

CRITICAL NOTICE

The Evolution of the Private Language Argument

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With this work Keld Stehr Nielsen provides the first full length monograph on the historical development and interpretation of what in the secondary literature came to be known for the first time around the 1960's as *The Private Language Argument*, particularly, though not exclusively, insofar as that argument can be found in different periods and in different guises and presentations, in the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein. If not quite exclusively, this is not only because the book begins with a discussion of the possibility of a private language as this notion is found by Nielsen to be at work in the writings of three members of the Vienna Circle, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath and to a lesser extent Moritz Schlick; but also because a substantial part of the book is justifiably committed to providing a blow-by-blow account of the varying claims and counter-claims made by a range of philosophers who sought to provide their own individual interpretations - sometimes at considerable remove from the primary texts - of what they believed Wittgenstein to be about in those passages of the *Philosophical Investigations* contained principally in §§ 243-315, during the two or three decades following the book's publication in 1953.

The story Nielsen tells is therefore highly complex, because he often sets himself the task of showing the different motivations underlying the varying interpretations of Wittgenstein he goes on to discuss, even when all the participants in a debate, for example, are party to what he will eventually reveal to be misconstruals of Wittgenstein's real intentions in talking about a private language. This is entirely consistent with what David Stern refers to as the tendency for interpretations of the work of any great philosopher to float free of the primary texts and take on a life of their own, (1) one to which debate over Wittgenstein's aims is particularly prone because of his methodology, in which different

'voices' can play opposing roles in any particular passage ; and in practice this has certainly meant that many of the wide variety of interpretations to which the relevant passages have often become subject have embodied implicit criticisms of Wittgenstein's 'argument' against a private language based on the very misconceptions he is intent to expose.

So what is a private language and why might anyone have thought that its possibility can in any way be implied by the way in which we do talk about our own sensations ? One point that has to be emphasised from the beginning is that the notion of a private language gains what sense it is supposed to have from its intended use to refer to what is, in a philosophical context, traditionally understood to be private to ourselves in at least one respectable sense of the term, something purely phenomenological, the 'felt quality' of our individual sensations. Surely these do present themselves to consciousness in every relevant respect exactly as the *kinds* of sensations that they are, and are exactly as they appear ? And surely this has nothing to do with one's behaviour in a community of other speakers ? As Saul Kripke succinctly puts it in talking of our sensations, 'Surely I can identify these after I have felt them, and any participation in a community is irrelevant !' (2) And again, carefully emphasising an important aspect of the debate over what, in the view of many philosophers, Wittgenstein surely must have meant by a private language, one revealing that his argument as he presents it is demonstrably invalid, Kripke echoes a theme that even today continues to play a central role in the secondary literature:

Readers, my previous self certainly included, have often been inclined to wonder: 'How can he prove private language impossible ? How can I possibly have any difficulty identifying my own sensations ? And if there were a difficulty, how could "public" criteria help me ? I must be in pretty bad shape if I needed external help to identify my own sensations !' (3)

In short, our sensations are intrinsically meaningful, and are so independently of the acquisition of a public language. But if Kripke is pointing here to at least one fairly

acceptable notion of privacy, one apparently enshrined in our ordinary talk - yet accompanied in his presentation by an idea of how our sensation terms acquire meaning which readily conforms to what has come to be known as the *Augustinian Picture* - can we take it for granted that this is the notion of privacy Wittgenstein has in mind when he refers in § 243 to a language used to refer to an individual's immediate private sensations, one which only he alone can understand ?

The answer is clearly that that we are talking here about two entirely different conceptions of privacy, one of which as presented by Kripke appears to bear some relation to our ordinary sensation talk. For even if this conception does leave him with the problem of 'other minds', there is nothing in his presentation *per se* to indicate that he is talking about a language which only he alone can understand. The more strict conception of privacy espoused by Wittgenstein, on the other hand, relates to the notion of a private language which Nielsen finds firstly in the three philosophers of the Vienna Circle, a notion central to what he refers to as the 'protocol sentence debate' concerned primarily with 'how, exactly, traditional empiricism could survive the strictures of consistent scientism and the verification principle'. (4) The point is echoed succinctly by Ayer in his discussion of Carnap's idea of a protocol sentence as presented in his booklet *The Unity of Science*, (5) for if a language is to be public it must refer to what is publicly observable; and since protocol sentences are intended to present a direct record of a person's immediate private experiences, it follows, according to Carnap, that every protocol statement could only be applied solipsistically, a consequence which on Ayer's account Carnap is only too keen to avoid:

Since Carnap wishes to maintain that people can understand one another's protocol statements, if only on the ground that this is a necessary condition for statements made in what he calls the physical language to be intersubjectively verifiable, he draws the inference that 'protocol language is a part of physical language.' That is, he concludes

that sentences which on the face of it refer to private experiences must be logically equivalent to sentences which describe some physical state of the subject.

Despite their different procedures, Nielsen sees both Carnap's and Neurath's private language arguments as at one in tackling 'the problem of explaining how the immediately given, or individual experiences, could be embedded into science in a way that does not jeopardize their crucial justificatory importance. In essence, this was the main issue in the protocol sentence debate'. (6) The issue for Moritz Schlick is slightly different, for Nielsen takes him to be endorsing the idea of a private language based very much on what he had supposedly gleaned from a close association with Wittgenstein. This interpretation is strangely at odds with John Cook's account of Schlick's argument, mentioned by Nielsen, an argument which, according to Cook, inspired Wittgenstein later on to use the example of a diary in § 258 of the *Investigations*. (7) For Cook takes Schlick to follow Wittgenstein in rejecting, rather than endorsing the idea of a private language: first person sensation ascriptions express only *structure*, and do not point to a *content* the nature of which only the speaker can know. This is an important element in Cook's claim that Wittgenstein is denying that we have private experiences in the sense proposed by the dualist:

Wittgenstein had two aims in dismissing the idea that one speaks of 'content', the most obvious of which was to undermine dualism and the skeptical question whether two people are speaking of the *same* content....he had to find an alternative to the Tractarian view that language is pinned to the world by means of names. His alternative, like Schlick's, was to deny that one ever speaks of 'content', which enabled him to dismiss as absurd the idea that, on successive occasions, one speaks of the *same* content. (8)

But if we study the actual passage that Cook uses to show that Wittgenstein is adopting a strictly philosophical position in denying the 'reality' of sensations, what it says

- whatever may be claimed about Schlick - allows for an entirely different interpretation to the one presented by Cook, one much more in accordance with the gradual account of Wittgenstein's development that Neilsen will provide in the following chapters:

