

PRIVATE NAMES

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In the present paper I intend to examine the central contention of those who hold that mental or psychological language is, primarily at least, a Private Language. I find that the thesis of private meanings or senses pictured on the thesis of logical proper names makes unintelligible the idea of language. But if the private senses are not thus pictured the philosophical privacy of the language breaks down.

In the first part of this paper I shall make some general remarks on proper names and common names; in the second, I shall argue that no name could be made intelligible under philosophical privacy. In the third part the main argument is presented. I shall end—in the fourth part—with some general conclusions.

I. PICTURE OF NAMING

Names are words used for naming; naming could be of two types, namely:

- a) Using the same type¹ to identify the same item. Thus one can use 'Henry Green' to identify the same (numerical) man in different places at different times. This use is the proper name use.
- b) Using the same type to identify the same kind of item. Thus one can apply 'red' to different things at different places and times. This is the common or kind name use.

¹ I shall not complicate matters with the case of tokens and will talk of types only. Types are what I need for my present purposes.

Thus 'Henry Green' is not to be applied as a proper name to more than one individual; if it is applied to more than one it will be wrongly used. 'Red' when used as common name can be applied to any red patch of color irrespective of its individuality and it will be wrongly applied to anything of any other color. Proper names are then more closely tied to the items they name than common names; but how closely tied are they?

To emphasize the connexion between a proper name and its referent it has been said that the meaning of a proper name is its reference, so that it would be impossible for 'Henry Green' to be used as a proper name without Henry Green occurring. In other words: nothing would make 'Henry Green' intelligible apart from the actual occurrence of Henry Green. In the case of proper names what makes the use of the name intelligible is what makes it right and so 'wrong use of a proper name' is an unintelligible expression. The above view of proper names has been called the 'logical proper name' view. According to the extreme requirement expressed above each occasion of the use of 'Henry Green' as a proper name has to be an occasion of the occurrence of one and the same embodied mind which is Henry Green and nothing over and above the actual occurrence of that can do. The occurrence of him can do. The occurrence of any other item apart from Henry Green will produce necessarily another proper name.

Thus suppose that someone utters 'Henry Green' and only an arm of Henry Green occurs: that won't do; the same result will bring the occurrence of Henry Green's body with another mind when 'Henry Green' is uttered.

To say that the proper name and the thing named are "connected" can prove to be too mild a characterization of the actual relationship involved for if 'Henry Green' conveys nothing intelligible apart from the actual occurrence of Henry Green it seems that there is no way of talking of a "connexion", out of the necessary and sufficient condition for 'Henry Green' to be intelligible as such. Even to say that 'Henry Green' is a label won't represent what the logical proper name view is

saying for labels can be removed from one thing to other and this is impossible under the view discussed.²

Without claiming to have shown the incoherence of that account of proper names and claiming only to have thrown a measure of discredit on it, I want now to consider a central feature of proper names. The central feature on which I want to concentrate comes out clearly from the account of proper names presented above. According to that account there is no “distance” between the name and its bearer, no degree of separation or independence is allowed; that is the central contention of that account and that is what is mistaken in it. A necessary degree of independence or distance (logical space?) must be allowed in between a name and its referent, if the type or token is to function as a proper name, or –what comes to be the same– if the name is to have any utility or point. Thus, coming back to our example, while ‘Henry Green’ has to be closely connected with the man Henry Green the connection should be kept open enough to allow for the following things:

- I) ‘Henry Green’ must be able to pick up the man Henry Green at disconnected time intervals and not continuously; it must pick up that particular man at different times e.g., when he is a child, when he is an adolescent at school, later when he is a writer, and so on.
- II) ‘Henry Green’ must be possibly used to identify the individual Henry Green even in the absence of Henry Green. Thus it must be possible to use ‘Henry Green’ as a proper name even when Henry Green does not occur at the time when the name is used. Thus there must be something else that allows these uses *in absentia* (though this addition need not be a single thing or element).

