the nailed person arises from something other than pain?¹⁴⁰

But this is not going to solve the problem, rather it will intensify it. If scepticism is accepted, then pain would mean something to one person, quite different to another one. But Wittgenstein would point out that if it is the case, then it is not pain, but *impression* of pain. Because this way of putting a private perspective is practiced by a private rule, but there cannot be any private rule, rather there are impressions of rule; and a rule is governed under a public standard, it is practiced not privately but in a public use. The problem is that if we believe in communication, then

¹⁴⁰ George Graham, *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction* (2nd ed.), p. 51.

we should believe in other minds, there is no question about it. Only thing is to know the extent of mental activities in another person.

Such sensations as pain do have a status that is inaccessible provided that the person who has it does not express in his behaviour. But, in principle, they are potentially accessible to other persons. It is a misguided notion to ascribe pain as completely private sensation. Wittgenstein's works in the area of philosophy of psychology spans a great range of categories and predicates of mind and experience. His philosophy is based on the idea that there cannot be any subjective justification of our experiences as well as it is baseless to form a concept of ostensive definition of the private mental objects. He observes that the meaning of a concept depends on the examination of its rules of use in ordinary situation. We learn to express particular concepts in with some utterances that are publicly intelligible, and appropriate in specific contexts or occasions in which we communicate.¹⁴¹ The basic about communication is to share the concepts, ideas or beliefs in a manner that is compatible with the public stage-setting or devices. When we talk about mental phenomena, it does not appear that a person is observing the sense-data of another person, not because they are 'private' but because of the structure of the 'criteria'.

¹⁴¹ Jeff Coulter, *Mind in Action* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, in association with Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 82.

It is not that I can see what sort of pain another person having, I can only see that the person is having 'pain' by his reactions in groaning, crying, screaming, or moaning. It is not about observing another person's 'pain' or witnessing someone else's 'dream', it is about understanding or learning about the mental acts.¹⁴² This is how the conceptualisation takes place and one gains the understanding of the mental concepts.

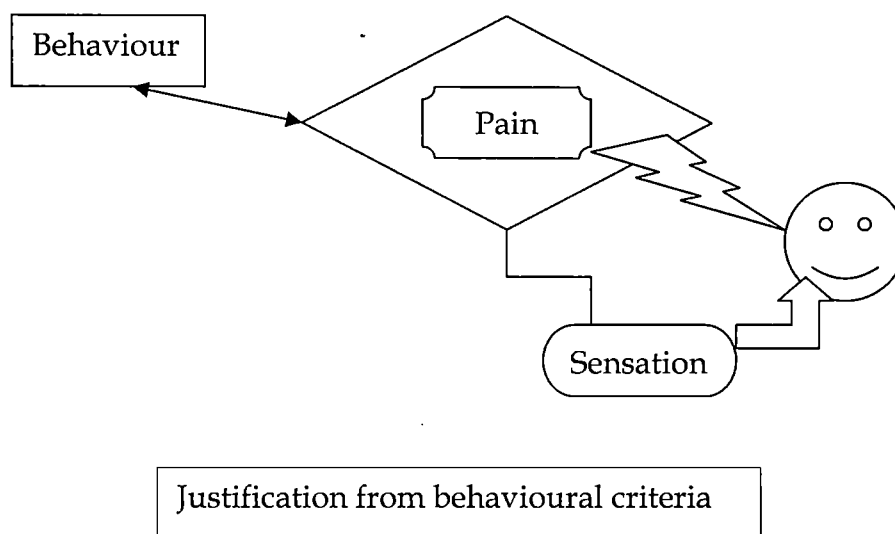
The 'criteria' takes part in understanding the operation of the mind. The mental reality of a person is something which cannot be ignored, but the task of philosophy is to know the mind of others. This can be done if we employ some criteria to reveal the reality and at the same time to check the meaning. For Wittgenstein, the 'inner' stands in need of outward 'criteria'.¹⁴³ But how does it happen? It might make sense to say that what Wittgenstein affirms is to make use of the predictable substantiation that verifies the occurrences of mental phenomena. The behavioural evidences could provide the guidance that is required to accomplish the task of knowing about others. The other is always potentially knowable, on the basis of the judgements which are made under certain circumstantial evidences. If we take the instances of groaning, moaning, or writhing in pain, they cannot be regarded as

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁴³ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §580.

criteria, rather they are weak, inductive evidences. Wittgenstein anticipated the possible objection of behaviourism coming his way. He does not state that pains or mental images are 'grammatical fictions', rather it is the way that we conceptualise them as 'grammatical fictions'.¹⁴⁴ The underlining point of his assumption is that we cannot deny about our mental events, our 'inner experiences', what he denies is the probability of privately enigmatic phenomena. There is no pain-behaviour without pain. But once the pain is expressed the privacy of its being under a mental operation disappears. Pain as a sensation does not belong to the language game, but after its manifestation through behaviour it becomes publicly observable. Pain as a publicly observable phenomenon functions in a language-game and the pain-behaviour is visible to everyone. The privacy of pain in a person is difficult to exist after his expression is observed by others. Therefore, the sensation of pain is potent on the behaviour of the person and hence becomes publicly observable. Here's a look at the following figure about the relation between sensation and the behaviour:

¹⁴⁴ Jeff Coulter, *Mind in Action*, p. 84.

