

PRELIMINARY STUDIES FOR
THE "PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS"

Generally known as
**THE BLUE AND
BROWN BOOKS**

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"only I feel real pain", "only I really see (or hear)" is not stating an opinion; and that's why he is so sure of what he says. He is irresistibly tempted to use a certain form of expression; but we must yet find *why* he is.

The phrase "only I really see" is closely connected with the idea expressed in the assertion "we never know what the other man really sees when he looks at a thing" or this, "we can never know whether he calls the same thing 'blue' which we call 'blue' ". In fact we might argue: "I can never know what he sees or that he sees at all, for all I have is signs of various sorts which he gives me; therefore it is an unnecessary hypothesis altogether to say that he sees; what seeing is I only know from seeing myself; I have only learnt the word 'seeing' to mean what *I* do". Of course this is just not true, for I have definitely learned a different and much more complicated use of the word "to see" than I here profess. Let us make clear the tendency which guided me when I did so, by an example from a slightly different sphere: Consider this argument: "How can we wish that this paper were red if it isn't red? Doesn't this mean that I wish that which doesn't exist at all? Therefore my wish can only contain something *similar* to the paper's being red. Oughtn't we therefore to use a different word instead of 'red' when we talk of wishing that something were red? The imagery of the wish surely shows us something less definite, something hazier, than the reality of the paper being red. I should therefore say, instead of 'I wish this paper were red', something like 'I wish a pale red for this paper' ". But if in the usual way of speaking he had said, "I wish a pale red for this paper," we should, in order to fulfil his wish, have painted it a pale red—and this wasn't what he wished. On the other hand there is no objection to adopting the form of expression which he suggests as long as we know that he uses the phrase "I wish a pale x for this paper", always to mean what ordinarily we express by "I wish this paper had the colour x ". What he said really recommended his notation, in the sense in which a notation can be recommended. But he did not tell us a new truth and did not show us that what we said before was false. (All this connects our present problem with the problem of negation. I will only give you a hint, by saying that a notation would be possible in which, to put it roughly, a quality had always two names, one for the case when something is said to have it, the other for the case when something is said not to have it. The negation of "This paper is red" could then be, say, "This paper is not rode". Such a notation would actually fulfil some of the

wishes which are denied us by our ordinary language and which sometimes produce a cramp of philosophical puzzlement about the idea of negation.)

The difficulty which we express by saying "I can't know what he sees when he (truthfully) says that he sees a blue patch" arises from the idea that "knowing what he sees" means: "seeing that which he also sees"; not, however, in the sense in which we do so when we both have the same object before our eyes: but in the sense in which the object seen would be an object, say, in his head, or in *him*. The idea is that the same object may be before his eyes and mine, but that I can't stick my head into his (or my mind into his, which comes to the same) so that the *real* and *immediate* object of his vision becomes the real and immediate object of my vision too. By "I don't know what he sees" we really mean "I don't know what he looks at", where 'what he looks at' is hidden and he can't show it to me; it is *before his mind's eye*. Therefore, in order to get rid of this puzzle, examine the grammatical difference between the statements "I don't know what he sees" and "I don't know what he looks at", as they are actually used in our language.

Sometimes the most satisfying expression of our solipsism seems to be this: "When anything is seen (really *seen*), it is always I who see it".

What should strike us about this expression is the phrase "always I". Always *who*?—For, queer enough, I don't mean: "always L. W." This leads us to considering the criteria for the identity of a person. Under what circumstances do we say: "This is the same person whom I saw an hour ago"? Our actual use of the phrase "the same person" and of the name of a person is based on the fact that many characteristics which we use as the criteria for identity coincide in the vast majority of cases. I am as a rule recognized by the appearance of my body. My body changes its appearance only gradually and comparatively little, and likewise my voice, characteristic habits, etc. only change slowly and within a narrow range. We are inclined to use personal names in the way we do, only as a consequence of these facts. This can best be seen by imagining unreal cases which show us what different 'geometries' we would be inclined to use if facts were different. Imagine, e.g., that all human bodies which exist looked alike, that on the other hand, different sets of characteristics seemed, as it were, to change their habitation among these bodies. Such a set of characteristics might be, say, mildness, together with a high pitched voice, and slow movements, or a choleric temperament, a deep voice, and jerky movements, and such like. Under such circumstances, although

it would be possible to give the bodies names, we should perhaps be as little inclined to do so as we are to give names to the chairs of our dining-room set. On the other hand, it might be useful to give names to the sets of characteristics, and the use of these names would now *roughly* correspond to the personal names in our present language.