² The outcome of a specific argument would drive the objection home, showing that it is actually worse than that, for according to the logical proper name view, the name is absorbed by (or fussed with) the referent and thus in fact disappears. The only item left is the referent, with no language level remaining at all. See more on this below.

III) There must be the possibility of a right and a wrong application of 'Henry Green'. It will be rightly applied when it actually picks out Henry Green, and wrongly applied when it picks out someone else or something else. Both applications are intelligible but one is a correct application whereas the other is mistaken. (I leave aside the case of empty names.)

These three features go against the idea that a proper name has to be used only in actual conjunction with the named thing; thus these three features indicate that if the name is to have any usefulness at all as a linguistic unit, a degree of independence should be allowed to exist in between name and referent. But then if a degree of independence is allowed, missapplication of many sorts will be possible on the one hand; and, on the other, 'something' will make it possible that at different places and times a name can be matched to an individual; that in the absence of the individual the name can convey its identity and in general that the name can correctly pick up the individual of whom it is a name any time the name is used. That 'something', it will be agreed, cannot be the token or type itself neither could it be the thing to be named, for it is the 'something' which determines which thing is the one to be picked out.

Then the something should be of a conceptual nature in a double sense of 'conceptual': it should be a capacity to identify and reidentify the named individual and it should be rule-like for it has to pick up constantly through time the same particular. For even if it happened that in uttering 'Henry Green' the person Henry Green occurred at random every time of its utterance (imagine a speaking machine) one would refuse to talk of naming: a more intimate connexion is required than that of regular coexistence between a proper name and its reference. Also it would be odd to call a given type a name when it was uttered before a given thing by one person only once and never before nor later used as a proper name.

I am aware of recent criticism to the Description Theory

of Names. I am not thinking in a description appended to a name which will guide its employment. I think rather in a sortal or species concept as Locke and Leibniz require, that is, a linguistic item that serves the function of identifying individuals and tracing their development. The sortal or species concept might not correspond to the nature of the individual picked out through it but nevertheless it would have the function of picking it out. I want to minimize the theoretical lead of these sortals or species concepts and would like to conceive them more like an ability or capacity to accomplish the individualizing-distinguishing function. Thus not that a definite description shows the way to pick up an individual but rather that a general capacity is involved in picking up individuals. But again, there might be such capacity or not; the minimum point I want to assure is that there is the independence between thing and name and somehow that has to be filled up in order to make possible the filling. If the filling is made through a concept, a capacity or any other thing is something extra to the realization of the fact of independence.

Whatever specific theory can account for the above facts, however, the only thing I need to state is that in between the proper name and the thing named there should be a distance or independence and that distance has to be covered somehow.

If the above contentions about independence between name and named thing are true, then one will worry what is the point of calling these types pictured on the logical proper name view "names" or to think that these could be linguistic parts or work as linguistic parts. One is astonished that these 'names' could be promoted to paradigmatic status, and thus when not found in actual languages could throw skepticism on ordinary names as names which are intrinsically defective or degenerate because they fail to come up to that paradigm. Thus even if that paradigm of naming could be achieved, the uselessness and pointlessness of such names would disqualify them. But I want to say more than that: I want to say that the useless and pointless character of these 'names' is what precludes their being names.

Common names are also impossible to fit under the picture expressed by the slogan 'the meaning of a name is its reference' for here again one finds that a major degree of independence should be allowed in between, say, 'red' and a red patch. For whereas the reference of 'red' is confined to a particular red patch on a given use, its 'meaning' extends over an indefinite number of red patches. The main function of common names is to cover a maximum number of things with a minimum number of names. In order to do this, these names don't have to match with what is singular in the individual but what makes them similar or makes them members of a class. But then, in order to do this they require a far looser relationship with any referent than the one a proper name bears to its referent. 'Red' in order to apply correctly does not need to apply to a single individual red patch through time but to any patch of red color. Understanding 'red' will be shown by making kind-identification, and communicating what 'red' means will consist in enabling the other person to identify red patches. In the case of common names, then, because the distance between name and kind is greater, the conceptual 'something' will allow a greater play, for now the capacity has to be exercised on a larger number of 'things' and can be satisfied by any of them; also, the regularity of application pertains not only to one singular thing but to any of a certain kind.