Illustration 4.2:

The above figure could show Wittgenstein as claiming to be a behaviourist. He himself anticipated about the possible objection. What he is looking for is not the exactly same experience, but same sort of experience;¹⁴⁵ even though one will agree that there is a difference in the degree of experience. For example, one might be listening to a music which is soft, another person will also accept the same thing. But the aesthetic responses will be different, even in the same person it will be seen differently in different times. The *private language argument* has a profound implication with regard to the problem of other minds. It brings out a broad spectrum of issues including the problem of other selves. Coming back to the criterial justification, Wittgenstein might be facing some difficulties. Because sensations have internal diversity and ramifications, their structure are altered in different times with different

¹⁴⁵ C.H. Whiteley, *Mind in Action: An Essay in Philosophical Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 14.

behavioural display. The doubt about the happenings in a person's mental phenomena jeopardizes the whole notion of public world or community standard of meaning.¹⁴⁶ A doctor while treating a patient asks some definite questions with the expectation of a positive answer on the basis of which he has to diagnose the illness of the patient. But is it certain that the patient is able to answer his questions correctly every time? He is surely trying to inform the doctor as best as possible, but his precision of the illness is itself a doubt. Although the modern technology is capable of eliciting a wide range of medical diseases, still the doctor has to have an intuition.

The above viewpoint is one way of looking at the problem of other minds. Cavell talks about the realisation of other selves or internalisation of other's pain. He says that I cannot feel another person's pain, rather I can acknowledge what the other is feeling. He has sketched an idea about the possibility of a kind of scepticism which is quite unusual in relation to the problem of other minds. Cavell argues that if we compare the human body with a machine, even if it is not a machine in the way a *machine* is a machine, I can ascribe 'body' to that machine. What would it be like if that machine behaves like a perfect human body? Cavell exemplifies:

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

And within the vision of the human body as a machine, a machine can feel. (“... It can be conscious or unconscious; it sees, is blind; ...” A machine has nothing special to do with pain. Build me one that can scan, peer, stare, glance....) But to take the human body as machine is as much, or little, a vision of humanity as the vision that takes the body to be inhabited by something *else*.¹⁴⁷

There is a sense in which Professor Stanley Cavell captures the notion of privacy. He questions about Wittgenstein’s remark regarding the obscurity of seeing the soul whilst looking at someone’s attitude. Wittgenstein thinks that the human body is the best picture of the human soul, but Cavell does not deny that there is a human soul that sees, feels, touches. He finds it as the difference between a human soul and a stone or machine. He opines that a machine or a stone cannot express in the way a human being expresses, as a stone or a machine has nothing to express. And there are sensations which are secret, yet to be expressed. Wittgenstein also does not deny that when I am in pain, it is I who give it an expression or fail to give an expression. Then it follows that if I do not give it an expression then no one will be able to know that I am in pain.¹⁴⁸ Cavell takes on the idea of Wittgenstein that if there is no point in saying that I know that I am in pain, then there would be no unutterable privacy. There will remain no bridge in terms of my sensation and its corresponding utterances. But as far as Wittgenstein’s process is

¹⁴⁷ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 414.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

concerned, one can find the criterion that could satisfy Cavell, which is the question of what it is to be in pain. Cavell has hypothesised an *Outsider* who can, as Cavell has imagined, going beyond our ideas to grasp the relation between me and the external world, to see the difference between human beings and non-human beings or human non-beings.¹⁴⁹ The Outsider is expected to internalise the pain that another person is having, but Cavell expects him how the Outsider sorts him, what he thinks of him as an individual. Cavell presupposes that an Outsider will be able to make comparison between him and other minds if the Outsider is invoked. His take on pain is that I can very well know that I am in pain when I am really feeling pain, but I cannot know about another's pain. Cavell has put a restriction on the Outsider which compels the Outsider to know something about the pain of another person but not about something about mine. Cavell gives the reason, "He is not really an Outsider to me. If he exists, he is in me."¹⁵⁰

We take into account Stanley Cavell's problematisation of the knowledge about other minds. His seems to be a very critical reflection on the problem, but to recognise the fact that what it is to be in pain shows a glimpse of solution, although not in a very convincing tone but still it can