Suppose someone says: 'The sensation passes, and then later on you recognise it again.' I would say no...You can't talk of *recognising* it, because you have no criterion of recognising correctly or incorrectly.Imagine that the sensation were something like a body which moved about and disappeared. Suppose there were a way of tracing the sensation's movements: you can see it move about away from him, and then it comes back and you say 'Ah, yes, he has it again'. Here you can say 'He recognises it'. - But clearly this is a wrong picture. And it makes plain that there is in our case no such thing as *recognising* it, since there is no criterion for recognising it rightly or wrongly. (9)

This is from 1936, and it forms an early and comparatively crude presentation of the point made later in § 258 that 'whatever is going to seem right to me is right'. Although Neilsen has no intention of providing a detailed account of the development of Wittgenstein's ideas on privacy from 1933 - 1945, he does succeed in capturing its more significant landmarks, on the way mentioning Wittgenstein's well-known accusation of plagiarism against Carnap, which Neilsen is given to see as partly resulting from a misunderstanding, suggesting that independent pathways had led to similar conclusions. Or perhaps not quite so similar, because, as David Stern emphasises, (10) Carnap and Wittgenstein each surely had a different understanding of the term 'physicalism'. Wittgenstein was mainly concerned to point to the importance of our ordinary physical object language, following a short period in which he toyed with what Neilsen describes as a 'phenomenological language', in the hope that it could provide an adequate translation of what we say in our ordinary language, only to discover by the end of 1929 that this is not the case. Cora Diamond's detection of an early version of the private language argument in the

Tractatus bears directly on the issue, because it importantly points to Wittgenstein's future philosophy and to a use of language which is not to be interpreted in terms of a reaching out beyond the bounds of experience and of language to an ontological category of 'other minds'. (11)

Although Neilsen does not discuss Diamond on this question, which would have provided an interesting adjunct to his account, he does go into considerable detail over Wittgenstein's reasons for abandoning what he considers to be his *de facto* private language, commenting on his remark to Malcolm that at the time he wrote the *Tractatus* he had seen himself as a logician who was unconcerned about providing an example of a simple object. Emphasising that the distinction between seeming to be and what there really is, is not available in visual space but only in physical, Euclidean space, Neilsen quotes a passage in which Wittgenstein in part echoes *Tractatus* 5.5563, following his brief foray into the field of a phenomenological language:

I used to believe that there was the everyday language we all usually spoke and a primary language that expressed what we really knew, namely phenomena. I also spoke of a first system and a second system. I think that essentially we have only one language, and that is our everyday language. We need not invent a new language or construct a new symbolism, but our ordinary language already is *the* language provided we rid it of the obscurities that lie hidden in it. (12)

The publication in 1993 of *Notes for the 'Philosophical Lecture'* edited by David Stern and dated by him to 1941, provides a remarkable transitional piece of writing which Nielsen uses to illustrate the changes in Wittgenstein's thinking that led eventually to his ideas as presented in the familiar private language passages as we know them in the *Investigations*. Here Wittgenstein struggles with thoughts in *English* in what often seems a rough and ready way, captured in his aside:

(This paper if it is in the least as I think it ought to be, should at first sight be very confusing indeed. For it apparently consists of a mixture of trivialities and paradoxes and why I should say them seems pretty unclear.) (13)

Here we see him saying, for example, that ' - In your own case you know that what's meant by feeling pain is entirely independent of external circumstances, and as to internal ones the only one that matters is *feeling pain*.' (14) Tempted to emphasise that we surely must have some *grounds* for distinguishing between pretending to be in pain and really being in pain, he remarks that the distinction - real as it is - is not one for which we have any *grounds*. But this is just to invite the kind of rejoinder that a philosopher, following Kripke, might give by saying something like:

But surely the *felt quality* of my sensation, telling me after all what *kind* of sensation it is, plays an integral role in my understanding of what it is to *name* it as one *type* of sensation rather than another ? The presence of the sensation after all is what *grounds* the distinction between pretending to have a sensation and *naming* a sensation I actually have ! And in the final analysis what could have *less* to do with my behaviour in the surrounding community ?

There are two points here, the first a reflection of Wittgenstein's claim in § 114 that the philosopher who is tempted to say this is one who 'thinks he is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.' The second is that what the philosopher is saying here, if seen aright, is not something Wittgenstein need have denied, for the philosopher is only describing what it does seem like to have a sensation against the background of one's prior knowledge of a public language. *Of course*, one is quite naturally tempted to say, the sensation has a distinctly *qualitative feel* of the kind described, and if it is of a kind one has never felt before, then one might very well wish to bestow a new *name* on it for the first time, thinking of this as a form of mock ceremony. From Wittgenstein's perspective, the common philosophical idea that one's sensations are always *already* intrinsically meaningful gains what sense it has from the fact that the philosopher has this

prior background *already* in place. But suppose the philosopher were to reiterate that his sensations would be experienced by him as intrinsically meaningful whether he were acquainted with a public language or not? Then *either* he would be capable of talking about them in a language which was in principle intrinsically public - by, say, imagining his *inventing* words for his sensations in an empiricist fashion in accordance with the Augustinian picture - *or* his sensations do not come to him as sensations of particular *kinds* with their distinctive *qualitative feels* after all, in which case they are not sensations at all and there is nothing more to be said.

It is because there is a tendency to say that animals and young children can have experiences without having concepts that a certain perplexity arises here, for the idea that creatures can have experiences with or without having concepts is a *picture*, and it would be a characteristic response on Wittgenstein's part to ask what can be done with it. How is the picture to be applied? Wittgenstein in any event captures his main point here much more succinctly later on in § 381, where his response to the question how one knows that this is red does after all have 'grounds' in the claim that 'I have learnt English'. But this, of course, could not count as *grounds* underlying the kind of privacy claims Wittgenstein is investigating in these 1941 Notes, where the notion of the *private object* designated by a name in the *private language* is intended to portray that kind of *superprivacy* referred to at the beginning of the paper. For the superprivate object is pictured as something akin to the mock spatio-temporal object mentioned in the previous Notes from 1936 taken by Rhees. But the identification of such an *object* would require criteria, when first person sensation ascription is actually criterionless, and so not based on *grounds* at all. Neilsen remarks in a footnote that Wittgenstein for once makes his point here very clearly (15):

And of course I know perfectly well that we are thinking of criteria similar to the ones of physical objects, only we can't apply any such criteria in our case and *that's* what we mean by talking of the privacy of the objects. Privacy here really means the absence of means of comparison. Only we mix up the state of affairs when we are prevented

from comparing the objects with that of not having fixed a method of comparison. And in a moment we would fix such a way of comparing we would no longer talk of 'sensations'.

It is for this reason that whilst we have *no* justification for saying that this is red, or for saying that the pain I had 5 minutes ago has returned - beyond saying that I have learnt English - the point remains that if we are genuinely to talk of the pain as a private object that only I could have, criteria for identifying the object would be required, in circumstances where the requirement for these criteria makes no sense because our actual sensation talk is criterionless. The extent to which Wittgenstein reveals the *consequences* of one way of thinking about this matter, is captured in the simple thought that the fact that we can talk innocuously of having sensations which are private to ourselves gains its sense from the acquisition of a public language in which there are indeed criteria in the third person but not in the first to talk about them.

