THE NOTION OF LOGICAL PRIVACY: HAS ITS INCOHERENCE BEEN DEMONSTRATED?

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I shall, I hope, not be thought fanciful if I confess to having sometimes found myself comparing Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* to *The Waste Land*. They were offered respectively, to the puzzlement of some contemporaries, as works of philosophy and of poetry; though each, at first glance, looked strangely unlike anything that had been called poetry or philosophy before. Each consists of a series of disconnected passages of varying length; whose unifying principle the reader is left to arrive at for himself; the author being unable or unwilling to be more explicit. All these might be merely formal peculiarities, but Eliot would doubtless have denied it; as Wittgenstein, in his preface, does expressly. They lay, he writes, in the nature of his undertaking. I shall not attempt, in either case, any assessment of the defence; though I confess I have some doubts of it, at least in Wittgenstein's. At all events I see no other course —conscious as I am of its dangers— but to try to set the work in some broader perspective; to ask where we ultimately find ourselves, taking our bearings, so to speak, from something like a Wittgensteinian position.[1]

I find one place in which Wittgenstein's successive 'remarks', more than elsewhere, seem to approach the character of consecutive argument. I mean where the discussion revolves around the possibility of a so-called private language; a possibility that apparently he denies. That is the usual reading, one might say almost, the orthodox reading; and

[1] I suspect, in fact, I am throughout treating Wittgenstein's argument in rather more of what one might call a Strawsonian or new-Kantian way than that in which it was conceived. But cf. p. 75 and p. 81 below.

although it has been challenged, one that I accept. It is a doctrine, if true, that is undeniably important; and whether or not the historical Wittgenstein held it, or consistently held it, is much less important —though for myself, I believe that he did.

I spoke of a broader perspective. I have in mind the problem of solipsism; one main persistent theme in Western philosophy from Descartes' time to our own. That provides a context or setting: one, I think, in which Wittgenstein's argument can helpfully be seen. We find a succession of philosophies that seem to condemn us eternally to an inner, mental world of our own, the world of our private experience; so that we can never hope to see beyond. The following lesson, then, is one I extract from Wittgenstein's text: the solipsist, merely to state his doctrine —even, if you like, to state it to himself— will at least need a language in which to do so. Now, we shall find, that must be a private language —in a sense I hope shortly to clarify. Such a language, however, proves impossible; or so Wittgenstein's argument seems designed to show. If so we must reject the solipsist's doctrine, though without attaching to it the label 'false', for it is worse; not even intelligibly expressible.

In his recent book on Kant, Mr. Bennett has criticized the existing argument; largely, I think, convincingly: and also —though here he seems to me less successful— offered another, or perhaps rather a reformulation, of his own. I mean, in this paper, to examine them both; but, I fear, the general upshot will be largely negative.

First, for the sort of privacy that we are concerned with: as Wittgenstein conceives it, a private language allows of reference to nothing but one's own experience. One might, of course, keep a private diary, and even keep it in a code of one's own; which, in one possible sense of the phrase, could be called a 'private language'. If you like, we may go further; we can lay it down that the pages of this chronicle shall contain references to nothing but one's

own private impressions. There still remain two points to be made about it; one, that the writer, on our suppositions so far, will first know some ordinary language, for instance, English. His code is a kind of translation; it presupposes that ordinary language. Secondly, that in ordinary language our talk of inner experience goes along with much talk of other things: it is, so to speak, an organ within a larger organism; not something self-sufficient and independent. It makes sense, and only makes sense, in that setting. As to the diary, someone else, finding it, might always succeed in breaking the code —an effort that may or may not prove rewarding. (Some stream-of-consciousness fiction makes one wonder whether a complete chronicle of inner goings-on would in fact be as exciting as it may sound.)

The solipsist's privacy is far more thorough-going. For him there is no world elsewhere. Even in a stronger sense that Milton's, his mind is its own place; it is self-sufficient. And, merely to express the fact, he will need a language to match; a language designed to speak of private things, without presupposing any necessary reference beyond them.

We find, as I shall shortly argue, a crucial ambiguity in these counterpart notions of publicity and privacy. But so far I am merely relying on *Philosophical Investigations* I § 243, which reads,

> The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; his immediate private sensations.