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 417.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

be used as a guideline. The recognition of pain in another person or to acknowledge that there is someone who is having pain makes me delve into the matter by identifying what sort of feelings he might go through. I do not need to totally internalise the pain of the other, I just have to dig into the knowledge of the character of the sensation, to know what it is like to be in pain. The suspicion about other mind starts from the assumption that only I can feel our pain, nobody else. Wittgenstein suggests that there is no point in asserting that "I know that I am in pain"; rather it is right to say that "I know that you are in pain". He attracts us to the notion of language-game where every one of us looks to see the reactions from each other when we are in pain. He not only intends to draw our attention to the reactions to e.g. pain; he means to the way we react to each other when we are in pain.¹⁵¹ We obviously react to others at the times of being in pain as it is naturally stimulating to us. The criterion of identity which we are searching for lies in our recognising of other persons while they are in a particular state of mental affairs, say, pain. Wittgenstein wants to advocate that in the original and primitive form of the language-game is 'reaction'. In the beginning, he says, it was the deed, language only adds refinement. The way a child learns a language is from the behaviour of the adults, their indications of different objects make a child interested to learn the name of the objects.

¹⁵¹ Anita Avramides, *Other Minds* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 196.

Child's learning of language is an example of reaction to the activities of the others. We move from simple or primitive use of language-games to a more complex and sophisticated form of language-game by a process of accretions.¹⁵² Wittgenstein's notion of 'language-game' and his preamble of 'forms of life' is intimately related, one cannot be understood without the other. Wittgenstein considers that to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life. We use signs in our community to convey meaning. But sign, according to Wittgenstein, is itself dead. It only gets alive when it is in use.¹⁵³ He is proposing a method in which our mental terms are expressed through language and the language becomes meaningful in terms of its use. The sensation becomes no more private when it is manifest by language; to know the meaning of a sensation is to know the use of it.

We are living human beings, and only of a living human being, Wittgenstein articulated, can one think that it has sensations, it sees, or blind, hears or deaf, conscious or unconscious.¹⁵⁴ This is a very crucial methodological remark that could show the way to solve the problem of other minds. We live in a world that is full of intersubjectivity and dependent on one another's linguistic communication. Here we cannot

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁵³ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §432.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., §281.

take others as mere 'automatons', machines devoid of any conscious experience or thought. That would simply be a bizarre idea as all our psychological and non-psychological data are derived from a single linguistic fountainhead. What we observe in a person is his behaviour and that behaviour forms the criterion of identity. "I am in pain" is a present tense first-person psychological statement in which one has privileged access, but such assertions do not differentiate a person from others, as I cannot be discriminated from others without ascribing the mental states to other selves. The moment I ascribe my 'inner' states to others it remains no more as a personal property.

Can language bridge the gap?

The problem of other minds is a precarious concern in the philosophy of mind. The scepticism associated with it makes it more complicated and there is always a temptation to treat the subject from an egoistic viewpoint. However, one can hardly get a solution if he gives preference to the ego to solve the problem of other minds. One of the most prudent ways to approach the matter is to study the human reactions when someone feels pain in his body. If a child hurts himself and then cries, adults teach him sensation-words, by telling what sort of pain the child is having and the locution of the pain. Wittgenstein mocked at the idea that

the content of experience is incommunicable; he expressed his disapproval of this factor in his *Philosophical Investigations* and *Zettel*. This was in the process of the standpoint of his second attempt to extend his treatment of the ego to sensations and their types.¹⁵⁵ He extends the treatment to the extent of people's reactions to the sufferer's predicament and included them to the primitive pattern of language. The following are his remarks:

It is a help here to remember that it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain; and not merely when oneself is – and so to pay attention to other people's pain-behaviour, as one does *not* pay attention to one's own pain behaviour.

But what is the word "primitive" meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behaviour is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought.¹⁵⁶

The problem of other minds is traditionally rooted in some assumptions. These are – I have certain sensations of which only I am aware, because I have them and I am aware of their quality. I claim those sensations to be *mine* because they qualify *my* condition. However, there are many bodies similar to 'mine', I call them 'other persons'. I often wonder: do these people have sensations?¹⁵⁷ Do they have minds like mine? Many times we behave according to certain rules and causal connections. As a result,

¹⁵⁵ David Pears, *The False Prison*, Vol. II, p. 303.

¹⁵⁶ Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, (2nd ed.), G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds.), tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), §§540-41.