Or imagine that it were usual for human beings to have two characters, in this way: People's shape, size and characteristics of behaviour periodically undergo a complete change. It is the usual thing for a man to have two such states, and he lapses suddenly from one into the other. It is very likely that in such a society we should be inclined to christen every man with two names, and perhaps to talk of the pair of persons in his body. Now were Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde two persons or were they the same person who merely changed? We can say whichever we like. We are not forced to talk of a double personality.

There are many uses of the word "personality" which we may feel inclined to adopt, all more or less akin. The same applies when we define the identity of a person by means of his memories. Imagine a man whose memories on the even days of his life comprise the events of all these days, skipping entirely what happened on the odd days. On the other hand, he remembers on an odd day what happened on previous odd days, but his memory then skips the even days without a feeling of discontinuity. If we like we can also assume that he has alternating appearances and characteristics on odd and even days. Are we bound to say that here two persons are inhabiting the same body? That is, is it right to say that there are, and wrong to say that there aren't, or vice versa? Neither. For the *ordinary* use of the word "person" is what one might call a composite use suitable under the ordinary circumstances. If I assume, as I do, that these circumstances are changed, the application of the term "person" or "personality" has thereby changed; and if I wish to preserve this term and give it a use analogous to its former use, I am at liberty to choose between many uses, that is, between many different kinds of analogy. One might say in such a case that the term "personality" hasn't got one legitimate heir only. (This kind of consideration is of importance in the philosophy of mathematics. Consider the use of the words "proof", "formula", and others. Consider the question: "Why should what we do here be called 'philosophy'? Why should it be regarded as the only legitimate heir of the different activities which had this name in former times?")

Now let us ask ourselves what sort of identity of personality it is we are referring to when we say "when anything is seen, it is always I who see". What is it I want all these cases of seeing to have in common? As an answer I have to confess to myself that it is not my bodily appearance. I don't always see part of my body when I see. And it isn't essential that my body, if seen amongst the things I see, should always look the same. In fact I don't mind how much it changes. And I feel the same way about all the properties of my body, the characteristics of my behaviour, and even about my memories.—When I think about it a little longer I see that what I wished to say was: "Always when anything is seen, something is seen". I.e., that of which I said it continued during all the experiences of seeing was not any particular entity "I", but the experience of seeing itself. This may become clearer if we imagine the man who makes our solipsistic statement to point to his eyes while he says "I". (Perhaps because he wishes to be exact and wants to say expressly which eyes belong to the mouth which says "I" and to the hands pointing to his own body). But what is he pointing to? These particular eyes with the identity of physical objects? (To understand this sentence, you must remember that the grammar of words of which we say that they stand for physical objects is characterized by the way in which we use the phrase "the *same* so-and-so", or "the *identical* so-and-so", where "so-and-so" designates the physical object.) We said before that he did not wish to point to a particular physical object at all. The idea that he had made a significant statement arose from a confusion corresponding to the confusion between what we shall call "the geometrical eye" and "the physical eye". I will indicate the use of these terms: If a man tries to obey the order "Point to your eye", he may do many different things, and there are many different criteria which he will accept for having pointed to his eye. If these criteria, as they usually do, coincide, I may use them alternately and in different combinations to show me that I have touched my eye. If they don't coincide, I shall have to distinguish between different senses of the phrase "I touch my eye" or "I move my finger towards my eye". If, e.g., my eyes are shut, I can still have the characteristic kinaesthetic experience in my arm which I should call the kinaesthetic experience of raising my hand to my eye. That I had succeeded in doing so, I shall recognize by the peculiar tactile sensation of touching my eye. But if my eye were behind a glass plate fastened in such a way that it prevented me from exerting a pressure on my eye with my