Now to turn to the argument, which is broadly this: a language, in its nature, obeys rules; and it is to those, in a difficulty, that we appeal. In default of that possible appeal, we have no way of distinguishing right and wrong (itself an arguable point, but one that it would probably be unprofitable to pursue here). Otherwise *per impossibile*, Wittgenstein argues, whatever I think will be right; which can mean only that the very notion is no longer applicable.

No one statement, in such a supposition, could contradict or conflict with another. But private rules, we soon learn, are impossible —that is, of course, 'private' in the sense I have sought to clarify. At one point Wittgenstein condenses the whole argument —one, of course, which might be developed at some length— into a rhetorical question of ten words, 'Are the rules of a private language *impressions* of rules?' (Significantly, in such passages he speaks interchangeably of 'impressions' (*Eindrücke*) and 'sensations' (*Empfindungen*)). We have to suppose a whole world coextensive with the world of my own impressions; and on this supposition, the argument goes, I could speak of nothing as simply right or simply wrong. My impression of one or the other will be the furthest that language can reach to; and if, a minute later, my impression changes, the second is as good as the first —which is to say that it is no good at all. More accurately, the terms 'good' and 'bad' cease to apply.

In real life, of course, much is private; it is not the common facts that are in dispute. Impressions or sensations occur; I feel them, and I can report on them. Moreover I report on them authoritatively; (I may, of course, be consciously lying, but that is another matter). The point is that I cannot be mistaken; which other people, at least in principle, always may. I cannot be wrong, nor right either; for each correlative term requires the other.

Our talk so far is of present impressions; and whether or not we ultimately accept it, here, surely, the doctrine is eminently plausible. But Wittgenstein's argument, we shall see, depends on his success in extending it; we have to consider the past. Bennett in the book I spoke of fastens on the concept of memory, which he makes crucial —as I believe rightly. And Wittgenstein correspondingly uses the example of a sensation which the man who experiences it calls 'S'. Later the same sensation recurs; such at least, to speak more cautiously, is his impression —specifically, a memory impression that his second sensation resembles the

first. He calls it 'the same' in a private language; but, we ask, is it the same really? —at least, it must be possible to ask. There must be procedures whereby we could decide. We should like, doubtless, *per impossible* to recall the earlier and vanished sensation, like a ghost from its grave, to set it beside its supposed duplicate. But the picture, for it is only a picture, points to nothing that could answer to it; all we have, or can ever have, is not the old sensation itself but only our present impression of it.

But once modify the story, only reintroduce public objects, things like rocks, trees and gasometers, and everything changes. Thorough-going empiricists from the eighteenth century to our own, from Berkeley to Russell and Ayer, will object that the present impression is all we can ever be certain of; which, allowing their rather perverse use of 'certain', may be true. But certainty is more than we need ask. One impression, being checked by another, can gain weight, without rising to certainty. True, too, the process of checking, in practice, must end at somewhere, here or elsewhere; and if we decide to end it here, we might always have chosen to carry it further. There is, however, all the difference in the world between a process that in fact must end somewhere, even end partly arbitrarily, and one, in effect, that can never start.

Here we have our strand, the principal strand, I believe, in Wittgenstein's discussion of privacy; but other of his sayings seems to point elsewhere. I spoke of public things, like rocks and trees; but in other passages his views seem to go far further. The trouble, when we turn to these stronger claims, is to find anything by way of arguments to support them. But what we seem to meet is the following: he now envisages an actual community, and its existing and common linguistic practices are what yours and mine are to be checked against. It is a reading on which some commentators lean heavily; but in the actual argument we have looked at, as equally in the general characterization of a private language that I quoted, what he speaks of are

'private sensations' and 'sensation S'. The natural contrast to those, of course, is the perception of public things; more to the point, it is all the actual argument possibly entitles him to. Such language, we can certainly grant, if not actually, is potentially common; it refers, *ex hypothesi,* to what other people can refer to, too. And if I alone speak and understand it, an invisible observer in a flying saucer or watching me from a distance with a telescope, might observe regularities in my behaviour; he might, at least in principle, catch on to what was happening and so learn it. But there remains a great gap, which some writers would seem to overlook, between the potential and the actual. If the stronger position is to be maintained, far more detailed argument seems called for.