Neilsen covers the ground here in considerable detail, illustrating what he takes to be the significant features of the 1941 *Notes for the 'Philosophical Lecture'*, and taking what he regards as Wittgenstein's final showdown with privacy to be a showdown with the picture theory: 'The picture theory generates privacy because we feel that there must be something we refer to that justifies the way we express ourselves about experiences and feelings'. (16) Ending with a brief account of how Wittgenstein's contemporaries understood the notion of privacy, mentioning Price on the argument from analogy and Stace on the inviolable privacy of sensation, Neilsen highlights just how far removed Wittgenstein's thinking had become from what may be regarded as the orthodox philosophical ways of thinking in this field. These orthodox ways of thinking in Neilsen's estimation gave rise to considerable confusion when commentators began to study the relevant privacy sections of *Philosophical Investigations* after 1953.

Part II of Neilsen's book devotes itself to the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and its first Chapter 5 discusses immediate reactions to the work principally from 4 philosophers, Norman Malcolm and P.F. Strawson in their famous Reviews of the book, and A.J. Ayer and Rush

Rhees in their equally famous Aristotelian Society encounter. (17) Beginning with what Neilsen chooses to call *The Reductio Argument* as initially espoused by Malcolm - Malcolm's 'postulate a "private" language ; then deduce that it is not *language*' - Neilsen claims, surely correctly, that Malcolm's presentation of what Wittgenstein was saying in § 258 and in surrounding passages was not only the most elaborate but also the most influential initial account of Wittgenstein's intentions. It was therefore accepted generally by philosophers who were not over-concerned to work out the significance of § 243 - 315 for themselves. Neilsen summarises Malcolm's argument reasonably succinctly: fixing one's attention on a sensation in order to define the meaning of a name, followed by a requirement that the name be used consistently in the future, a requirement demanding that there be a difference between properly following a rule and being only under the impression that one is following a rule. But this requires that there must be something independent of one's impression of following a rule, something that is not available in the 'private' case.

Strange as it may seem with hindsight, there is actually a reading of Malcolm's treatment in which this argument could go through almost as it stands, for if we take it that the private linguist is pictured as an element in the wrong private-object model for sensation discourse, then there will indeed be nothing in which his identifying and re-identifying his sensation correctly could even be taken to consist, for there is nothing after all - apart from our ability to speak English - that *grounds* our talk of having the same sensation. It follows that there is nothing that we could understand even to *be* a proper identification of a sensation according to this misleading private-object model that supposedly underlies a private language.

But one would be hard put to uncover this simple reading from Malcolm's presentation, and that is why most of those who objected to the argument as Malcolm presents it, regarded it as an attempt to prove that because the so-called private linguist is in no position to know whether he is using a word correctly beyond his apparent ability to speak the (private) language, it therefore makes no sense to say that he can be meaningfully referring to his private sensation.

But this is simply not true if we adopt the assumptions made by those philosophers, Ayer and Strawson, who initially objected to Wittgenstein, for all that they tended to do was argue on the (implicit) assumption that since our sensations are intrinsically meaningful to begin with, there would surely be no difficulty - as Strawson puts it - in claiming that the private linguist in the course of fixing his attention on a sensation in the private case 'might simply be struck by the recurrence of a certain sensation and get into the habit of making a certain mark in a different place every time it occurred'. (18) That Strawson's conception of a private language is really that of a language which is in principle public yet used by a solitary individual, is confirmed by his famously asking in the course of his discussion - as if this for Wittgenstein could be at all relevant - whether we do in practice ever 'find ourselves misremembering the use of very simple words of our common language, and having to correct ourselves by attention to others' use?' (19)

The same presupposition underlies Ayer's account, in which his famous Robinson Crusoe is used to show that a human being raised by wolves in isolation from any normal social contact could invent a language for himself, a language which he could eventually teach to Man Friday. Neilsen unusually slips up here, when he takes Ayer to be arguing in favour of the claim that Crusoe's language 'could incorporate descriptions of sensations which might turn out to be unintelligible to other people', for he uses this to show that Ayer is arguing in favour of the conclusion that 'a contingently private language was possible, and that the possibility of a contingently private language implied the possibility of a necessarily private language. Wittgenstein was mistaken.' (20) But Ayer nowhere endorses the possibility of a language which is necessarily private: all he does is suggest that where Crusoe's sensations have no 'natural expressions' he may fail to find any way of teaching Friday the use of the words to stand for them, which he follows with the claim that this does not at all mean that - presumably when the sensations do have natural expressions - Man Friday will be incapable

of learning the meaning of the words which Crusoe uses to describe his private sensations. The difficulty posed is practical rather than theoretical, a point confirmed in Ayer's later writings when he firmly agrees with Wittgenstein in finding the notion of a necessarily private language unintelligible (21).

A point Nielsen fails to mention here, no doubt because it is incidental to his purely historical survey, and to his treatment of Rhee's, is that the assumption by both Strawson and Ayer that our sensations are intrinsically meaningful is pivotal to their both being party to a crucial element of the so-called *Augustinian Picture*, viz., that in this context our sensations present themselves to consciousness as the *kinds* of sensations that they are independently of the acquisition of a public language; and Wittgenstein's objection to this idea is that it is totally empty and comes nowhere close to allowing us to understand how our sensation terms acquire meaning. Nielsen is certainly correct to claim that philosophers found Rhee's reply to Ayer difficult to follow, but the reason for this is that they were almost inevitably prone to interpret Rhee as attempting to provide a logical demonstration that language is, in their terms, necessarily acquired within a social context; and that is a claim that no argument can succeed in providing. That language is acquired within a social context is for Wittgenstein an expression of a methodological principle rather than the conclusion of a logical argument. Its aim is to turn the investigation around so that the philosopher is no longer encumbered by *pictures* of the kind encapsulated in the idea of a born Crusoe who invents a language for himself. Far from constituting a valid objection to Rhee's, insofar as he is in this respect following Wittgenstein, what Nielsen calls *The Solitary Language Argument* - if this be interpreted as a reference to Ayer's argument in favour of a solitary speaker - is really an expression of the very misunderstanding that Wittgenstein is at pains to expose. At the end of the chapter Nielsen actually refers to Rhee's *Solitary Language Argument*, in which case he intends it to be regarded as an argument against the idea of a solitary speaker.