¹⁵⁷ Bruce Aune, "The Problem of Other Minds", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July, 1961), p. 322.

we promote ourselves as minded beings in comparison to other animals. Animals other than humans also react to the stimulations in certain ways, but they do not have the power of reflection into their own activities. Human beings have the capacity to reflect upon their actions, thereby they could possibly react in a more fruitful and rational manner than other animals. But when it comes to recognizing other people's pains, agonies, fears etc., we face two kinds of enticement. First, the temptation to regard only my sensations, to know that only I see, I feel, I have pains etc. Second, the pity of feeling ashamed not to acknowledge the pain of others, to admit that my experience is not the only real one. This question has been asked by Wittgenstein in his *Blue Book* in the following way:

But wasn't this a queer question to ask? *Can't* I believe that someone else has pains? Is it not quite easy to believe this? – Is it an answer to say that things are as they appear to common sense? – Again, needless to say, we don't feel these difficulties in ordinary life. Nor is it true to say that we feel them when we scrutinize our experiences by introspection, or make scientific investigations about them. But somehow, when we look at them in a certain way, our expression is liable to get into a tangle. It seems to us as though we had either the wrong pieces, or not enough of them, to put together our jig-saw puzzle. But they are all there, only all mixed up; and there is a further analogy between the jig-saw puzzle and our case: It's no use trying to apply force in fitting pieces together. All we should do is to look at them *carefully* and arrange them.¹⁵⁸

The problem in knowing other minds could have a ramification in the link-up between the *philosophy of language* and the *philosophy of mind*. It is

¹⁵⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations"* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), p. 46.

prerogative of the philosophy of language to decide in which way the rule is formulated in the language-game and approach for a criterion based meaning. We find this approach especially in Wittgenstein. If we monitor the argument given by Wittgenstein in the last paragraph, we could easily see that his approach with the problem of other minds is to demystify the issue at large. In other words, it is a participatory activity to learn about someone else's pain. I cannot imagine someone's pain on the model of my own, since this is not an easy job. I simply have to make a transition in imagination from one place of pain to another.¹⁵⁹ But if 'pain' is given a meaning entirely by an ostensive definition, then I would be the only participant witnessing the domain of 'objects' where it does not make any sense to talk of any other's pain. Hence, there would be no such distinction between "my pain" and "pain *simpliciter*" as both the expressions would have precisely the same meaning.¹⁶⁰ This situation invites a lot of the incommunicability factor between two persons as one is hardly aware of another person's pain, given that both are unable to communicate with each other about their experiences. Experiences become private in the sense that the mental events in the persons gain space. It therefore, urges for the meeting point between the persons who have the experiences to share between them.

¹⁵⁹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §302.

¹⁶⁰ Bruce Aune, "The Problem of Other Minds", p. 325.

The gulf between the experiences among different persons will broaden because of the unavailable resources of sharing the experiences. There must be an instrument which would provide the resources to share the experiences, and this instrument is no better than language. One can guess what the other person is thinking simply by asking a question, even though that person gives a wrong answer it is possible through a dialogue that his mental events could be located. Nonetheless it is not possible for a person to enter into the mind of another person, but that is not the case here. The language by which we communicate has the intersubjectivity which transfers my beliefs to another person. But when we claim that we are using a language that talks about my own immediate private experiences, it becomes obsolete for us to make any standardisation of the use of language. Wittgenstein wants us to pull out of the muddle as there is a collapse of reasons in believing in the mental pictures as our ultimate criteria and that they are sensations. We cannot posit private sensations as our criteria for the function of descriptive predicates to publicly recognisable phenomena because private sensations cannot serve as reasons at all, they fail to make any justification.¹⁶¹ Therefore, a private language cannot be taken as a successful venture to capture the mental events of others. Language, as a

¹⁶¹ Carl Wellman, "Wittgenstein's Conception of a Criterion", in Harold Morick, (ed.), *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds*, (USA: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 166.

publicly governed activity and driven by shared beliefs, can be the best possible instrumentation in reading the mind of others. Thus, the meeting point between *philosophy of language* and *philosophy of mind* help in creating a strong platform to solve the problem of other minds.

Many would say that the problem of other minds is a bogus one in the contemporary philosophical parlance. But we would not take the matter as lightly as this. Rather our aim is to come across the problem in the light of Wittgenstein's *private language argument*. Wittgenstein's search for a grammar of our sensations had to face the challenge from the other minds problem. Even if we do believe in the other minds, as it is quite normal, question arises about our comprehension of the knowledge of the other minds. Can we fully plumb the depth of the mental level of a person? If we cannot, is it a matter of failure in communication? The concept of 'criteria' plays an important role in this regard. The behavioural criterion like pain-behaviour replaces pain, but still the problem persists. Peter Strawson fittingly remarks:

"To see each other as persons" is a lot of things; but not a lot of separate and unconnected things.¹⁶²

¹⁶² P. F. Strawson, "Persons", in Harold Morick, (ed.), *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds* (USA: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 150.