Bennett, in the criticism I spoke of, finds fault even with the weaker. He appeals to certain arguments of Professor Ayer's; which, he thinks, justice has not been done to. To me it seems rather that Bennett —doubtless with commendable self-abnegation — is crediting Ayer with certain powerful arguments that are really his own. But once again, the authorship of the thesis matters less than its truth or falsity.

In general our picture is this: we appeal to one impression to check another. But here, Wittgenstein tells us, the appeal is a useless one. The one has no different status from the other; so we might as well buy a second copy of the morning paper to verify —let us say— a statement that Sir Alec Douglas Home had joined the Labour Party that we found in the first. Such, broadly, is Wittgenstein's thesis: Bennett's argument against it takes the form of a dilemma. The problem was how to distinguish between memory proper and mere memory impressions. Now first, if memory as such is in question, if the very faculty is hypothetically suspect, then the appeal beyond it to perception serves no purpose. For perception itself presupposes the faculty of memory; one perception can only serve to check another in virtue of memory. I find a thing, for instance,

where I remember leaving it; the memory supports the perception and the perception the memory. But without memory I could make no distinction between perceptual impressions that are mere impressions, and impressions of something other than themselves. Alternatively, if it is not memory as such, not the very faculty, that is, so to speak, in the dock, where are we left? One impression can always support another; a sense impression a memory impression or conversely. And there are two further possibilities: that either a sense impression or a memory impression should be invoked to support another the same in kind. Granting, what we are now granting —pursuing the second alternative— the authority of the faculty itself, it is not clear why the appeal from a first memory impression to a second should be crucially weaker than the others.

Here I shall interpolate two comments, one on each wing of the argument. Bennett speaks of memory 'as such'; a small terminological change, it would seem, might remove the difficulty. For he not only allows but insists that perception as a whole requires memory; it is true but, it may be argued, from a Wittgensteinian position harmless. For surely the converse can hold, too. Memory as a whole can require perception; and if so, the case for publicity will have been made out. The possibility seems to me eminently to deserve consideration; only unless I have misread him, it is one that the actual detail of Wittgenstein's text seems neither to contemplate nor, far less, to make good.

As to the second horn of Bennett's dilemma; the point, it may be felt, needs more looking into. We may be asked how one impression can support another, by hypothesis a memory impression, when before the second appears, the first must have vanished beyond recall. I answer as follows: at time t_1 I remember, or seem to, the occurrence of S at time t. The same happens again at t_2: but at t_2 what I have are two separate, though simultaneous, impressions: the one a direct memory —or memory impression— of S at t; the other, the impression of the impression that I

subsequently had at t_1. Now, at least in some degree, the one supports the other; minimally, it suffices to make sense of our speaking of them as agreeing or conflicting. But that, for our purposes, is enough. Were this language in reality no language, were the very possibility of such a language illusory, this talk, of course, would be impossible, too.

Here I am tempted to add a further argument of my own. I suspect, however, that something must be wrong with it; for it is an argument so simple and obvious that, were it valid, it would surely have been brought into play long ago. We are to suppose that a first impression is supported by a second, both by a third, and so on. Then each alone, independently, it would seem, must have a certain intrinsic force; a thousand times zero is still zero. One impression can do nothing to support another, can give us no further reason for accepting it, without some reason, however weak, for accepting each one by itself. And in fact we may add, we do only seek confirmation for impressions we are already inclined to accept. True, the isolated force of a single impression might be weak in the extreme; but logically that differs entirely from saying that it has none at all.