Thus the consideration of both proper and common names brings out a central feature that makes their use in language possible: namely, the distance or independence that must exist in between name and what is named; and correspondingly, a conceptual element which makes it possible to match a name with what it names and so makes naming possible. Naming is generally reckoned as the paradigmatic way of referring and thus of linking language and reality (but even if the referring function is translated to other parts of language that won't make any difference to what I shall argue later). In any referential discourse then, naming will prove to be decisive for it will be in the achievement of the referring function that the success of that language rests, and the

achievement of reference rests on the names. My next concern is that of inquiring if it is possible to exercise the naming function in a language that is philosophically private. Only if sense can be made of private naming can one begin to make sense of a philosophically private language. But in order to decide that, we must first examine the notion of privacy itself.

II. PICTURE OF PRIVACY

According to the Cartesian³ the essential fact about Persons or Human Beings is that they are minds, that is, that they are conscious beings who are aware of or acquainted with things, who experience things. Consequently, they have immediate knowledge which engenders certainty. The paradigm of knowledge —for some ‘the principle of all knowledge’— is the knowledge each one has of his own mental states and acts.⁴ That premise is the source of the problem of other minds. But it is also the source of the idea that a private language is possible, for unless one is to divorce knowledge from understanding one has to accept that the paradigm of understanding is the understanding one has of one’s own sayings. Thus the picture that emerges from that paradigm is one according to which Cartesio⁵ says “Only I understand what ‘S’ means”.

Accordingly, let us try to build a picture of communication or a semantic model that can satisfy the Cartesian assumptions in a more or less plausible way.

Picture of Communication: According to the Cartesian communication is to be analyzable into two elements, namely,

³ I am conceiving of a philosophical view that holds a certain view on belief, knowledge, thinking, etcetera, characterized as grasping something immediately and thus with certainty. This view is instantiated in philosophers as diverse as Plato, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Russell, Husserl, etcetera. Obviously not all of them hold the view always.

⁴ Cfr. My paper “El principio de la certeza en Descartes”, *Diánoia*, No. 24, 1978, pp. 66-79 (UNAM/FCE).

⁵ Cartesio is the putative user of a Private Language. On this see my papers “El argumento del lenguaje privado” I y II, in *Crítica* No. 20 & 21, 1975. An English version appeared in *Philosophical Analysis in Latin-America*, Reidel, 1984.

one whose nature is mental and another whose nature is material or physical. The mental element is immediately given to the mind whereas the material one is given to the mind perhaps through the senses. Accordingly, the mental element is appended to the mind in such a way that it is impossible that two minds can have one such mental item whereas the material element can be accessible to the senses of many different persons.

Now in order to achieve communication –the Cartesian will continue– a person has to grasp the mental element which is the one that matters (for communication or discourse is a “mental” affair); in our world, where it so happens that minds are embodied, communication is carried through the physical element which works as a vehicle of the mental element. But that is only a contingent fact. For there could be a possible world in which unmediated communication from mind to mind could be achieved (though perhaps at the cost of losing or severing the individuality of each ‘soul’). Because in our world communication has to be made through physical and behavioural means, complete or full communication is never achieved.

Thus, for example, if one wants to communicate his pain to another person one has to say something or make gestures or scream, etcetera, without being able to exhibit the pain itself; the other person will express his sympathy only in the measure he can guess from the external signs that perhaps pain is going on. In the measure in which the pain cannot be exhibited or in which the others cannot feel it, communication should be necessarily imperfect or even impossible.

But then the fact that communication would be necessarily imperfect is also the fact that understanding is private for –Cartesio will say– in my own case I do understand fully the meaning of “pain”. When I am suffering from pain and say so to the doctor there is no residue left to be apprehended: the whole of my current pain is before me leaving no place for doubt, guess or missapprehension. And if that is the fact it shows also why understanding is private for it turns clear that one’s understanding cannot go beyond that with which one is

acquainted or which one experiences at a given time (and that is valid for 'knowledge' also).