finger, there would still be a criterion of muscular sensation which would make me say that now my finger was in front of my eye. As to visual criteria, there are two I can adopt. There is the ordinary experience of seeing my hand rise and come towards my eye, and this experience, of course, is different from seeing two things meet, say, two finger tips. On the other hand, I can use as a criterion for my finger moving towards my eye, what I see when I look into a mirror and see my finger nearing my eye. If that place on my body which, we say, 'sees' is to be determined by moving my finger towards my eye, according to the second criterion, then it is conceivable that I may see with what according to other criteria is the tip of my nose, or places on my forehead; or I might in this way point to a place lying outside my body. If I wish a person to point to his eye (or his eyes) according to the second criterion *alone*, I shall express my wish by saying: "Point to your geometrical eye (or eyes)". The grammar of the word "geometrical eye" stands in the same relation to the grammar of the word "physical eye" as the grammar of the expression "the visual sense datum of a tree" to the grammar of the expression "the physical tree". In either case it confuses everything to say "the one is a *different kind* of object from the other"; for those who say that a sense datum is a different kind of object from a physical object misunderstand the grammar of the word "kind", just as those who say that a number is a different kind of object from a numeral. They think they are making such a statement as "A railway train, a railway station, and a railway car are different kinds of objects", whereas their statement is analogous to "A railway train, a railway accident, and a railway law are different kinds of objects".

What tempted me to say "it is always I who see when anything is seen", I could also have yielded to by saying: "whenever anything is seen, it is *this* which is seen", accompanying the word "this" by a gesture embracing my visual field (but not meaning by "this" the particular objects which I happen to see at the moment). One might say, "I am pointing at the visual field as such, not at anything in it". And this only serves to bring out the senselessness of the former expression.

Let us then discard the "always" in our expression. Then I can still express my solipsism by saying, "Only what I see (or: see now) is really seen". And here I am tempted to say: "Although by the word 'I' I don't mean L. W., it will do if the others understand 'I' to mean L. W., if just now I am in fact L. W." I could also express my claim by

saying: "I am the vessel of life"; but mark, it is essential that everyone to whom I say this should be unable to understand me. It is essential that the other should not be able to understand 'what I really mean', though in practice he might do what I wish by conceding to me an exceptional position in his notation. But I wish it to be *logically* impossible that he should understand me, that is to say, it should be meaningless, not false, to say that he understands me. Thus my expression is one of the many which is used on various occasions by philosophers and supposed to convey something to the person who says it, though essentially incapable of conveying anything to anyone else. Now if for an expression to convey a meaning means to be accompanied by or to produce certain experiences, our expression may have all sorts of meanings, and I don't wish to say anything about them. But we are, as a matter of fact, misled into thinking that our expression has a meaning in the sense in which a non-metaphysical expression has; for we wrongly compare our case with one in which the other person can't understand what we say because he lacks a certain information. (This remark can only become clear if we understand the connection between grammar and sense and nonsense.)

The meaning of a phrase for us is characterized by the use we make of it. The meaning is not a mental accompaniment to the expression. Therefore the phrase "I think I mean something by it", or "I'm sure I mean something by it", which we so often hear in philosophical discussions to justify the use of an expression is for us no justification at all. We ask: "*What* do you mean?", i.e., "How do you use this expression?" If someone taught me the word "bench" and said that he sometimes or always put a stroke over it thus: "bēnch", and that this meant something to him, I should say: "I don't know what sort of idea you associate with this stroke, but it doesn't interest me unless you show me that there is a use for the stroke in the kind of calculus in which you wish to use the word 'bench' ".—I want to play chess, and a man gives the white king a paper crown, leaving the use of the piece unaltered, but telling me that the crown has a meaning to him in the game, which he can't express by rules. I say: "as long as it doesn't alter the use of the piece, it hasn't what I call a meaning".

One sometimes hears that such a phrase as "This is here", when while I say it I point to a part of my visual field, has a kind of primitive meaning to me, although it can't impart information to anybody else.