The point is linked with another noticed earlier. Wittgenstein, like the philosophers he is implicity criticizing, Berkeley, Hume, Russell, and others, makes no difference between sensations and impressions; between something that I merely feel, for instance a twinge of mental pain, and my visual impression of the landscape, say the valley that I glance up at from the window. An impression, by its very nature —as Wittgenstein would say, by its grammar— is of something other than itself. The pain itself and my feeling of it are one and the same; but, of course, the valley itself remains untouched if I turn away, shut my eyes or lose consciousness. The impression, but only the impression, will therewith wholly cease to exist. But perhaps Wittgenstein's object is rather to use the traditional language precisely to discredit it; to demonstrate —so to

speak, internally— how it breaks down. Indeed, the solipsist ought never to talk of impressions; for along with the concept of impression comes the concept of what it is *of* — of something existing independently. With that, in turn, come criteria for its application; which either you use and apply, and therefore accept the consequences whenever in fact they belong, where the conditions for their application are visibly satisfied; or else you are less a solipsist or sceptic, than a sort of non-participant —one who refuses to apply a concept he nonetheless possesses, in such circumstance as would alone make it applicable. As to ordinary perceptual beliefs, then you are in no position either to doubt or accept them; you have simply withdrawn from further discourse. And silence is always unanswerable.

But suppose Wittgenstein had merely spoken of sensations from the start —had not even allowed 'the impression of a rule'— he might have won what would have seemed all too easy a victory.

All the same I suspect some linguistic trickery. *Prima facie* there are three things to distinguish: sensations proper, where no question of truth arises; mere impressions and, thirdly, veridical impressions. Austin argues against equating simple inner experience with impressions; with what one would naturally express with the words, 'how things seem to me'. This latter appears more in the nature of a tentative judgment that a mere report on a sense-experience.

The correlative notions of privacy and publicity, I said, allow of a stronger and a weaker interpretation. The latter requires only reference to public things such as shoes, string or sealing wax; the former an already actual community with its linguistic practices, those in fact established. Bennett, I think, dismisses the latter far too summarily. He appeals to what he calls 'the cold maxim' that 'what people say is just a special case of what objects do'. Sounds issue from a physical object; or so the sceptic describes the situation when, say, Mr. Harold Wilson is defending the

government's record. From his view, it is all we are entitled to; to talk from the start, on these terms, of people's use of a language would be merely to beg the question.

But, in truth, the question-begging is precisely the other way round. The argument, as it stands, is quite fallacious. You might take a similar short way with the whole argument; an argument, we shall see, though in a very different form, that Bennett himself accepts. The weaker position, let us recall, was that in the very concept of a language, that is, of course, in any coherent conception, we need talk of public, enduring objects, as something over and above our impression of them. Bennett might as well invoke the phenomenalist's maxim that talk of those objects 'just is a special case of talk of our own impressions'. But that would not be to refute the argument but to refuse to listen to it. For the argument is precisely this: that the phenomenalist's apparently intelligible account of this world of impressions and nothing else, once looked deeper into it, proves incoherent. So may the other, then; the world in which other people are seen —seen at least *prima facie*— as merely a special sort of physical object.

There remain, however, the consideration already cited. Wittgenstein's characterization of a private language in *Philosophical Investigations* § 243, and his whole argument concerning sensation S, seem to bring in no overt reference to other people; and, as I said, the natural thing to oppose to 'private sensations' is no more than the perceptions of objects in space. True, there are other passages that do; but then, it seems to me, we look in vain for argument to back them. The arguments show, if they show anything, the impossibility of the solipsist's world, a world wholly made up of impressions: that reliance on memory presupposes reliance on perception, but not any actual community of languages-users; nor further —despite the famous dictum— that inner process necessarily bring with them, even normally bring with them, anything by way of actual outer expression.

Indeed, other considerations are appealed to: for instance, the practical impossibility of thinking in real situations, as philosophers in their studies profess to think; of divorcing our view of other people's visible behaviour from the feelings and attitudes that it obviously expresses, say, agony or joy. At most we achieve this: we see them as stoically repressing or brilliantly play-acting the one or the other.[2] That account must belong, I suppose, to what Wittgenstein refers to as an *attitude* —in his usage almost a technical term— to some basic form of human orientation. We have reached rock-botton where our spade is turned. The giving of reasons, as he says elsewhere, must come to an end. But what others may feel comes to an end is the thinker's willingness to go on philosophizing. We seem to lack any clear marks whereby to know or recognize these ultimate logical stopping-places; or to distinguish them from others, where one might stop merely arbitrarily. And besides, once rest your case on all this —to use Wittgenstein's own phrases from other works— 'persuasion' or 'propaganda', the rest becomes superfluous; the tighter discussion, straight argument about sensation S (which may impress non-Wittgensteinians more), is left idle and unnecessary. But the role of such 'attitudes', as well as its particular application in the present context, raise problems too large and far-reaching to pursue here.