Neilsen continues to provide a good blow-by-blow account of the varying turns of the argument here, pretty much accepting for the purpose of his exposition the questionable presuppositions sometimes underlying the standpoints occupied on both sides. He then goes on to discuss what is generally understood as *The External Argument* presented by Malcolm, in which it is assumed that 'once I know from my own case what pain, tickling or consciousness is, then I can transfer the ideas of these things to objects outside myself'. (22) Once again, although Malcolm does his best to explicate the meaning of *criteria* in the course of showing that there is an element of incoherence in the very attempt to provide an argument from analogy for the existence of 'other minds', in the course of doing this he can sometimes appear to be party to the very conceptions that Wittgenstein is attempting to undermine:

When his thinking is freed of the illusion of the priority of his own case, then he is able to look at the familiar facts and to acknowledge that the circumstances, behaviour, and utterances of others actually are his *criteria* (not merely his evidence) for the existence of their mental states. Previously this had seemed impossible.

But now he is in danger of flying to the opposite extreme of behaviorism, which errs by believing that through observation of one's own circumstances, behavior and utterances one can find out that one is thinking or angry. (23)

Quoting this passage himself, Neilsen draws attention to what he takes to be problematic with the idea of *criteria*, 'this seemingly fantastic notion' as he puts it, thus properly reflecting the contemporary terms of the debate, which tended to see Malcolm's use of *criteria* as an illegitimate attempt to in some way improve upon the aims of an argument from analogy. It is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the quite extraordinary amount of discussion that went

on during the decade or two following Malcolm's initial expositions of Wittgenstein, centering around the elucidation of *criteria*. Here, for example, are Baker and Hacker:

Philosophers have notoriously found difficulty in making sense of Wittgenstein's remarks about criteria. The crucial problem is to explain how an internal relation can be defeasible. Defeasibility amounts to the absence of any entailment, while an internal relation must be a necessary connection. Can there be necessary connections that fall short of entailment? Again, evidence is typically held to render a proposition certain if and only if it confers upon it the degree of probability 1.....only entailment confers the probability of 1 upon an hypothesis. Yet Wittgenstein suggests that undefeated criterial support renders the proposition supported certain. How can this be? (24)

There follows a characteristic reference to 'rules of grammar' holding of certain statements corresponding to criterial relations. But if we return to Malcolm's original characterisation of what Neilsen entitles his *External Argument*, Wittgenstein's claim can be better presented by the thought that when doing philosophy we can easily be confused by a picture which, harmless in itself, is doing no real work: 'his being in pain is something going on in him in the way it goes on in me', is a *picture* of this kind, and once again the question to be asked is what we are supposed to do with the picture. How is it to be used? For in philosophy the problem lies in taking our understanding in this field of investigation to rest in our attempt to apply it, an attempt underlying the very idea that we should even require an argument from analogy to justify a belief in 'other minds'. But the picture is no more than a harmless accompaniment to our talk about first and third person sensation ascription, and only in philosophy would that talk be misconstrued as a matter of referring to two different ontological categories. This very characterisation is what underlies the apparent need to make the kind of leap from the behaviour to the pain, from one

category to another which the argument from analogy, or even the notion of *criteria* as misunderstood, are supposedly intended to secure.

Yet criteria in reality are what enter into our descriptions of the circumstances in which we do in practice refer to people who are experiencing pain, suffering deep grief or whatever emotional or mental states may be in question. The degree of certainty that an individual is undergoing great pain or is suffering deep loss is then relative to prevailing circumstances, set against the background against which we employ the criteria determining the truth in any particular case. Baker's and Hacker's defeasibility puzzle is then not so much a difficulty for the interpretation of *criteria* as a factor which is integral to the framework against which we justifiably make the appropriate attributions of pain or grief. The extent to which Wittgenstein turns the normal philosophical way of thinking about this matter inside out, is once again captured in the way in which our innocuously attributing these feelings to ourselves and to others gains its sense from the acquisition of a public language. Whether there are indeed criteria in the third person but not in the first to talk about them, then depends on the kinds of feelings or sensations in question: a person cannot be wrong about being in pain in the way in which he can convince himself of feeling deep grief even when he is not. *The Private Language Argument* for Wittgenstein was only ever concerned solely with phenomenological aspects of private experience.

In the course of his purely historical and expository narrative, Neilsen makes no attempt to provide any exposition of this kind that from our current perspective might seem to capture a more adequate account of Wittgenstein's intentions. He takes time to accurately discuss Strawson's charge in his Review that Wittgenstein gets himself into a muddle in the course of conflating Strawson's *Weaker Thesis* that certain conditions must be satisfied if there is to be a common language in which people talk about sensations, with his *Stronger Thesis* that no words name sensations or private experiences. But with the benefit of hindsight we can see (25) that the muddle is Strawson's, rather than Wittgenstein's, and results from his misunderstanding of Wittgenstein, who nowhere denies that we 'name our sensations' (§ 244). What he denies is that a certain way of looking at the naming

of sensations which we are prone to adopt when doing philosophy provides the proper *picture* of what is involved in calling them by name. Yet even in the course of pointing out that when we refer to 'the taste of onions', this is a taste which is 'certainly recognisable and identifiable in itself', Strawson concedes that 'one does not use *criteria* of identity for *the taste*', suggesting that if one asks what the criterion of identity is here, one can only answer 'Well, the taste itself'. But this is effectively to concede to Wittgenstein the point he makes in § 381 when he states that 'I have learnt English' is an answer to the question how he knows that this colour is red.

This, however, has to be balanced against other claims made by Strawson - not mentioned by Nielsen - which are totally at odds with Wittgenstein's intentions, including his supposition that the private language user would have no proper *check* on the correctness of his use of it, whether using memory or not, and that this equally applies to a 'private language' used to talk about 'colours or material objects or animals'. He then appears to anticipate Saul Kripke in his suggestion that in *this* case even the presence of a physical dictionary would not be sufficient to provide an external check on the correctness of his use of names, because the interpretation of such a dictionary depends on the application that is made of it. Strawson ends with the suggestion that Wittgenstein's arguments point towards the conclusion that the idea of a language '*of any kind*' used by only one individual is an absurdity, when it is not made clear whether this individual is intended to be isolated in practice or in principle from a surrounding community of other individuals. There remain apparent contradictions in Strawson's presentation which are difficult to resolve.

Chapter 6, 'The Availability of an Argument', has Nielsen providing a very good account of Judith Jarvis Thomson's famous paper 'Private Languages' from 1964, in which she claims that the way in which Malcolm presents his *Reductio Argument* would rule out even a public language, since the fact that a language is used 'in isolation' does not in itself exclude the possibility that a speaker can meaningfully talk about his sensations, a point echoed *via* Ayer's original assumption that if we presume that from the beginning our sensations are

intrinsically meaningful, then any suggestion that the so-called private linguist has no way of finding out that he is using his words wrongly will have to turn on an unacceptable appeal to some form of scepticism about memory. This in Neilsen's judgement means that Thomson had posed a real problem for Malcolm, whose *Reductio Argument* after a period of 10 years was then seen to depend on nothing more than an application of the verification principle combined with a version of memory scepticism. Certainly, Malcolm can be faulted because he does present his case in a way which makes him appear to be party to the very metaphysical dichotomy that Wittgenstein intended to renounce. Furthermore, whilst the problems Thomson poses are based on what she takes her reading of Malcolm to imply, she does not provide a detailed interpretation of Wittgenstein's original texts in her own terms.