When I say "Only this is seen", I forget that a sentence may come ever so natural to us without having any use in our calculus of lan-

guage. Think of the law of identity, " $a = a$ ", and of how we sometimes try hard to get hold of its sense, to visualize it, by looking at an object and repeating to ourselves such a sentence as "This tree is the same thing as this tree". The gestures and images by which I apparently give this sentence sense are very similar to those which I use in the case of "Only *this* is really seen". (To get clear about philosophical problems, it is useful to become conscious of the apparently unimportant details of the particular situation in which we are inclined to make a certain metaphysical assertion. Thus we may be tempted to say "Only this is really seen" when we stare at unchanging surroundings, whereas we may not at all be tempted to say this when we look about us while walking.)

There is, as we have said, no objection to adopting a symbolism in which a certain person always or temporarily holds an exceptional place. And therefore, if I utter the sentence "Only I really see", it is conceivable that my fellow creatures thereupon will arrange their notation so as to fall in with me by saying "so-and-so is really seen" instead of "L. W. sees so-and-so", etc., etc. What, however, is wrong, is to think that I can *justify* this choice of notation. When I said, from my heart, that only I see, I was also inclined to say that by "I" I didn't really mean L. W., although for the benefit of my fellow men I might say "It is now L. W. who really sees" though this is not what I really mean. I could almost say that by "I" I mean something which just now inhabits L. W., something which the others can't see. (I meant my mind, but could only point to it via my body.) There is nothing wrong in suggesting that the others should give me an exceptional place in their notation; but the justification which I wish to give for it: that this body is now the seat of that which really lives—is senseless. For admittedly this is not to state anything which in the ordinary sense is a matter of experience. (And don't think that it is an experiential proposition which only I can know because only I am in the position to have the particular experience.) Now the idea that the real I lives in my body is connected with the peculiar grammar of the word "I", and the misunderstandings this grammar is liable to give rise to. There are two different cases in the use of the word "I" (or "my") which I might call "the use as object" and "the use as subject". Examples of the first kind of use are these: "My arm is broken", "I have grown six inches", "I have a bump on my forehead", "The wind blows my hair about". Examples of the second kind are: "I see so-and-so", "I hear so-and-so", "I try to lift my arm", "I think it will

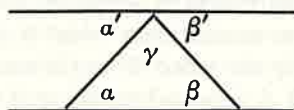
rain", "I have toothache". One can point to the difference between these two categories by saying: The cases of the first category involve the recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error, or as I should rather put it: The possibility of an error has been provided for. The possibility of failing to score has been provided for in a pin game. On the other hand, it is not one of the hazards of the game that the balls should fail to come up if I have put a penny in the slot. It is possible that, say in an accident, I should feel a pain in my arm, see a broken arm at my side, and think it is mine, when really it is my neighbour's. And I could, looking into a mirror, mistake a bump on his forehead for one on mine. On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I say I have toothache. To ask "are you sure that it's *you* who have pains?" would be nonsensical. Now, when in this case no error is possible, it is because the move which we might be inclined to think of as an error, a 'bad move', is no move of the game at all. (We distinguish in chess between good and bad moves, and we call it a mistake if we expose the queen to a bishop. But it is no mistake to promote a pawn to a king.) And now this way of stating our idea suggests itself: that it is as impossible that in making the statement "I have toothache" I should have mistaken another person for myself, as it is to moan with pain by mistake, having mistaken someone else for me. To say, "I have pain" is no more a statement *about* a particular person than moaning is. "But surely the word 'I' in the mouth of a man refers to the man who says it; it points to himself; and very often a man who says it actually points to himself with his finger". But it was quite superfluous to point to himself. He might just as well only have raised his hand. It would be wrong to say that when someone points to the sun with his hand, he is pointing both to the sun and himself because it is *he* who points; on the other hand, he may by pointing attract attention both to the sun and to himself.

The word "I" does not mean the same as "L. W." even if I am L. W., nor does it mean the same as the expression "the person who is now speaking". But that doesn't mean: that "L. W." and "I" mean different things. All it means is that these words are different instruments in our language.