Bennett, for the reasons we have seen, dissatisfied with Wittgenstein's argument, offers an alternative of his own. The primary project remains closely similar: we start with the bogey of solipsism, confine ourselves in our own inner world, a world of impressions and nothing else. We go on, having first accepted the picture uncritically, to question its real inner coherence. On such terms, Bennett argues, the whole notion of memory breaks down; the concept itself becomes inapplicable. I have present impressions of past events; then I add nothing by calling them past —or even by calling them 'impressions'. 'Sensations' would do just as

[2] Cf. e.g. *Philosophical Investigations* I, § 391 ff.

well. For take these two statements; the one about would-be past events, the other about present impressions. Their practical use proves identical. '[My] "past" states', Bennett writes, 'collapse into present "recollections" of them, because no work is done by the distinction between the two. And so, on [this] scheme of things, the past collapses into the present'.[3] The upshot then is this: that on such a hypothesis, we could jettison as idle that whole class of linguistic uses, tensed verbs, expressions like 'past', 'recollection' and so on.

This argument recalls a persistent strand in Bennett's thought; indeed it is his professed aim 'to phenomenalize the story as much as possible'.[4] But he still lets himself talk, if only for the purposes of a *reductio ad absurdum*, of impressions; and impressions, we saw, in their nature are of something other than themselves. But let us recapitulate: take any proposition, call it *p*. Bennett writes of propositions about the past; but mathematical ones or any others for that matter, would have done just as well. We distinguish two possible statements concerning it: (i) simply that *p* is true; (ii) that at least to appropriate observers —and, for the mathematical case add, thinkers— *p* always will seem true. (The term 'appropriate' might give rise to difficulties; but those I pass over.) They seem different; but for Bennett the supposed difference proves illusory. The first merely collapses into the second. Statements about the past, on this view, might as well be about present impressions of it; 'the past', the very concept, is left empty.

The argument is certainly plausible; but something, one feels, has got left out. We have past and present; but can one ever properly discuss them, one wonders, without bringing in the third term of the relevant trio? I mean, of course, the *future*.

All talk of the past, I shall argue, implicity involves the notion of the future; and all talk of the future, conversely,

[3] J. Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, p. 209.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 208.

involves that of the past. Lastly talk of the present involves both. All this is for more than the obvious reason, that future events will in due course be present events, and after that, past ones. But take an impression of any sort, of a past event, a mathematical truth, or what you will. It commits me so far as I accept it —and inclines me in its very nature as an impression— to predictions about future impressions; which must normally agree with it when they occur at all. Of course the point may always be one which in fact I never think of again; or, if I do, special factors may operate to change my impression of it. But subject to those qualifications, truths must at least go on seeming true —to me, and for that matter to other people.

To establish his point, Bennett must show, not only that would-be statements about the past collapse into statements about the present, but that of statements about the future, the same holds. It is here his phenomenalism runs aground. For once grant the phenomenalist his premisses, and not only in a would-be private language but in any language, the conclusion holds; the same holds for the future as for the past. And a prediction of future good or evil collapses into our present expectation of it. Unless —what at least will require a new argument— Bennett can eliminate expectations of the future, he cannot eliminate impressions of the past. For my present impression, as it were, looks forward to others; which may always confirm or conflict with it. And that confirmation or conflict makes it possible to call it, at least probably, rigth or wrong. Alternatively, you may disallow the future, and confine us to the momentary present. But to argue, on those terms, that we lack any adequate procedure for distinguishing perceptions from impressions would seem all too easy; indeed, trivially easy.

Once you allow the future at all, the phenomenalist meets other, more familiar difficulties. We are to talk of a series of impressions —a series that can be extended indefinitely. For it is never what Bradley calls a completed

totality. Suppose *p* is true, then, and that we say so; there is no actual set of impressions, nor possible statement about them, into which the first statement dissolves. They only approach it asymptotically. The phenomenalist cannot speak of how things actually seem; but only *per impossibile* how they would seem at point of infinity; which distinguishes sensations from impressions. The latter, we said, always point beyond themselves; and will do so, however far you extend them.

Further, what seems to me to clinch the argument, even to contemplate that possibility, even to speak of two impressions as agreeing or conflicting, then, as we have seen, you need more; something different in its nature from an impression. Impressions in one aspect are certainly experiences; two experiences, merely *qua* experiences, never conflict. One may be of one sort, one of another; a shoot of pleasure succeeds a twinge of mental pain. But, to repeat, it merely succeeds, it does not conflict with it. For sensations, unlike impressions, are not of anything other than themselves. Where one such item conflicts with another, it follows that it is an impression, not a mere sensation; and perhaps, if so, a memory impression. The possibility is no longer one to be ruled out *a priori*.

I conclude, then, as far as Bennett's argument goes, we may still have impressions of the past, even without the aid of perception; we are no nearer to demonstrating the impossibility of a private language.

What, then, is the upshot? I said that it would be largely negative. But the failure of the 'private language' argument would not itself force us back into solipsism or phenomenalism. The latter is anyway open to many and well-known objections; indeed, one may doubt whether any ultimately coherent version of it has yet been formulated. Our knowledge of other minds forms a further, large problem; but anyway, if what I have said is right, it is only by confusion that the 'private language' argument could be thought to get us beyond material things to other people.

I would add, however, that we left open as unproven, but unrefuted, the possibility that just as perception in general presupposes memory, memory, conversely, may presuppose perception; it is a possibility that would seem worth exploring. We certainly cannot rule it out *a priori;* though I confess that I cannot see in detail that Wittgenstein's argument establishes it. Nor, so far, have I succeeded in finding any other to take its place.[5]

[5] Bennett's argument is offered in the course of his chapter on Kant's Refutation of Idealism, even as a reformulation of it. It is a field in which I can claim no special competence to speak; I, however, would have interpreted Kant very differently. His thesis seems to rest at bottom on some form of the polar principle, that the notion of *change* involves that of *permanence.* Further, we could never recognize change in experience without something permanent to contrast it with. But for Kant not even the substantiality of ordinary objects seems to suffice; he prefers to lay down, theoretically speaking, something absolutely permanent underlying it. As far as the argument goes I cannot see that some relatively permanent background of sensation —to be contrasted with fleeting impressions, say, of sights and sounds— would not have been enough.

RESUMEN

El concepto de lenguaje privado. Hemos de imaginar un lenguaje tal que sólo permite referirse a cosas de las que únicamente yo puedo tener conocimiento directo: mis propias sensaciones e impresiones internas. Todas éstas, aun en el lenguaje ordinario, son "privadas"; sólo yo las "tengo", sólo yo puedo informar acerca de ellas con suficiente autoridad. Pero éste es, más bien, un sublenguaje dentro de una totalidad; presupone el organismo más amplio del que forma parte. Vamos a examinar la posibilidad de privacidad en el lenguaje, en un aspecto más amplio.

El argumento de Wittgenstein. Cualquier lenguaje, *en cuanto* lenguaje, obedece reglas y debe, asimismo, ser capaz de desobedecerlas. Sólo podemos decir que algo es correcto en la medida en que hubiéramos podido decir también que era incorrecto. En un "lenguaje privado" (como el que antes caracterizamos) no se aplica ninguna de las dos nociones; por ende, no se trata de un lenguaje. El solipsismo, por lo tanto, no debe llamarse falso; no es ni siquiera inteligiblemente expresable. En efecto, en un lenguaje que fuese privado, sólo puedo recurrir, por definición, a mi impresión presente. Podría decir que se asemeja a otra anterior; pero, una vez más, sólo puedo recurrir a mi impresión presente de esa semejanza, y no puede haber otra posibilidad de comprobación. *Per impossibile,* cualquier cosa que diga será verdadera; lo que significa que los conceptos "verdadero" y "falso" carecen de aplición.

La crítica de Jonathan Bennett. Hemos puesto en cuestión o bien la memoria, la facultad misma, o bien impresiones mnémicas particulares. En el primer caso, el recurso a la percepción no puede prestarnos ayuda; pues la misma percepción depende de la memoria. Las impresiones perceptuales presentes sólo pueden comprobarse con mi memoria de otras impresiones pasadas. En el segundo caso, no parece haber ninguna razón para que impresiones mnémicas particulares no pudieran comprobarse una con otra, y la una sirviera para sostener la otra, justo como impresiones de otras clases sirven para sostenerse unas a otras.

Desarrollo de la crítica de Bennett. Una objeción posible sería que, antes de que ocurra una segunda impresión, la primera habrá desaparecido sin posibilidad de retorno. Pero puedo tener dos impresiones presentes tales que cada una sirva para sostener la otra. Una sería una impresión mnémica presente, que consistiría en una memoria directa de algún acontecimiento pasado; la otra

sería una impresión mnémica de un acontecimiento subsecuente, también pasado, que consistiría en una memoria directa de la anterior. Cada una sostendría a la otra.

Dos interpretaciones del argumento de Wittgenstein. Se condena por imposible un lenguaje privado, en contraste con uno público. Pero este último podría significar solamente, en un sentido "débil", un lenguaje que permitiría tanto percepciones como otras impresiones, esto es, referencias a cosas públicas. Y un lenguaje semejante sería por principio cognoscible, aunque no necesariamente conocido, por otras personas. Una pretensión más "fuerte" (a la que Wittgenstein se muestra a menudo favorable) sería la de una comunidad existente de usos de lenguaje; con la práctica de esos usos comunes debería comprobarse cualquier uso de lenguaje dado. Bennett responde que "Lo que dicen las otras personas es sólo un caso especial de lo que hacen ciertos objetos." Esta respuesta comete una petición de principio. Toda la cuestión estriba en que un lenguaje que fuese privado se rechaza por inconsistente; y la forma de argumentación será la misma si la privacidad del lenguaje se interpreta en el sentido "fuerte" o en el sentido "débil". Con todo, el argumento antes esbozado sólo parece prestar apoyo, de hecho, a la interpretación "débil". La otra podría sostenerse con un recurso básico a "actitudes" (en el sentido de Wittgenstein) o reduciéndonos al extremo en que las justificaciones se terminan. Empero, en la medida en que el rechazo de la posibilidad de un lenguaje privado haya de sostenerse en el tipo de argumentación que encontramos en las *Investigaciones Filosóficas*, §§ 258 y ss., parece que sólo puede mantenerse la posición "débil".

El argumento alternativo de Bennett. Supongamos que nos restringimos a nuestro propio mundo interior, entonces no podemos tener ninguna distinción operante entre memorias propiamente dichas y meras impresiones mnémicas. La misma noción de memoria, y con ella la noción de pasado, cae por vacía. Las cosas psíquicas duran en el tiempo, pero para tan siquiera hablar de "impresiones mnémicas", como opuestas a sensaciones presentes con un carácter distintivo, necesitamos más de lo que puede suministrarnos la mera experiencia interna.

Respuesta al argumento de Bennett. Tenemos que reducirnos a un momento singular de tiempo, o, de lo contrario, hemos de tener al menos —si no memorias del pasado— expectativas del futuro; (aunque éstas podrían también reducirse a experiencias presentes, de acuerdo con la misma forma de análisis). Una impresión mnémica presente lleva consigo al menos la presunción de que una impresión futura, en el caso de que los pensamientos vuelvan al mismo acontecimiento pasado, resultará acorde con ella. Pero estas

impresiones sólo pueden mostrarse acordes o desacordes, confirmarse o entrar en conflicto una con otra, en la medida en que sean impresiones de algo diferente que ellas mismas, en este caso de un acontecimiento pasado. Meras experiencias o sensaciones, *en cuanto* experiencias, pueden ser semejantes o diferentes, pero no pueden confirmarse o entrar en conflicto una con otra.

Colofón. El resultado es en gran medida negativo. Parece no haberse justificado todavía la imposibilidad de la privacidad de un lenguaje. Queda sin demostrar, pero sin refutar tampoco, la posibilidad de que, así como la misma facultad de percepción requiere de la memoria para poder operar —según lo ha mostrado Bennett—, así también la facultad de la memoria requiera de la percepción.