The remainder of Neilsen's Chapter 6 is devoted to an exposition of George Pitcher's and Alan Donagan's views on sensation language, and here a revisit to Pitcher's original book provides a worthwhile reminder of a certain traditional way of looking at sensations:

You cannot feel my toothache, nor I yours. But your toothache is doubtless qualitatively similar to mine, since the structures of our bodies are very similar. And so, although many words in our language denote physical things and events which are publicly observable, other words denote items in each of our separate consciousnesses, things directly observable only by the one person in whose consciousness they occur. All this seems undeniable. (26)

This passage, quoted by Nielsen, is surely the perfect introduction to a treatment of sensation language allowing for all manner of variation on what one might wish to say (when doing philosophy) about one's sensations. One might wish to claim with Pitcher, for example, that saying that I am in pain is not a way of describing what is going on inside me, or that the word 'pain' is not the name of a sensation. This is not, according to Pitcher, a claim that we do not have sensations, but only that they do not enter into pain language-games. But everything that Pitcher

says here is evidently based on his attempt to reconcile his initial (philosophical) assumptions with the kinds of claims he understands Wittgenstein to be making about our sensations. If we have no idea what Pitcher's beetle in his box might be like, that for Pitcher is no drawback, for what it might be like plays no role at all in the game, because it is not at all required. (27)

If this seems at odds with the common temptation to claim (in philosophy) that surely the felt quality of my sensation plays an essential role in my correctly describing it as the kind of sensation it is, then one is reminded of Wittgenstein's remark (*Investigations* § 194) about seeing how high the seas of language run here, and how a set of presuppositions can so determine the route that a philosopher's thinking continues to take that he is prone to regard as a description of the inmost nature of the phenomenon under review, what is nothing more than a feature of our thinking allowing us to trace round the frame (in our public language) through which we look at it (§ 114).

Alan Donagan chastises Pitcher for suggesting that the representation of pain enters the language-game not by referring to a mental object, but by pointing only towards the circumstances surrounding the pain-behaviour:

This cannot be right. It is true that Wittgenstein denied that pain is imaginatively represented by a picture of a mental object behind the pain behaviour; but that is not the same thing as denying that a mental object is referred to....At the very least, Wittgenstein was maintaining that, in the *Vorstellung* of pain, reference is made to something other than the external circumstances depicted in the *Bild* that corresponds to it. (28)

Donagan's ingenious solution is to treat a sensation as a private non-dispositional accompaniment of behaviour, something defined by reference to its external circumstances but not reducible to them. Consequently, if two people correctly claim that they have toothache, then they will characteristically say that they both have something frightful 'that we would naturally express by holding and rubbing our jaws, by certain kinds of grimace, and the like.' Donagan's

conclusion, therefore, is that, unlike Pitcher, sensations do play a role in the language-game, except that 'Whether the internal character of what is expressed in these ways is the same for you as for me is irrelevant to the meaning of the word "toothache".' Or, as Donagan puts it on the preceding page, 'The existence of the "object", of that which accompanies natural pain-behaviour, is not only not irrelevant to the meaning of pain words, it is cardinal. What is irrelevant is not the existence of the object, but what it happens to be.' (29)

What makes this ingenious solution so interesting is precisely that whether or not there is something called the 'internal character' of a sensation which either is or is not the same for me as for you would be for Wittgenstein 'a full-blown pictorial representation of our grammar' (§ 295). The philosopher who insists that there surely is a genuine question whether what is going on in him is the same as what is going on in me is being confused by a *picture*, in much the same way as is Wittgenstein's student who tells him whilst striking himself on the breast that surely no one else can have *this* pain! (§ 252) Once again, the only solution whilst doing philosophy, is perhaps to give in to the picture, whilst asking how it is to be applied. One way of resolving this dispute is to ask in what circumstances people say that they have the same pain, and in what describing it as the same is normally taken to consist. This provides a context in which there is a perfectly ordinary way of answering the question whether the nature of the pain they are both experiencing is the same for each of them. But that would not be a way of pointing to the pain (as in a philosophical context) as a member of a special kind of ontological category.

Another interesting aspect of Donagan's interpretation of Wittgenstein - not mentioned by Neilsen - is his claim that Wittgenstein's argument in § 258 is fallacious, because Wittgenstein failed to distinguish between an inability to verify his recollection of the meaning of sensation sign 'E' with an inability to understand what it would be for his recollection to be right; and from the non-existence of an independent test for the former, it does not follow that the so-called private linguist could not properly identify and re-identify his sensations. But since this claim by Donagan itself rests on an interpretation of what is going on in § 258 that Neilsen will justifiably go on to

question, the point that Donagan is making here - along with Ayer, Strawson, Kripke *etc.* - may not be thought to be of any ultimate significance.

Chapter 7 on 'Ordinary Sensation Language' is largely occupied with a discussion of John Cook who, having been introduced to the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* by Norman Malcolm and Oets Bousma, was concerned to show that the statement 'I know I am in pain' has no proper application as an expression of certainty since, in the final analysis, someone who persistently claims to be in pain when he is not - and is neither a liar nor is making a slip of the tongue - would be regarded not as having inadequate powers of inner observation, but of having a poor command of the English language. This conclusion is intended to break the hold of the suggestion made in § 246 that 'Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it.' Along with his treatment of 'Another person can't have my pains' (§ 253) in which Wittgenstein questions what is supposed to count as a criterion of identity here, Cook's proposals are seen by Neilsen as an important historical step in the literature undermining the attractions of the so-called 'Cartesian' approach in which sensations are assimilated into a special category of private 'mental' as distinct from 'physical' object. If Neilsen's treatment here seems to be recounting something with which we are now almost too familiar, this is no doubt because the message from Cook that 'sensations as private objects' is solely the result of being under the influence of a false grammatical analogy, has now become an accepted feature of the philosophical landscape. Neilsen is describing here what has come to be known as 'early Cook', and it is no doubt some form of testimonial when a philosopher's thinking is divided into 'earlier' and 'later' periods. Later Cook does not figure in any detail in Neilsen's coverage of the literature, which deals primarily with Cook's three well-known papers from the 1960's and 70's, pointing in particular to the now very familiar 'Human Beings' in which Cook effectively treats § 258 not as a *reductio* on Malcolm's lines, but as a devious heuristic device indicating that when severed from their ordinary contexts of application in multifarious human activities, attempts to talk about naming and remembering sensations by disembodied

souls, become unintelligible. This may very well be a reflection of the influence of Bouwsma's therapeutic approach on Cook, which would be regarded nowadays by some philosophers to have been ahead of its time. Neilsen ends this section, however, by claiming that appeals to ordinary language in themselves require to be backed by important discoveries about the nature of language as such, before a decisive argument against the possibility of a private language - showing that in some sense language is essentially public - can be invoked. Here Neilsen is surely best regarded as making a point relevant to Wittgenstein's interpreters rather than to Wittgenstein himself, for whom the proposal that language either is, or is not *essentially* public as a statement of metaphysical *fact* would itself have been a symptom of confusion.