Think of words as instruments characterized by their use, and then think of the use of a hammer, the use of a chisel, the use of a square, of a glue pot, and of the glue. (Also, all that we say here can be understood only if one understands that a great variety of games is played

with the sentences of our language: Giving and obeying orders; asking questions and answering them; describing an event; telling a fictitious story; telling a joke; describing an immediate experience; making conjectures about events in the physical world; making scientific hypotheses and theories; greeting someone, etc., etc.) The mouth which says "I" or the hand which is raised to indicate that it is I who wish to speak, or I who have toothache, does not thereby point to anything. If, on the other hand, I wish to indicate the *place* of my pain, I point. And here again remember the difference between pointing to the painful spot without being led by the eye and on the other hand pointing to a scar on my body after looking for it. ("That's where I was vaccinated".)—The man who cries out with pain, or says that he has pain, *doesn't choose the mouth which says it*.

All this comes to saying that the person of whom we say "he has pain" is, by the rules of the game, the person who cries, contorts his face, etc. The place of the pain—as we have said—may be in another person's body. If, in saying "I", I point to my own body, I model the use of the word "I" on that of the demonstrative "this person" or "he". (This way of making the two expressions similar is somewhat analogous to that which one sometimes adopts in mathematics, say in the proof that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is 180° .



We say " $\alpha = \alpha'$, $\beta = \beta'$, and $\gamma = \gamma$ ". The first two equalities are of an entirely different kind from the third.) In "I have pain", "I" is not a demonstrative pronoun.

Compare the two cases: 1. "How do you know that *he* has pains?"—"Because I hear him moan". 2. "How do you know that you have pains?"—"Because I *feel* them". But "I feel them" means the same as "I have them". Therefore this was no explanation at all. That, however, in my answer I am inclined to stress the word "feel" and not the word "I" indicates that by "I" I don't wish to pick out one person (from amongst different persons).

The difference between the propositions "I have pain" and "he has pain" is not that of "L. W. has pain" and "Smith has pain". Rather, it corresponds to the difference between moaning and saying that someone moans.—"But surely the word 'I' in 'I have pain' serves to dis-

tinguish me from other people, because it is by the sign 'I' that I distinguish saying that I have pain from saying that one of the others has". Imagine a language in which, instead of "I found nobody in the room", one said "I found Mr. Nobody in the room". Imagine the philosophical problems which would arise out of such a convention. Some philosophers brought up in this language would probably feel that they didn't like the similarity of the expressions "Mr. Nobody" and "Mr. Smith". When we feel that we wish to abolish the "I" in "I have pain", one may say that we tend to make the verbal expression of pain similar to the expression by moaning.—We are inclined to forget that it is the particular use of a word only which gives the word its meaning. Let us think of our old example for the use of words: Someone is sent to the grocer with a slip of paper with the words "five apples" written on it. The use of the word *in practice* is its meaning. Imagine it were the usual thing that the objects around us carried labels with words on them by means of which our speech referred to the objects. Some of these words would be proper names of the objects, others generic names (like table, chair, etc.), others again, names of colours, names of shapes, etc. That is to say, a label would only have a meaning to us in so far as we made a particular use of it. Now we could easily imagine ourselves to be impressed by merely seeing a label on a thing, and to forget that what makes these labels important is their use. In this way we sometimes believe that we have named something when we make the gesture of pointing and utter words like "This is . . ." (the formula of the ostensive definition). We say we call something "toothache", and think that the word has received a definite function in the dealings we carry out with language when, under certain circumstances, we have pointed to our cheek and said: "This is toothache". (Our idea is that when we point and the other "only knows what we are pointing to" he knows the use of the word. And here we have in mind the special case when 'what we point to' is, say, a person and "to know that I point to" means to see which of the persons present I point to.)

We feel then that in the cases in which "I" is used as subject, we don't use it because we recognize a particular person by his bodily characteristics; and this creates the illusion that we use this word to refer to something bodiless, which, however, has its seat in our body. In fact *this* seems to be the real ego, the one of which it was said, "Cogito, ergo sum".—"Is there then no mind, but only a body?" Answer: The word "mind" has meaning, i.e., it has a use in our

language; but saying this doesn't yet say what kind of use we make of it.

In fact one may say that what in these investigations we were concerned with was the grammar of those words which describe what are called "mental activities": seeing, hearing, feeling, etc. And this comes to the same as saying that we are concerned with the grammar of 'phrases describing sense data'.

Philosophers say it as a philosophical opinion or conviction that there are sense data. But to say that I believe that there are sense data comes to saying that I *believe* that an object may appear to be before our eyes even when it isn't. Now when one uses the word "sense datum", one should be clear about the peculiarity of its grammar. For the idea in introducing this expression was to model expressions referring to 'appearance' after expressions referring to 'reality'. It was said, e.g., that if two things *seem* to be equal, there *must* be two somethings which *are* equal. Which of course means nothing else but that we have decided to use such an expression as "the appearances of these two things are equal" synonymously with "these two things seem to be equal". Queerly enough, the introduction of this new phraseology has deluded people into thinking that they had discovered new entities, new elements of the structure of the world, as though to say "I believe that there are sense data" were similar to saying "I believe that matter consists of electrons". When we talk of the equality of appearances or sense data, we introduce a new usage of the word "equal". It is possible that the lengths A and B should appear to us to be equal, that B and C should appear to be equal, but that A and C do not appear to be equal. And in the new notation we shall have to say that though the appearance (sense datum) of A is equal to that of B and the appearance of B equal to that of C, the appearance of A is not equal to the appearance of C; which is all right if you don't mind using "equal" intransitively.

Now the danger we are in when we adopt the sense datum notation is to forget the difference between the grammar of a statement about sense data and the grammar of an outwardly similar statement about physical objects. (From this point one might go on talking about the misunderstandings which find their expression in such sentences as: "We can never see an accurate circle", "All our sense data are vague". Also, this leads to the comparison of the grammar of "position", "motion", and "size" in Euclidean and in visual space.

There is, e.g., absolute position, absolute motion and size, in visual space.)

Now we can make use of such an expression as "pointing to the appearance of a body" or "pointing to a visual sense datum". Roughly speaking, this sort of pointing comes to the same as sighting, say, along the barrel of a gun. Thus we may point and say: "This is the direction in which I see my image in the mirror". One can also use such an expression as "the appearance, or sense datum, of my finger points to the sense datum of the tree" and similar ones. From these cases of pointing, however, we must distinguish those of pointing in the direction a sound seems to come from, or of pointing to my forehead with closed eyes, etc.

Now when in the solipsistic way I say "*This is what's really seen*", I point before me and it is essential that I point *visually*. If I pointed sideways or behind me—as it were, to things which I don't see—the pointing would in this case be meaningless to me; it would not be pointing in the sense in which I wish to point. But this means that when I point before me saying "this is what's really seen", although I make the gesture of pointing, I don't point to one thing as opposed to another. This is as when travelling in a car and feeling in a hurry, I instinctively press against something in front of me as though I could push the car from inside.

When it makes sense to say "I see this", or "this is seen", pointing to what I see, it also makes *sense* to say "I see this", or "this is seen", pointing to something I *don't* see. When I made my solipsist statement, I pointed, but I robbed the pointing of its sense by inseparably connecting that which points and that to which it points. I constructed a clock with all its wheels, etc., and in the end fastened the dial to the pointer and made it go round with it. And in this way the solipsist's "Only this is really seen" reminds us of a tautology.

Of course one of the reasons why we are tempted to make our pseudo-statement is its similarity with the statement "I only see this", or "this is the region which I see", where I point to certain objects around me, as opposed to others, or in a certain direction in physical space (not in visual space), as opposed to other directions in physical space. And if, pointing in this sense, I say "this is what is really seen", one may answer me: "This is what *you*, L. W., see; but there is no objection to adopting a notation in which what we used to call 'things which L. W. sees' is called 'things really seen' ". If, however, I believe that by pointing to that which in my grammar has no