A functional law could thus be stated: the measure of understanding is the measure of experiencing or being acquainted. Let us call it the functional law of private understanding. That law explains why communication has to be imperfect and why full understanding is private.

But it is necessary to make clear how imperfect communication is and correlatively how complete private understanding is; it is necessary to see to what extent communication is achieved and —what comes to be the same— to what extent understanding is confined to one's own person. Following the case of pain pointed out above, it seems that the Cartesian is likely to say that what is communicated are the gestures, voices, etcetera, but not the feeling or sensation itself. For the only thing that would count as communicating it would be to experience the pain itself. And if, as it was pointed before, what is essential to understanding is to share the mental element itself, it will mean that no communication can be achieved at all (or at least not while the mind is embodied). Or in other words, that understanding is essentially or philosophically private. Indeed the Cartesian, if he is presenting a philosophical puzzle at all, has to conclude that communication or common understanding is just another illusion which philosophy uncovers. In other words, if the Cartesian is to advance any philosophical problem at all, he must say that it is at least a necessary condition of understanding and thus of communicating that the one who understands a given word has to experience the thing which the word names or refers to. Otherwise understanding is not achieved. But if the Cartesian goes that far he would be saying that 'pain' uttered when the pain feeling is absent is an empty sound for nothing would be understood under it and that would be irrespective of Cartesio's uttering it or anyone else doing so: the only intelligible use of 'pain' would be one in which pain-feeling occurs. But then there will be understanding only as long as there is experience.

Suppose however the Cartesian rejects this. Suppose he

wants to maintain that no one else can communicate the mental states he has (that no other can grasp the 'meaning' of his words or names), but that he —the Cartesian— can understand what 'pain' means even when pain is not being felt. Two questions will face that Cartesian; namely:

- 1) In what would consist the understanding Cartesio would have of 'pain' when he is not feeling pain?
- 2) What would make it impossible to have common understanding then?

Suppose the Cartesian answers these questions in the following way: 'Understanding what 'pain' means would consist in having the idea of pain whereas having the pain would consist in feeling the pain; it is clear that one can have the idea of pain without having the experience of it: ideas are not experiences and I do distinguish them. On the other hand, the idea is also private and cannot be communicated'. This answer in its turn has to face the following two questions:

- I) In what does consist having the idea of pain? When Cartesio has the idea of pain without feeling or experiencing a pain, what is it that he has which ensures his understanding 'pain' *in absentia*?
(How would one distinguish the idea from the experience in the 'immediate experience'? And if one could indeed distinguish the experience from its being a pain (the occurrence of the experience from pain itself), what would be that experience and that pain?)
- II) Why should the having of the idea of pain be incommunicable in the way the experience of pain is incommunicable?

An impossible answer to (I) would be to say that ideas are copies for that answer would amount to a disguised re-introduction of experiences with the possibility of a vicious regress. I think a copy will be an impossible answer for the following reasons. If it is a copy qualitatively and numerically

identical, it will have the same problems than the original experience plus the perplexity of assuming identity *solo numero*. If the copy is numerically different but qualitatively identical an answer —one which explains— should be given of the similarity or qualitative identity. But then we get a dilemma: either a third copy is introduced to explain the qualitative similarity —and thus a vicious regressus will threaten— or the Cartesian will appeal to a Humean feeling of similarity. He will say something like ‘I feel they are similar: Why do not you grant me this natural feeling?’ By this way we arrive to paradox: we were told that a proof would be offered in a language which is philosophically private so that by means of that proof every man would be forced to accept that language. But instead of proof or demonstrative argument we are led into a vicious regress or else we are asked to grant a feeling, that is, a psychological fact which involves a no answer, a no-philosophical elucidation or explanation, an abandonment of philosophical or theoretical level. Again, the Cartesian arrives only to a subjective conviction or so it seems and his only answer is ‘I have a private language because I feel I have it’. And now we have to explain why these feelings should have philosophical value.

And if Cartesio prefers instead to talk of ‘ideas’ in the sense in which platonizing philosophers talk of ‘meanings’ it will become impossible for him to maintain ideas’ privacy for the very notion of such ideas will carry the claim of intersubjectivity. And if that is not so, the introduction of ideas will be useless. But prior to this consequence the intelligibility of these ‘meanings’ has to be defended.

The conclusion then has to be that either the experiences would have to be the meanings of Cartesio’s words or he has to give up privacy.

III. PICTURE OF USE

A. Could Cartesio make sense of the notion of an individual? What is to count in Cartesio’s privacy as an individual? What is to count as a single mental state? How could Cartesio say

that what goes on from T_1 to T_2 is one mental state, and what goes from T_2 to T_3 is another mental state instead of saying that what goes from T_1 to T_3 is one single mental state? Could he make sense of criteria of individuation? What are his criteria of individuation for mental states? Could Cartesio distinguish what seems to him to be an individual from what in fact is one? What are his principles of counting?⁶

Somehow the Cartesian has to assume that mental states come already individuated and that it is a most natural thing to count 'this' (roughly, what is going on inside him) as a single mental item and 'that' as another item. It should be clear that given the philosophical privacy stated in II above, Cartesio is bound to over-use 'this' and 'that' as private pointers. Could he make sense of 'this' and 'that' as private pointers? The only thing that is left then is the idea of staring at what he says is going on in him at a given time. For given the principle of acquaintance Cartesio will say that a mental individual will be that with which he is acquainted at a given time. What does that mean? Could he mean what he utters?⁷

Whatever any such individual may be, and without questioning whether it can have anything to do with our 'pain', 'item', etcetera, it will be clear from the nature of acquaintance that any such individual must have momentary existence, and not

⁶ It will be clear what strategy is followed in the present work: each time the Cartesian says Cartesio has this or that, or can do this or the other, we inquire if in fact he has made a move or only appears to have made one. In other words, the moves the Cartesian intends to make have a place in ordinary circumstances but it is far from granted that they could be made once one becomes aware of the philosophical privacy the Cartesian himself has. In this paper I am confining myself to the central point of the PLA but one could apply the same strategy to the whole Cartesian Programme.

⁷ Remember the law of private understanding stated on p. 10. The move the Cartesian is making here amounts to a stipulation of what is to count as an individual. This stipulation rests on the notions of acquaintance, knowledge and thinking that are intelligible only if philosophical privacy is abandoned. If we seem to understand these Cartesian notions, it is because a different meaning is subreptitiously introduced, that is, a non-Cartesian reading of them.

One general presupposition is that Cartesio himself is already individuated—his private *ego* perhaps. Thus we have to grant two things for the sake of argument, namely, individual objects and individual persons.

the permanence we attribute to common objects or particulars. But as Cartesio wants to say that he can name any one of those individuals, we will accept hypothetically his contention and ask what he might mean by that utterance.

B. Cartesio will suppose any of the following situations:

- A) It could be that an experience makes an impression on him or calls his attention to it. (The obvious example would be something like a striking pain which comes suddenly and monopolizes all of Cartesio's attention.)
- B) It could also be that Cartesio himself chooses to concentrate on a bit of his current experience and decides to consider it as a single mental item.

In either of these situations, if Cartesio who could want to keep a private diary and remind himself later of this one current occurrence, he then writes down in his diary the sign 's' while he is acquainted with S. It should be stressed here that the writing of 's', which is itself a public deed, is purported to have a very special significance, for it is intended to bring about an association (fussion?) with his current experience, which is philosophically or logically private. It is of crucial importance to the idea of a Private Language to make clear the nature of the relationship –if any– that holds between the sign 's' and the private mental state or event.

C. We said the relationship, correlation, or association –if any– is intended to be one holding between the sign written and the current mental experience to be associated with 's' must be the one which no one else could possibly understand –whatever (if any) that may be– hence one which cannot possibly be communicated; that is, something beyond what the others could understand, and which Cartesio alone can understand. Thus not our 'pain', for example.

The act of association is itself a private act in the above sense, for only Cartesio can have both 's' and the experience, and no one can make the association except Cartesio himself for no one else could be in his position. This is again because

of the privacy of experience. Thus the association is possible only because the person who writes 's' is the person who stares at the particular experience; anything less than that wouldn't do. This fact sets two conditions on the meaning—if any—of 's'; namely:

- I) That for anyone else 's' is not a sign or anything of the sort (not *that* sign).
- II) That 's' gets a different status (that of sign?) only for Cartesio, because it is written at the time the experience is undergoing; had it not been for that, 's' would have the status of a *flatus vocis* even for Cartesio himself.

These conditions are related in this way: (II) is offered as an explanation for (I). Accordingly, we can state the law of private intelligibility or understandability⁸ in the following way: " 'S' and the experience with which it is associated shall be as closely related as possible, for each degree in which the relationship between 's' and the experience is loosen will be either a degree in which others apart from Cartesio would—in principle—understand it or a degree in which 's' becomes a *flatus vocis* (even for Cartesio himself)." This law follows from the functional law of private understanding stated in page 10 above.

It should be noticed however that so far 'association' might be nothing more than the contingent juxtaposition of 's' and a given current experience; however close these may be, they are together, side by side, merely as a matter of fact. After these general points, I think the stage has been reached at which the full difficulties of private names will be appreciated.

D. What I shall be doing next is very straightforward, namely, to show that under the conditions imposed by philosophical

⁸ It is this that has escaped the attention of so many philosophers and because of that they fail to see why the idea of a PL cannot work.

Notice I am granting assumptions for the sake of argument. Not that I think this law of private understandability is correct but—as will soon be clear—that this law is the best one could make of philosophical privacy, and it turns out that it cannot even begin to work.

privacy we cannot make sense of the use of private names, be they proper names or common names. Thus, the very question the Cartesian philosopher need to answer is how any juxtaposition or private ostention could make Cartesio able to use 'S' as a name.

Suppose then that at time T_1 Cartesio is acquainted with an experience E and writes down 'S' in his diary, purporting to establish an association between E and 'S'. (Notice how much we are granting, namely, an object, acquaintance with it, knowledge of language, and corresponding abilities.) Then at T_2 —when E no longer exists— if Cartesio wants to understand his entry of 'S'; that is, he wants to know what 'S' means, he will have no answer even for himself. For, as we explained above, 'S' has to come with E or else it will be unintelligible. In fact, Cartesio never understood 'S' apart from E ; what he got was E , that is, what we granted to him for the sake of argument. Cartesio never got to the step of defining 'S'.

The situation Cartesio is in, shows that he should keep redefining 'S' for each experience, each time he experiences something or concentrates his attention on the private ostention, for as the private experience is what gives 'S' its meaning, *ex-hypothesi* each experience will give 'S' a different meaning. And if we concede long lasting experiences —even Cartesio's life experience— it will be unintelligible to call 'S' a name just because it coincides with the experience.

That is the original private situation (OPS from now onwards) derived from the law of private understanding stated above. Now let us consider a way out for the Cartesian philosopher. Suppose he holds that the referent S is private but that together with it —being a different thing— there is another item —let us call it S' — which will remain when S is gone and will indicate the item to which 'S' refers. It seems that we cannot object to the introduction of a second item that comes to help us understand 'S' when S no longer exists, an item that is also philosophically private and that no one apart from Cartesio could possibly understand.

I have four things to say against this last proposal of a way out.

- I) It is not clear how *S'* could be different from *S* if it is going to keep philosophical privacy. Remember that according to the law of private understanding the only reason that prevents any person from understanding '*S*' is that he cannot have immediate experience of *S*. If we introduce now *S'*, private understanding will no longer depend on the privacy of *S* but on that of *S'* as well. We will need further explanation of why *S'* makes '*S*' philosophically private even if *S'* is different from *S*.
- II) The suspicion arises that if *S'* is really different from *S* then there is no reason any longer to hold philosophical privacy. That is, if *S'* survives the disappearance of *S* why is it that *S'* cannot be communicated to anyone else apart from Cartesio? If *S'* is no longer tied to the experience *S*, then it could be shared. Or is *S'* a permanent or enduring experiencing? It looks rather as an *ad hoc* postulation.
- III) Furthermore there is the question concerning when *S'* is introduced. It could be at the same time *S* appears or later. If it is at the same time how could *S'* be disentagled from *S* without breaking the understanding of '*S*'? Why should we suppose that '*S*' keeps the same meaning when *S* no longer appears?
Suppose then that *S'* comes later than *S*. There are many questions here. How is *S'* different from *S*? Does it have the same content in a different occurrence (say a duplicate of *S*)? Is it a substitute for *S*? Or is it substitute with something extra (something added)? How are we to explain or analyze all this?
Now in framing this mechanism we refrain from invoking or introducing memory. It might happen that memory smuggles the very thing that has to be proved, namely, that '*S*' is the private name of *S*. Thus do not say that *S'* is *S* plus the remembering of the connection between '*S*' and *S* for this connection is what is in ques-

tion and we are still waiting to see that it has been introduced successfully.

- IV) But then we arrive at a final dilemma: If S' is the same (same content in a different occurrence) as S the difficulty remains; if it is different *ex-hypothesi* we have to conclude that Cartesio no longer understands the same. For ' S ' has switched from S to S' . Thus, far from getting a way out the situation is worse for now the link between ' S ' and S was not established and a second link has been introduced, namely, that between ' S ' and S' '. A *regressus* is threatening the Cartesian Philosopher once again.

Moral: Do not persist in thinking that by hiding into privacy a solution will come where there is a mistake of principle, namely, acquaintance.

Concerning the common name case, here the situation looks worse. For now Cartesio has to go from one S to one ' S ' and back again from that ' S ' to many different S 's. That is, the independence or separation is wider and the problem radically increases.

First, it could be argued that it might be the case that Cartesio has experiences already sorted into kinds, that is, private kinds of experiences. Then if he has kinds he could make use of a device that will help him to identify the next E that comes, say E' and apply to it ' S '.

The answer to that reply is that the device to be used has to be a reply or duplicate of E or else the law of private understanding will be broken.

Suppose it is a duplicate (an 'idea', perhaps) there will be only two possibilities: if it is a reproduction from E , how would Cartesio manage to decide if it is like the original E if that E is gone now; then, if the duplicate survives the disappearance of E and it is the meaning of ' S ' then the reason to say that the meaning of ' S ' is philosophically private is gone and there is in principle no objection now to declaring such a language public.

Or else, he has to say something such as this: That Cartesio

experiences from the beginning the whole kind *E*, that is, all and each of its members so that he could use 'S' properly.

The short reply to this proposal is to ask in what sense we could talk of a common name here? For certainly there is no use of 'S' to name a new, different *E*. It looks rather as if we are back into the difficulties of the case of proper names.

A second reply is to say that Cartesio could keep a memory of the private ostention and thus get help from it to give sense to future uses of 'S'. But this is to accept too much.

Again, this introduction of a memory tries to smuggle the very fact that is in dispute, namely, that 'S' has successfully passed the name test, or in other words, that 'S' is already a common name and that Cartesio only needs to remember this and go on applying it to future instances of *E*.

In any case, it is for the Cartesian to show how Cartesio could have something like private concepts or memories that could preserve the philosophical privacy of those private meanings he claims for his private language. I think I have stated the main point. And I may of course incur the future task of refuting specific candidates that a Cartesian may propose as fulfilling the role of private meaning.

IV. SOME CONCLUSIONS

The argument set out above is very simple. It has gone from some uncontroversial features that names have in our languages. Then a picture of privacy is construed so as to embody certain features Cartesians and Platonists ascribe to the mental. The conclusion is straightforward: under philosophical privacy the use of names would be unintelligible. We must hence reject either that Cartesio has a language or that his language is philosophically private.

To many the above account will appear incredible: They will complain that no sane philosopher now holds or has ever held such a diseased view of privacy. The answer to this is that this much could be true. But then it only shows that certain Platonists and Cartesians have been incoherent because they hold at least that very strong view of privacy at

some crucial moments only to abandon it later. The Private Language Argument purports to give a full expansion to such a diseased idea so that philosophers get a radical cure and do not look for solutions in philosophical privacy.⁹

Further philosophical consequences follow for other main areas of Epistemology and Metaphysics: for the idea of a certainty or knowledge that cannot be false and the idea of purely mental individuals. Such ideas go together with the idea of a private language. I cannot go into them now, but I want to emphasize that the three of them plus some others constitute the same diseased view. I look forward to showing the interconnections among them, and the reasons why none of them is viable.

⁹ There is the further issue concerning the importance and relevance of starting our thinking of persons and the world with a consideration of a theory so strange and wild as that of privacy. I cannot offer a defense of that charge in this paper.

RESUMEN

El trabajo ofrece un argumento en favor de la tesis de que el lenguaje (mental) es fundamentalmente, por lo menos, un lenguaje filosóficamente privado.

En la primera parte se argumenta que el uso de los nombres exige una independencia o separación entre el nombre y lo nombrado. También se necesita de algo que pueda enlazar o relacionar el mismo nombre con la misma cosa (en el caso de los nombres propios). En consecuencia, si el nombre sólo se puede usar en conjunción constante con la cosa u objeto nombrado, no se comprendería cómo puede ser un nombre (propio).

Al examinar la tesis de la privacidad filosófica, crucial para defender la idea de un lenguaje privado, nos percatamos de que la única manera de que las palabras de ese lenguaje no puedan ser comprendidas por nadie aparte del poseedor del lenguaje privado y de los objetos privados consiste en introducir dos leyes, a saber, la ley funcional de la comprensión privada de acuerdo con la cual:

La medida de la comprensión (privada) es la medida en que se tiene experiencia (privada) o se está en contacto inmediato (privado) con los referentes (privados).

De esta ley se deriva la ley de la inteligibilidad o comprensión privada que establece que:

El signo *S* y la experiencia con la cual se lo asocia deben estar tan estrechamente relacionados como sea posible pues cada grado en el que se debilita o abre la relación entre *S* y la experiencia privada será un grado en el que otras personas aparte de Cartesio (el putativo hablante del lenguaje privado) podrían —en principio— entender *S* o un grado en el cual *S* se convierte en un *flatus vocis* (aun para el propio Cartesio).

Esta última ley conforma la situación privada original (SPO) en la cual tiene que decidirse si Cartesio puede tener nombres para poder decidir posteriormente si puede tener lenguaje.

Se considera un conjunto de posibles maneras de introducir nombres privados y se las rechaza porque en una forma u otra violan la SPO. Se concluye que no se pueden introducir nombres privados ya sean nombres propios o nombres comunes.

El argumento no depende de usar tesis positivas como las de los criterios, o escepticismo en el uso de la memoria, sino solamente de tomar en serio al cartesiano y hacer explícitos los supuestos que hacen plausible y posible su idea de una privacidad filosófica. Cuando esos supues-

tos se hacen explícitos en la SPO las consecuencias se siguen directamente y no es posible volver inteligible el uso de nombres (sean nombres propios o nombres comunes).

Tampoco depende el argumento de la introducción de alguna paradoja. No depende ni de tesis positivas ni de paradojas sino de lo que el propio cartesiano adelanta al proponer su tesis. En este sentido es un argumento *ad-hominem* que cuestiona una suposición filosófica crucial del pensamiento cartesiano. Otras consecuencias semánticas, epistemológicas y metafísicas se siguen de esta manera de rechazar la idea de un lenguaje filosóficamente privado. En otros trabajos futuros trataré de establecerlas así como de mostrar las interconexiones entre ellas.

[E.V.]