Chapter 8, together with parts of Chapter 10, prove to contain some of the more interesting discussions in the book, for these consider firstly the readings of § 258, § 265 and § 270 by Sir Anthony Kenny which in Neilsen's estimation come close to capturing what Wittgenstein on private language is really about. Certainly, times have changed: there is just not the same determination today as there was forty or fifty years ago to discuss what was presumed to be the fine argument of these passages in the detail that used to be regarded as essential, because more therapeutic interpretations of Wittgenstein's methodology inevitably tend to emphasise his concern to uproot philosophical confusion; and this does not dispose commentators to look for the kinds of detailed argument which they may not even presume these passages to contain.

The real difficulty that has occupied the innumerable commentators who have discussed § 258 is that of pinpointing just what the private linguist's problem is supposed to be. After all, if we follow the thinking of Kripke and Ayer, for example, it would appear that there need be no problem at all: the sensations of their private linguist present themselves to him exactly as the *kinds* of sensations that they are, so that there just is no problem of 'identifying' them and 'reidentifying' them as they recur, irrespective of the lack of what to Kripke is evidently a quite incidental 'public' context. Their concept of privacy is in effect a perfectly ordinary notion of

privacy, just as their notion of a private language is that of a version of English only used purely 'privately', *i.e.*, in total isolation from a public context. But it is never made clear what would distinguish this supposed isolation *in principle* from what would be no more than an isolation *in practice* from a public context, because it is evident that their concept of a 'private' language is comparable to that of the philosopher who is given to suddenly imagining himself without a body, unable to communicate with others, yet still able to talk to himself inwardly about his sensations in a 'Cartesian' fashion. Yet Wittgenstein's objection to this conception of a private linguist would be methodological rather than logical: what sense the private linguist's claims have in this context is based entirely on his prior mastery of a public language: the claims of Kripke's linguist gain what sense they have only because this individual, whether now conceived as a disembodied soul or not, has been surreptitiously segregated from the stable background in which he originally acquired the language he pretends to think of as 'private'. For particular purposes, Wittgenstein would have had no objection to our indulging in this kind of fantasy, even if the price paid is inevitably that it has no philosophical significance.

An importance consequence of this understanding of what Kripke and Ayer are up to, is that if we assume with them for the purposes of their argument that our sensations are in this way intrinsically meaningful, then there simply cannot be a problem of having to invoke some independent standard in order to distinguish Malcolm's following a rule from only being under the impression that one is following a rule. There may indeed be a *separate* question at stake over the very idea of a born Crusoe inventing a language for himself, which is brought to a head with the thought that whatever he does can be made to appear, on some interpretation, to be in accord with the rule he is endeavouring to follow ; but *that* question with its overtones of *Platonism v rule scepticism*, is just not the issue at stake in § 258.

So what is ? One answer is to draw the inevitable conclusion that the problem faced by the private linguist is that, initially, his sensations, unlike Kripke's, are *not* sensations of particular kinds, so that his problem in 'providing a meaning for his sign S' is from the beginning the much

deeper problem of having to confer meaning on his own private world: endowing his sign with meaning is inseparable from converting his bare sensations into sensations which can be 'identified' and 'reidentified' under a meaning-rule. The question is how this is to be achieved, and the answer would appear to be that a *connection* must be established between the sign and the sensation, since 'recognising' the sensation on its recurrence as the *same*, is at least partly what constitutes experiencing *again* a sensation of the same *kind*. But here it must be remembered that this language is intended to be intrinsically private in a radical sense, and this requires that these sensations must have *individual* criteria of identity, with the consequence that it should be possible simultaneously to have two sensations of the same kind. This requires that they each must be recognised under a meaning-rule *prior* to determining whether one of them is or is not individually the same one as a sensation previously identified. But our very idea of an ordinary *sensation* precludes the existence of criteria of identity allowing for the possibility of identifying sensations after this manner. It follows that if, in using this model, an attempt is made to identify and reidentify an *individual* sensation in accordance with the criterionless aspect of first person sensation ascription, then 'whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about "right" '.

On the other hand, if we assume from the beginning with Ayer and Kripke that our sensations are intrinsically meaningful, then criteria of identity are not required in talking of the same sensation, beyond 'I have learnt English', and there can be no problem of identifying a sensation as falling under a meaning-rule prior to recording it as the same sensation, because first person sensation ascription is criterionless and so without grounds. Certainly, the notion that our sensations are intrinsically meaningful quite independently of the acquisition of a public language is an element in the *Augustinian Picture*, and Wittgenstein counters this by drawing our attention to the common fact that we learn a language in a public context. But this is not a question of our *necessarily* acquiring a language in a public context. It points only to the principle

that we cannot even envisage a language which is *not* intrinsically public, for that in accordance with the criterionless aspect of first person sensation ascription is something that has no *sense*.

It is important, therefore, to distinguish the question of how our sensation terms acquire meaning in practice, from the distinct question of the nature of first person sensation ascription, and whilst Wittgenstein tends to treat them together as in the last paragraph of § 288, the issues are quite separate. It is for this reason that if we cut out human behaviour as the expression of sensation, then it *seems* we might *legitimately* doubt afresh only if we are prepared to abandon the model of first person criterionless sensation ascription in favour of the model of a private object. But that model is illusory, and whilst the fantasies of Ayer and Kripke are indeed an expression of the Augustinian picture, they still make *sense*. The fact that they do also reveals the extent to which Colin McGinn, for example, goes astray in concluding that Wittgenstein ‘invites us to believe that someone whose sensations happen to have no behavioral expression is semantically impotent in respect of those sensations.’ (30) But McGinn is assuming that what is being provided by Wittgenstein here is a logical argument, when he is doing no more than issue a reminder of the circumstances in which we learn how sensation terms are applied.

So how far does this account approximate to Kenny’s succinct treatment of the relevant passages in the *Investigations* ? The salient point is actually one that Neilsen finds rather too subtle, one in which Kenny ‘sacrificed clarity for compactness’. (30) The reference is to § 270, and Kenny’s rejection of the ‘intermediate step’ between having the sensation and judging that one’s blood pressure is rising, a step which would consist in *recognising* the sensation as a sensation of a particular kind, prior to judging that this kind of sensation indicates a rise in blood pressure. But if this is a normal sensation of a particular kind, there can be no intermediate (private) step: the distinction between *recognising* a sensation prior to *describing* is one that has no application to our ordinary sensation language. The difference between § 270 and § 258, therefore, is that § 258 presents the idea of a sensation that is not already an ordinary sensation of a particular kind, a sensation which has effectively to be

identified in terms of criteria if it is to be a truly *private* sensation. The gist of Kenny's treatment and of Wittgenstein's is to show that if a purely private sensation is *defined* in these terms, then there is nothing that could count as identifying and reidentifying a sensation purely privately, for there is nothing in which conferring meaning on a purely private sensation term could even be taken to consist. This reflects the point that if we are, like Kripke and Ayer, to think that we can name our sensations 'privately', then this is possible only because this procedure is being surreptitiously divorced from the public background against which it habitually takes place.

In short, if we are to talk of naming our sensations in an uncontroversial way, against the background of our prior acquaintance with a public language, then *meaning* must be presupposed. Kenny's arguments against privacy are then no more than a reflection of this principle. In his wish to show that 'This is called "S"' is not a way of conferring meaning on "S" in the private language, for example, Kenny invites the private linguist to answer the question what he means by "S", and proposes three possible answers none of which can give him what he requires. The first answer is 'By "S" I mean this', when 'This is "S"' is not a genuine statement, for what gives it its content is the same as what gives it its truth. The second answer is 'By "S" I mean the sensation I named "S" in the past', when this depends on memory and it is possible to call up the wrong memory, so that 'whatever is going to seem right to me is right.' The third concerns § 270 which has already been considered.

If Kenny's presentation here seems rather trite, almost as if he is begging the question, this is simply because he is envisaging circumstances in which by definition *meaning* is not already presupposed, and if it *were* to be presupposed, then it could be so only in a public language. But this is not a begging of the question: it follows from the very way in which a private language has already been *defined*. Ayer indirectly makes this point perfectly clear in the course of presenting an argument in which he certainly does not think that 'This is "S"' if uttered would be a totally empty proposition:

The recognition consists in treating whatever it may be as an instance of its kind, as being '*the same*' as a previous specimen which, if no label has yet been applied to it, may itself be remembered simply as being, in a more or less shadowy context, the same as *this*. If the kind has been labelled, the disposition to apply the same label enters into the process of recognition; and here it must not be forgotten that the labels themselves have to be recognised. (31)

But Ayer can adopt this procedure here purely because he has already assumed that our sensations are intrinsically meaningful, an assumption that, for the purposes of his argument, he is perfectly free to make, even if this does ultimately make sense from the standpoint of Wittgenstein's methodology only against the background of his prior knowledge of a public language. Consequently, if Neilsen is correct in thinking that Kenny comes closer than most commentators to capturing what is at stake in the elaborate scenarios envisaged in the three important passages discussed, it is important to clarify exactly what this comes to. If there is one salient point on which the presentation given here differs from Kenny's, it rests on the requirement that sensations as identified in the private language must each be recognised under a meaning-rule *prior* to determining whether one of them is or is not individually the same one as a sensation previously identified, a condition requiring the background of that mock spatio-temporal context referred to earlier on, and rendering the very idea of a private language inherently absurd. Neilsen suggests that one of the reasons Kenny has been easily misread along verificationist lines by Marks and Candlish is that his argument 'was at crucial points very hard to decipher and distinguish from a verificationist account' (31); but if we see Kenny's treatment in the right light, this is surely being more than a little unfair to him. Neilsen in any event slightly revises this view in Chapter 10.

Chapter 10 is Neilsen's opportunity to pull the various strands of his previous argumentation together in the hope of providing what he regards as succinct and authoritative versions of those passages within §§ 243-315 - § 258, § 265, § 270, and § 293 - mentioning Candlish, Canfield, Hacker and von Savigny as those whose works can, in his estimation, make the strongest claim to have provided a proper interpretation of Wittgenstein. Despite a slight tendency to waffle at the beginning over the question of the lack of interpretative agreement amongst scholars *versus* a newly-found professional consensus on §§ 243 - 315, the Chapter does manage to pull itself together even although it could still have been much improved by being tightened and properly focussed on its real objectives. Ultimately, for Neilsen, the private linguist's attempts to confer meaning on his sign are incoherent, because what he is really attempting to do is remember what his sign means, and this can only presuppose that it is already meaningful: he cannot magically endow it with meaning. In this respect, early Kripke is correct after all insofar as this is only what he is confirming in his implicit claim that his sensations are intrinsically meaningful : unless sensations appear in every respect as sensations of particular kinds - and what could it possibly mean for them not to ? - there is nothing in which naming them (uncontroversially) could be taken to consist.

Wittgenstein's chain of reasoning points to the further claim - based on the need for criteria in the private but not in the public case - that this makes sense only within a language which is already public in principle. In the course of revealing that Candlish misinterprets Kenny by imputing to him a version of memory scepticism, Neilsen reintroduces Kenny as someone who, with Candlish, properly interprets Wittgenstein on § 258. Lumping together § 270 and § 293 in what he calls *The Manometer - Beetle Argument*, Neilsen also stresses that the overall point of § 270 will be completely misunderstood unless it is acknowledged that this passage incorporates a transition to ordinary sensation language in which sensations are not recognised or identified according to criteria.

This point can be expressed by imagining that every time I have a sharp pain in my knee I discover that my blood pressure rises, but that every time I have a dull pain in my foot my blood pressure falls. The medical explanation for these phenomena need hardly arise. The point remains that

in these cases it is not only going to make a recognisable difference to the behaviour of the manometer whether I have one kind of pain or the other, but also that my correctly predicting the manometer reading is going to correspond to my reporting *what* kind of sensation I am having. If, for example, I temporarily forget the proper correlation and predict a rise in blood pressure on having a dull pain in my foot, then I will have made a quite definite mistake in my prediction. In the same way, if I instead make only a slip of the tongue by saying that there is a rise in blood pressure when I report a dull pain in my foot, intending to refer to my knee, I will still have made the right prediction regardless of how clumsy I have been in stating what I feel, since this slip of the tongue was no part of my intention. It then follows that when Wittgenstein talks of its being quite indifferent whether I have recognised the sensation *right* or not, he is either referring to a private *object* that has no part to play in talking about our sensations, because it is only on this *inapplicable* model that a question of correct or incorrect *recognition* arises, or he is simply reiterating the point that since a question of recognition does not arise in those cases where we talk about our ordinary sensations, the private object drops out of consideration altogether. Neilsen is justified in concluding that a similar point is being made in § 293 - and incidentally in §§ 271-2 - where the vivid imagery of the *Beetle in the Box* is no more than a reminder that if when doing philosophy the tendency is to reify private objects in this fashion, then we will be tempted to ask the kinds of questions asked by Pitcher and Donagan, who were prone to query whether there *really* are private sensations which are qualitatively the same for each of them.

Neilsen remarks at the end of Chapter 10 that Wittgenstein's treatment of a private language nowhere excludes the possibility of an infant Robinson Crusoe inventing a language for himself, so making Crusoe a potential speaker. Here it is almost as if he is oblivious of Wittgenstein's point that our attraction to Crusoe is symptomatic of our being party to a picture which is doing no real work, one which underlies the philosophical urge to talk at a more sophisticated level about innate conceptual capacities and intrinsically meaningful sensations which can be named prior to the acquisition of a public language.

The intermediate Chapter, No. 9 in which Neilsen discusses 'The Rule-Following Considerations' central to Saul Kripke's picture of Wittgenstein as a rule sceptic providing a 'sceptical solution' to a sceptical paradox, will inevitably appear - to those who adhere to this version of the private language argument in the *Investigations* - to embody a misrepresentation of the real meaning of the rule-following passages: Kripke argues that §§ 243-315 are a special case of what is going on in §§ 138-242. Certainly, Kripke's treatment does appear to be something of an anomaly from Neilsen's historical perspective, but the linear progression he discovers in revealing the evolution of the argument about *sensations* as it has developed in the literature suggests that there are very good reasons for adopting the traditional view that §§ 243-315 require separate treatment. But Neilsen has an additional justification for thinking that Kripke and Wittgenstein have different agendas, for he sees the sceptical paradox as an expression of the closed *picturing* function of language in the *Tractatus*, in contrast to the role of language in the *Investigations*: as an open-textured and constantly developing and changing medium, a means of *communication* set against a background of social customs and institutions.

Whilst Neilsen would be the first to claim that this description is probably too brief to be of any real value as it stands, and whilst there has been occasion to quote Kripke here only in relation to a viewpoint of his 'early self' shared with Ayer in which he is shown to adhere to an important element in the Augustinian Picture, it would be better to see Wittgenstein's reaction to his sceptical paradox - which is generally agreed to differ in detail from Kripke's - as a further reaction to a *picture*; and the characteristic question he asks of a picture is what is to be done with it? How is it to be used? He does not *answer* the sceptical paradox expressed in the picture by saying that we *really do* act in accordance with a rule which stretches to infinity, any more than he *answers* the problem of other minds expressed in the picture by claiming that we *really do* have direct access to the thoughts and feelings of others: these requirements are the source of the philosophical confusions the *pictures* serve to express. In § 201, 'It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here....' is a way of once again drawing attention to the fact

that when doing philosophy, in this case 'we gave one interpretation after another', as if we could not be content with any one of them because we were under the spell of a picture which had no genuine application, a point emphasised in his immediate reference to the everyday contexts in which we naturally 'obey the rule' and 'go against it' in *actual* cases. The problem of other minds, like the sceptical paradox, has no answer at the level of the question, because the question is itself a reflection of the very *picture* requiring the philosopher to turn the investigation around in order to relinquish its hold: only then can the philosophical landscape be viewed from a wholly different perspective.

In the final analysis, Neilsen's book makes for a very good read. It is a highly competent historical account bristling with argument on every page. He is at his best in reviewing this argument. It is often better avoiding the kind of broad historical overviews instantly requiring minor or even major qualification. Perhaps he could have drawn attention to the therapeutic approaches to Wittgenstein's philosophy which became more prominent from the 1990's - the change in Gordon Baker's work being a prime example - and perhaps he could have related this to how a perspective on private language may be reflected in the much-discussed Diamond-Conant interpretation of the *Tractatus*. Diamond's paper on the private language argument she discovers in the *Tractatus* is particularly relevant. But these are minor points in an otherwise significant achievement.

Proof-reading could have been considerably improved. In the last chapter alone, six pages long, providing a brief review of Wittgenstein and contemporary philosophy, there is a characteristic 'Here is bold statement of these conclusions' at the beginning of paragraph 4, on page 178; a reference to 'Hutchinson/Read (2005)' at the foot of this page which cannot be found in the Bibliography; and another 'It would misleading not to mention Sellars and Quine...' on page 181 paragraph 3, line 3. There are too many instances of missing definite and indefinite articles and prepositions, occasional unnecessary use of the definite article, with rarer faults of English idiom. On page 61, penultimate paragraph, Neilsen understands Strawson's claim that in reading this section of the *Investigations* 'one may well feel one's capacity to learn coming to an end' to mean that the relevant passages are very difficult to understand, when it is instead a compliment to the author suggesting that his writing is so rich in content that it can take an unusually long time to absorb.

ENDNOTES

- (1) David Stern: *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), 175.
- (2) Saul Kripke: *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1982), 80.
- (3) Kripke, *Ibid.*, 60.
- (4) Nielsen, 26.
- (5) A.J. Ayer 'Can There be a Private Language?' in *Wittgenstein The Philosophical Investigations* Ed. George Pitcher (New York: Doubleday Anchor 1968), 253.
- (6) Nielsen, 25.
- (7) Nielsen, 56 and Note 12.
- (8) John Cook: *Wittgenstein's Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994), 331.
- (9) Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Occasions* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. 1993), Rush Rhees: Wittgenstein's Lectures 1936 'The Language of Sense-Data and Private Experience, 340.
- (10) David Stern: 'Wittgenstein, The Vienna Circle and Physicalism: a Reassessment' *The Cambridge Companion to Logical Empiricism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 305.
- (11) Cora Diamond: "Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in His Box? " in *The New Wittgenstein* (Routledge: London 2000), 278.
- (12) Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Ludwig Wittgenstein and The Vienna Circle - Conversations recorded by Friedrich Waismann*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), quoted Neilsen: *Ibid.*,29.
- (13) *Philosophical Occasions, Ibid.*, 450.
- (14) *Ibid.*, 454.
- (15) *Ibid.*, 451 *et seq.*
- (16) Neilsen, 54.
- (17) Pitcher, ed. 1968 contains all the relevant papers.
- (18) Strawson in Pitcher ed. 1968, 44.
- (19) *Ibid.*
- (20) Neilsen, 69.
- (21) In, for example, A.J.Ayer: *Wittgenstein* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), 74 -75.
- (22) Neilsen, quoted 71.
- (23) Malcolm in Pitcher ed. 1968, 380-81.
- (24) G.P. Baker & P.M.S. Hacker: *Scepticism, Rules and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 111.
- (25) Malcolm in Pitcher ed. 1968, 42-45.
- (26) George Pitcher: *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 281.
- (27) Neilsen, 97.
- (28) Donagan in Pitcher ed. 1968, 332.
- (29) *Ibid.*, 347.
- (30) Colin McGinn: "Budd: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology", *Minds and Bodies: Philosophers and Their Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 188. A clear echo of Kripke.
- (31) A.J. Ayer: "Reply to David Pears", *The Philosophy of A.J.Ayer* ed. L.E. Hahn (La Salle Illinois: Open Court, 1992) 403.

As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. His latest, on Wittgenstein, appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH.