Discussion

Locating Wittgenstein

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I

Wittgenstein wrote 'While thinking philosophically we see problems in places where there are none. It is for philosophy to show that there are no problems'.[1] He meant that the 'problems' philosophers grapple with are of their own making. In a related remark he said: 'This is the essence of a philosophical problem. The question itself is the result of a muddle. And when the question is removed, this is not by answering it'.[2] Even more explicitly he said: 'All that philosophy can do is to destroy idols'.[3] As he understood his job, it was not to produce or construct something; his job was entirely destructive. (He compared it to destroying houses of cards.[4]) This is how Wittgenstein thought of philosophy when he thought about it in the abstract, and I share this view of philosophy. I believe that when we see how to dispose of all philosophical categories, our job is finished. For example, in epistemology our job is not to argue that it is possible to know such-and-such *because so-and-so*; rather, we undermine all those ideas that make it seem as though we could *not* know such-and-such. Undermining philosophical ideas takes the form: When we philosophise, we are tempted to think so-and-so, but if we consider that idea, and do so *while remaining free of all philosophical jargon*, we find that we cannot make sense of it.[5]

[1] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Anthony Kenny (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 47.

[2] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions*, eds. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 366.

[3] *Ibid.*, 171.

[4] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, eds. G. E. M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, trans, G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, Blackwell, 1953), §118.

[5] For illustrations of this method see chapters 4 and 15 of my *Wittgenstein, Empiricism and Language* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999).

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At one time I naïvely assumed that Wittgenstein, in addition to holding this view of philosophy in the abstract, actually practiced philosophy in this manner. Eventually it dawned on me that we never find Wittgenstein, in his writings and lectures, conducting his philosophising in this manner. (As Frank Ebersole has put it, Wittgenstein 'does not – in truth – ever follow his own advice'.[6]) What we find, rather, is that he clung to philosophical ideas that he ought to have challenged. And some of those ideas, I came to realize, comprise the core of neutral monism, the elimination of the self or ego. So I abandoned my naïve interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophical practise and set about explaining, in the course of three books and many articles, how he could have been a neutral monist (of sorts) while also thinking, in the abstract, that the business of philosophy is to demolish philosophical ideas. I was surprised, therefore, to find Rom Harré arguing in these pages that I failed to realise that Wittgenstein did practise what he preached, that it was I who made glaring philosophical mistakes.[7] My surprise was short lived, however, for I quickly realized that Harré concerned himself with only two recent articles of mine.[8] I was at fault, no doubt, for having failed to explain that these articles were intended to do no more than supplement my books on the subject, where much fuller documentation can be found.

II

In his article Harré takes issue with two claims that I make. The first of these is that, while Wittgenstein rejected the Cartesian (immaterial) mind, he retained the Cartesian (material) body, so that he mapped thoughts, sensations, emotions, and the like onto human bodies, which is to say that he was a behaviourist, albeit a very untypical one. According to Harré, this reading of Wittgenstein is wildly

[6] Ebersole, *Meaning and Saying* (Washington, D. C., University Press of America, 1979), ix.

[7] Harré, 'The Complexity of Wittgenstein's Methods', *Philosophy* **83**, 255–265. Page references in the text that are not otherwise identified are references to this article.

[8] He cites two recent articles of mine: 'Did Wittgenstein Practise What He Preached?' *Philosophy* **81**, 445–462 and 'Did Wittgenstein Speak with the Vulgar or Think with the Learned? Or Did He do Both?' *Philosophy* **82**, 213–233.

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wrong, for he rejected both components of the Cartesian person, the body as well as the mind.

My second claim is that Wittgenstein, in his later years, never relinquished the view he expressed in the *Tractatus* by saying: 'There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas'[9] – which is to say that Wittgenstein never abandoned the neutral monist idea that the first person pronoun in such statements as 'I am thinking' and 'I am dizzy' is not used to refer to something, as it is in 'I am six feet tall'. Harré declares that in cases of both sorts the pronoun is a referring expression, although not in the way that a person's name is, and he claims, moreover, that Wittgenstein understood and affirmed this.

At one time I agreed with Harré about the first of these claims. I argued in some detail that Wittgenstein was not a behaviourist.[10] I long ago saw that I was wrong and will presently explain my change of mind. I must begin, however, by discussing Harré's objection to my second claim, because Wittgenstein's treatment of the first person pronoun is central to his thinking, both early and late.

III

Hume famously claimed that when he looked most intimately into himself he always came upon some thought or feeling or perception but never a self that had these mental states. This was the stroke that initiated neutral monism.[11] Hume also said, 'The mind is a kind of theater' but immediately cautioned against being 'misled' by the comparison, for the mind, he said, is constituted solely by the successive thoughts, perceptions, etc. Some years later Ernst Mach took the matter to its final conclusion, declaring that the ego must be abolished, so that what had formerly been thought of as the contents of a mind is now understood not to be the *contents* of anything at all. Mach had knocked down the walls of Hume's metaphorical theater, thereby making reality, the world, coextensive with what

[9] Wittgenstein *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961) 5.631.

[10] See my 'Human Beings' in *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. Peter Winch (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

[11] *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (2nd ed, gen. ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge University Press, 2005) declares: 'Hume was a neutral monist' (686).

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had formerly been thought of as being in a mind and private but is now neither uniquely mental nor essentially private. Wittgenstein in his pre-*Tractatus* notebooks put it this way: 'All experience is world and does not need the subject'[12] In the *Tractatus* he wrote: 'There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas'.[13] And in his conversations with Schlick and Waismann in 1929 he said: 'The word "I" belongs to those words that can be eliminated from language'.[14] In later lectures he quoted with approval Lichtenberg's statement that instead of saying 'I think', we could say, 'It thinks', like 'It is raining',[15] and he said that this new form of words, with no referring expression, would show that the original did not mean what it appeared to mean. Wittgenstein, like Hume and Mach, had disposed of the ego.

This idea can be easily traced through Wittgenstein's writings and lectures from the 1930s right to the end of his life. Harré speaks of Wittgenstein's 'rather sketchy treatment of the uses of the first person pronoun' (255), but in fact his writings and lectures are replete with relevant comments. For example, in *Philosophical Remarks* he wrote:

> One of the most misleading representational techniques in our language is the use of the word 'I', particularly when it is used in representing immediate experience, as in 'I can see a red patch'. It would be instructive to replace this way of speaking by another in which immediate experience would be represented without using the personal pronoun; for then we'd be able to see that the previous representation wasn't essential to the facts.[16]

In The Blue Book he said: 'To say "I have pain" is no more a statement *about* a particular person that moaning is'.[17] In his lectures of 1946–47 he remarked that we tend to think that words stand for things, but 'in most cases this is inapplicable', and he went on to say:

[12] Wittgenstein, *Notebooks, 1914-1916* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1961), 89.
[13] See above.
[14] *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 49.
[15] Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge* 1932–35, ed. Alice Ambrose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 21.
[16] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975), §57.
[17] Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford University Press, 1958), 67.

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> Let's take the word "Self". One begins by saying "My body" – but if bits are chopped off… Now there begin all sort of subterfuges. The blunder is to think the word "Self" means something in the way that "body" stands for the body, e.g. stands for something inside the body. If you consider substituting a signal for "I suffer," you see that the first mistake is to take "I" as *standing* for something.[18]

As late as 1948 he was saying that 'It looks … to me' differs from 'It looks … to you' in that in the former case 'a person does not occur as perceiving subject'.[19] He also said: 'The experience of feeling pain is not that a person "I" has something. I distinguish an intensity, a location, etc. in the pain, but not an owner'.[20] In these and in many similar passages (His treatment was *not* 'sketchy') Wittgenstein was clearly saying that when using the first person pronoun in speaking of something thought or suffered, there is no reference to one who thinks or suffers.[21]

Harré pays no attention to such passages. Instead, he has a story of his own to tell, a story about Wittgenstein and indexicals. It is this: Although the word 'I' does not designate a person, 'there is another equally important way in which such expressions as "I", "here" and "now" have a referential function, namely, as indexicals' (262). Harré explains his meaning as follows: '[The first person pronoun] "I" indexes the content of the utterance it introduces with the spatio-temporal location of the speaker. The spatiotemporal indexicality of

[18] Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures on Philosophical Psychology*, ed. P. T. Geach (Chicago, University of Chicago Press), 47.

[19] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. I, eds. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. Von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), §317.

[20] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, op. cit., 94.

[21] This Humean rejection of the Cartesian self or ego had several corollaries which Wittgenstein spelled out in his writings and lectures. One of these he expressed in such phrases as 'Nothing is hidden' and 'Everything is open to view', where he meant to include, as being open to view, the 'mental life' of other people (see Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*. *op*. *cit*., 6). Another he expressed by rejecting the idea that some things are in the mind and others outside. Thus, in his 1932 lectures he said, 'This simile of being "inside" or "outside" the mind is pernicious' *(Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge* 1932–35, op. cit., 25). And later: 'The "inner" and the "outer", a *picture*' (Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), §554). In his last writings on this subject, in 1950, he wrote: 'The "inner" is a delusion' (Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, Vol*. *2*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 84).

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the first person in "I heard a nightingale" displays the speaker's claim to have been then and there in the forest'. He adds: '[T]he use of "I" is tied to embodied beings'.[22] – All of this sounds very unlike, and even hostile to, Wittgenstein, and yet Harré claims that in these remarks he is presenting the position Wittgenstein embraced.

There are several problems with this claim, one of them being that, unlike Harré, Wittgenstein treated very differently the use of the first person pronoun in statements about (in his phrase) a 'personal experience' and its use in a statement about one's body, such as 'I am six feet tall'.[23] As regards cases of the latter sort, Wittgenstein would have agreed with Harré that the use of 'I' is tied to material beings. But as regards cases of the former sort, such as 'I am dizzy', his position, as we have seen, was sharply and explicitly at odds with Harré's. How, then, does Harré attempt to support his (mis)-reading of Wittgenstein?

Harré says that it is a mistake to think that the first person pronoun in the sentences in question 'has no referential function at all'. He adds: 'But that function must not be construed on the model of name and object. There is another important way in which such expressions as "I", "here" and "now" have a referential function, that is as indexicals' (262). As proof that Wittgenstein understood the referential function of 'I' Harré quotes §410 of the *Investigations*:

> "I" is not the name of a person, nor "here" of a place, and "this" is not a name. But they are connected to names. Names are

[22] Harré's point about indexicals is not new to philosophy. In 1918 Russell made the same point, although his terminology was different. He spoke of a class of words which he called 'emphatic particulars', amongst which he explicitly included 'this' and 'I'. These words, he said, 'pick out certain particulars from the universe *by their relation to oneself*' (Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951), 222; emphasis added). So Russell and Harré are agreed that in such cases as 'I am in pain' the first person pronoun has a referential function. They are both opposed to Wittgenstein's three claims, regarding the cases in question: that (i) our use of 'I' is misleading except in references to a body, that (ii) Lichtenberg was right to compare 'I think' to 'It is raining', and that (iii) saying 'I am in pain' is like groaning, in that in neither case is a person mentioned or alluded to.

[23] See Wittgenstein: *The Blue and Brown Books*, op. cit., 66; *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932–1935*, 21 and *Philosophical Occasions*, op. cit., 101. He also treated differently what 'I' means to the speaker and what it means to the hearer. For example, he wrote: 'Remember that whatever the word "I" means to you, to the other man it draws his attention to a human body…' *Ibid.*, 228).

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> explained by means of them. It is also true that it is characteristic of physics not to use these words.[24]

Commenting on this passage, Harré says (262) that Wittgenstein is here 'making the point' about the indexical function of 'I', and he offers no other proof of this. A paragraph later he comments: 'Wittgenstein's comparison between the uses of the first person and exemplary indexicals such as "here" and "this" leaves no doubt as to his understanding of the role of "I"' (263). Unfortunately, Wittgenstein's comparison in PI §410 does no such thing.

Consider the following points. First, because Harré fails to realize that Wittgenstein treats ''I' differently depending on the nature of the statement it introduces, his remarks do not (unambiguously) engage with Wittgenstein's. Second, there is nothing in PI §410 about the way so-called indexicals work. Wittgenstein says only that the three words he mentions are not names, but this negative claim neither says nor implies anything about whether 'I' is used as a referring expression in the cases in question. That being so, Harré's evidence is no evidence at all. Third, throughout Wittgenstein's writings and lectures there are many passages, some of which I have quoted, which echo Hume on the self and make it entirely implausible that he intended PI §410 to convey Harré's point about 'I'. These passages are vital to Wittgenstein's philosophy, and yet Harré takes no notice of them.

What, then, was Wittgenstein's intention in PI §410? Why would he have bothered to state the obvious fact that the three words he mentions there are not names? Who in the world would have thought otherwise? I suspect that that was Harré's reaction; he could not imagine that Wittgenstein could have meant to be saying here something so obvious as that the three words cited are not names. (It is just too obvious that if a person is asked 'And what is *your* name?', he cannot suitably answer 'I'.) This is what happens when a philosopher tries to interpret the *Investigations* while treating as irrelevant Wittgenstein's early years, especially his connections with Russell.[25] What, then, was Wittgenstein commenting on in PI §410?

In 1910, in the course of explaining meaning and denotation, Russell wrote something that in later years continued to shape the way Wittgenstein discussed the first person pronoun. Russell wrote:

[24] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, op. cit. §410.

[25] In the appendix of *Wittgenstein, Empiricism and Language* I cite numerous instances in which Wittgenstein is reacting to something Russell had said.

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> The denotation [of a word] … is not a constituent of a proposition, except in the case of proper names, i.e. words which do not assign a property to an object, but merely and solely name it. And I should hold further that, in this sense, there are only two words which are strictly proper names, namely, 'I' and 'this'.[26]

So in 1910 Russell held that in the case of, for example, 'I am in a lot of pain' the speaker is a 'constituent of the fact'[27] that he or she is in pain. This is what Wittgenstein was intent on denying in the passage Harré cites. It has nothing to do with indexicals.

It is worth noting that Russell soon changed his mind about 'I', and when he reprinted this 1910 article in *Mysticism and Logic* he appended to the lines I have quoted the following note: 'I should now exclude "I" from proper names in the strict sense, and retain only "this" [1917]' (*ibid.*). He did not set out in this note the reason for his change of mind, but in a 1914 article in *The Monist* he did so as follows:

> Hume's inability to perceive himself was not peculiar, and I think most unprejudiced observers would agree with him. Even if by great exertion some rare person could catch a glimpse of himself, this would not suffice [as a standard for the common use of 'I']; for 'I' is a term which we all know how to use, and which must therefore have some easily accessible meaning. It follows that the word 'I', as commonly employed, … cannot be a true proper name in the logical sense, since true proper names can only be conferred on objects with which we are acquainted.[28]

Wittgenstein, in PI §410, was thinking along the same lines as Russell was when writing this. Recall here Wittgenstein's 1948 remark (quoted above) that 'It looks … to me' differs from 'It looks … to you' in that in the former case 'a person does not occur as perceiving

[26] 'Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description' reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic*, op. cit., 1951, 224 (originally published in 1910).

[27] Philosophical terminology changes from time to time, and here we have a case in point. Whereas in 1910 Russell, Moore, and others spoke of a 'constituent of a proposition', they would later use the more understandable phrase 'constituent of a fact'. I have chosen to use the latter phrase.

[28] 'On the Nature of Acquaintance' reprinted in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. Robert C. Marsh (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), 164.

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subject'. Clearly, where there is no subject there can be no reference to a subject.

IV

How was it possible for Harré to go so far wrong in his interpretation of Wittgenstein? At least part of the explanation is that he made the very common mistake of supposing that Wittgenstein was a garden variety ordinary language philosopher, meaning that when he discussed a word or form of words, his aim was to give a straightforward – rather than a metaphysically influenced – description of its use. This is the way Wittgenstein's method was described by, for example, O. K. Bouwsma, a prominent Wittgensteinian and a teacher of mine. He remarked that Wittgenstein's method, surprisingly, 'turns out to be so simple'[29] and gave this account of it: His method 'consists in reminding oneself of what one says, the lay of the lingo in the surroundings of this or that word, what words, sentences, go together with the word or expression about which one is concerned'.[30] The implication is that if you learn how to do this, you will become the sort of philosopher Wittgenstein was. Harré, quite clearly, has learned how to do this and so thinks that *his* account of how a word is used would agree with Wittgenstein's. The trouble is that Bouwsma's description of Wittgenstein's method describes only half of it. The other half is that, to agree with Wittgenstein, one must agree that many ordinary forms of words, including the first person pronoun, mislead us, by their grammatical form, into some very wrong-headed philosophical ideas.[31] If one fails to carry out this latter half of the method, one's employment of the first half only leaves one more completely ensnared – so Wittgenstein thought-by the misconceptions caused by the grammar of ordinary language.

[29] Oets Bouwsma, 'The Blue Book', reprinted in *Philosophical Essays* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press: 1965) 189.

[30] To be fair to Bouwsma, I must add that he discussed at length in this piece Wittgenstein's account of how one falls into – and can escape from – philosophical muddles. But he discussed this only in the abstract and did not review what Wittgenstein did in particular cases.

[31] Just how one is to recognize those misleading forms of words is not clearly spelled out by Wittgenstein, but I have given an account of this in my book '*The Undiscovered Wittgenstein*' (Amherst, Humanity Books, 2005), 65–75 and in "Bouwsma on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Method,' *Philosophical Investigations*, 31:4, 302–310.

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This is what happened to Harré. While he gives a faithful account of the use of the first person pronoun, i.e. its indexical character, he ignores the fact that Wittgenstein repeatedly warned that the first person pronoun is the source of a major philosophical confusion. In a passage quoted above he said: 'One of the most misleading representational techniques in our language is the use of the word "I", particularly when it is used in representing immediate experience…' In what way is it misleading? Because it tempts us to think of 'I' as standing for something, as having a referential function. It is clear that Harré succumbed to this temptation, and it blinded him to the fact that, as Wittgenstein saw the matter, we must realize that there simply is no self or subject to refer to when speaking of a personal experience. Or as he put it in the 1948 passage quoted above: When we speak of a perception in the first-person 'a person does not occur as a perceiving subject'. And obviously, where there is no subject, there can be no reference to a subject, not even indexically.

Wittgenstein was speaking of the dual aspect of his method when, in 1947, he wrote: 'How far do we investigate the use of words? – Don't we also judge it? Don't we also say that this features is essential, that one inessential?'[32] The questions are rhetorical, of course. He clearly held that the first person pronoun is inessential in statements about one's 'personal experiences', so that we could simply eliminate the pronoun. This is the part that Harré has overlooked or ignored. We can see from the following passage how Wittgenstein would have regarded Harré's indexical account. He remarks that we tend to think of our present language as being without defects, then adds: '… and hence we think we describe phenomena incompletely if we leave out personal pronouns. It is as though we had omitted pointing to something, since the word "I" seems to point to a person. But we can leave out the word "I" and still describe the phenomena formerly described. It is not the case that certain changes in our symbolism are really omissions'.[33] In other words, Harré's mistake about 'I' is the result of his thinking that our present language is, from a philosophical point of view, beyond reproach. He was not heeding Wittgenstein's prescription: 'Distrust of grammar is the first requisite for philosophizing'.[34]

[32] *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* Vol. I, op. cit., §666.
[33] *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1932–1935*, op. cit., 21–22.
[34] 'Notes on Logic' in *Notebooks, 1914–1916*, op. cit., 93.

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V

I turn now to Harré's objection to my first claim, and here the issue is as follows. I have maintained that in order to dispose of the skeptical problem of other minds, it is necessary to show what is wrong with the idea of a Cartesian body. In other words, it will not suffice to dispose of the idea of Cartesian minds, for doing merely *that* would leave us saddled with something, namely, a Cartesian body, that is no more qualified to be the locus of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and the like than a brick is. So in order to understand how we often know what other people are thinking or feeling, we must somehow dispose of the idea that what we see when we see another person is a Cartesian body. And I have argued, moreover, that Wittgenstein failed to do that. In fact, it seems never to have occurred to him that the idea of Cartesian bodies is just as problematic as the idea of Cartesian minds. This is what Harré disagrees with. He claims that Wittgenstein managed to 'ditch' both components of a Cartesian person. Forty years ago that was my own interpretation of Wittgenstein, but I have long since repudiated that opinion. Perhaps, however, Harré has discovered something in Wittgenstein's writings and lectures that I have overlooked. So let us consider his evidence.

I will point out, first of all, that Harré does not cite a single passage in which Wittgenstein discusses and criticizes the philosopher's use of the word 'body'. He doesn't do so because there *are* no such passages in Wittgenstein's writings or lectures. That there are no such passages is in itself very revealing, inasmuch as other philosophers have successfully undertaken that critical task.[35] Did Harré not even notice this most revealing lacuna in Wittgenstein's work?

Equally significant is the fact that Harré makes no attempt to explain away passages that appear to show that Wittgenstein failed to recognize that Cartesian bodies are just as problematic as Cartesian minds and must be got rid of. I am referring to passages such as the following: 'Talk about a chair and a human body and all is well; talk about negation or the human mind and things begin to look queer'.[36] He is, of course, referring here to philosophers'

[35] For detailed criticisms of the philosophical notion of a body, see the following two articles by Douglas C. Long: 'Descartes' Argument for Mind-Body Dualism', *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. I, No. 3 (Spring, 1969), 259–273, and 'The Bodies of Persons', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol LXXI, No. 10 (May, 1974), 291–301.

[36] *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1932–1935, op. cit.*, 119.

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talk about 'human bodies', not our colloquial talk about torsos or corpses. So we can take him to be saying here that when philosophers talk about (human) bodies, 'all is well'. And he left no doubt that he regarded *people* as bodies. He said that 'other people's names refer to bodies'[37] and in *The Big Typescript* wrote: 'I regard a person's name as the name of a body'.[38] We also find him saying: 'If I talk of seeing, then as a rule I think of a subject which sees an object – I think of a human body and before his eyes a certain object'.[39] A philosopher who realized that the philosophical idea of a body is just as muddled as the idea of a Cartesian mind would not have said such things.

It may be suggested here that Wittgenstein could have changed his mind in his later years. But if we consult his 1946–47 lectures, we find him saying that when a person makes a decision, he 'says something and his body acts accordingly'.[40] And in the *Investigations* he writes: 'The human body is the best picture of the human soul' (178). This is not the way a philosopher would talk if he thought it important to dispose of the philosophical idea of human bodies.

Bear in mind here that the problem of other minds is one of the most often discussed and hotly debated problems in modern philosophy, and Wittgenstein devoted a great deal of time trying to deal with it. (Think, for example, of his extremely elaborate notion of criteria.[41]) So we may safely assume that if he had recognized that one key to the whole problem lay in disposing of the idea of Cartesian bodies, he would have made it clear that this *is* what he thought, and in addition would have devoted considerable space to discussing that idea and, most importantly, would not have gone on using the word 'body' as though it were not a source of great trouble. But we find none of this. Wittgenstein did not even hint that we ought to subject the philosophical idea of a body to careful scrutiny.

In what way, then, does Harré undertake to make a case for his reading? He cites two sorts of evidence from Wittgenstein writings. First, and most importantly, he cites several passages from the *Investigations* which show, he claims, that Wittgenstein abandoned the Cartesian distinction between mind and body 'in favour of a

[37] *Ibid*., 61.
[38] *The Big Typescript* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 360.
[39] *Philosophical Occasions, 1912–1951*, op.cit., 365.
[40] *Wittgenstein's Lectures on Philosophical Psychology, op. cit., 36*.
[41] In my book *Wittgenstein, Empiricism and Language* I devoted chapters 7, 8 and 9 to expounding Wittgenstein's concept of criteria and showed (77–90) that the concept is governed by seven rules.

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spectrum of material exemplars, from stones to people'. And it is true that Wittgenstein drew attention to differences between people, stones, dolls, wriggling spiders, corpses, etc. and our varied ways of responding to such things. This, according to Harré, shows that Wittgenstein had found a way out of the problem of other minds. He writes: 'It seems to me … that Wittgenstein works with exactly the right distinction between stones and people' (259). But I fail to see how this 'spectrum of material exemplars' provides Wittgenstein with a way out of the problem of other minds. A behaviourist could perfectly well cite the differences that Wittgenstein cites and that Harré finds so significant. After all, a behaviourist only wants to say that these differences can be explained without resorting to conscious, mental states. Could that have been what Harré was wanting to say – that Wittgenstein was a behaviourist? I do not think so, but he has yet to make a case for claiming that Wittgenstein was not a behaviourist.

There is, however, a second part to Harré's way out of the problem, and it is this. He tells us that Wittgenstein, instead of claiming that we make an 'ingress into the soul' of other living beings, claims that normal human beings (unlike autistic children and adults) have 'an intact ability to share our emotional lives with others'. Of course, Wittgenstein never said exactly that, but Harré cites the fact that Wittgenstein more than once spoke of our having an attitude towards living human beings that we do not have towards, for example, corpses or dolls. This attitude, says Harré, is a 'natural' reaction – meaning, I think, that it is not based on reasoning. Harré might have quoted here, but didn't, Wittgenstein's remark: 'My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not [as dualists imagine] of the *opinion* that he has a soul'[42] I don't know exactly what this remark means, and I am not sure that anyone could make sense of it. The best I can do is to suggest that Wittgenstein was saying that we don't treat our friends and neighbours as if they were storefront manikins or robots, which is to say that we variously get angry with them, love some of them, respect some of them, try to help them, answer their questions, loan them money and so on. Was Wittgenstein calling this motley of things 'an attitude'? Or is the 'attitude' supposed to be something that underlies and explains all that?

The relevant question here is: Why did Wittgenstein think it necessary to include this life-conferring 'attitude' in his account? What was it needed for? We get a clue to this in Harré's remark:

[42] *Philosophical Investigations*, op. cit., 178.

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'From birth we are presented with material beings… Wittgenstein seems to me to be quite consistent in holding that taking some things to be people and so blessed with subjectivity and others to be stones is a matter of the *attitude* we take to them' (257). Here it rather looks as though we are to think of people as we think of Pinocchio. He started out as a piece of wood, and he *remained* a piece of wood, albeit an *animated* piece of wood. And once he became animated, others began treating him as a little boy. Is this where the so-called attitude comes into play? It allows us – or enables us – to treat *animated material things* as persons. I am not sure that this is how Harré understands the matter, although he does speak of people as 'animated bodies' (255). In any case there is some reason to think that this is how Wittgenstein thought of the matter. But did that amount to a repudiation of Cartesian bodies?

Consider a passage in The Blue Book where he addressed philosophers who think that pains, etc. 'can only be in the mind'. Wittgenstein said:

> Let us now ask: "Can a human *body* have pain?" One is inclined to say: "How can the body have a pain? The body in itself is something dead; a body isn't conscious." And here again it is as though we looked into the nature of pain and saw that it lies in its nature that a material object can't have it. And it is as though we saw that what has pain must be an entity of a different nature from that of a material object; that, in fact, it must be of a mental nature.
>
> On the other hand we can perfectly well adopt the expression "this body feels pain", and we shall then, just as usual, tell it to go to the doctor, to lie down, and even to remember that when the last time it had pains they were over in a day.[43]

You may be inclined to ask: 'But where are we to find that *body*, that material object, Wittgenstein speaks of?' If so, his answer would be: 'Look around at your family and friends; what you see are material objects that are called "bodies".' In other words, Wittgenstein was answering the initial question, 'Can a human *body* have pain?' by saying, in effect, 'Of course we can attribute pains, thoughts, emotions, etc., to bodies; we do it all the time!'

The crucial part of this passage, however, occurs in the second paragraph, where we find Wittgenstein employing his 'substitution method', which he had explained and employed earlier in *The Blue Book*.[44] This method was supposed to remove difficulties by

[43] *The Blue and The Brown Books*, op. cit., 73.
[44] *Ibid*., 23 and 49.

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substituting a new form of expression for an ordinary form in order to display the depth grammar that is not perspicuous in our colloquial phrasing. In the *Investigations* he wrote: 'Some [misunderstandings] can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another; this may be called an "analysis" of our forms of expression' (§90). So when he says in the above-quoted passage that we could adopt the expression 'this body feels pain', he is saying that this new form of expression displays the depth grammar of such ordinary forms of words as 'He is in pain' and 'Mary has a headache'. And when he says 'and we shall then, just as usual, tell it …' this reference to what is 'usual' is his way of saying that the 'This body …' locution merely gives us a new way of saying the *same* thing that we have said in the past when using third-person pronouns and people's names. (Recall here his remark: 'I regard a person's name as the name of a body'.) In other words, Wittgenstein utilized his substitution method here because he saw philosophers taking such ordinary forms of expression as 'She is in pain' and 'Mary is in pain' to be referring to something other than a body when, in truth, a body is exactly what they *are* referring to.

Moreover, this idea is not confined to his early works, for in the *Investigations* he writes: 'Only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains. For one has to say it of a body…'[45] And as I pointed out above, in his 1946–47 lectures he said that when a person makes a decision, he 'says something and his body acts accordingly'. Also it is clear from what he wrote just months before his death[46] that he still clung to the idea that a person – your friend or neighbour – is a body, a body made human by its unique, non-mechanistic way of behaving.

So it looks as though the Pinocchio analogy is the right one for Wittgenstein's account of the matter. And to complete the picture, we may take note of what he said about brains. In *On Certainty* he said that 'it is imaginable that my skull should turn out empty when it was operated on'.[47] More pointedly he remarked: 'The best

[45] §283. This passages continues, rather surprisingly, as follows: '… or, if you like, of a soul which some body *has*. And how can a body *have* a soul'. Why does Wittgenstein introduce here a soul, or, in his words, 'a soul which some body *has*'? One cannot be sure, but consider the following. If you are going to hold that it is unthinkable that a body should have a pain, why should it be more thinkable that a soul has a pain or that a body has a soul? I suspect that Wittgenstein meant that dualists should find themselves embarrassed by such questions.

[46] *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. 2, op. cit., 66–67.

[47] (Oxford, Blackwell, 1969), §4.

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prophylactic against [a philosophical confusion] is the thought that I don't know whether the humans I am acquainted with have a nervous system.'[48] He meant: If, when I philosophise about thinking or memory, I bear in mind that the people I talk to may have no brain, that is to say, if I think of them as being like Pinocchio (wooden through and through), I will avoid certain philosophical mistakes.

So there are various reasons to think that Wittgenstein never seriously challenged the idea of Cartesian bodies. Harré is wrong about that.

VI

Before ending, I must say something about the very different ways in which Harré and I understand the philosopher's task. We differ greatly in what we regard as the necessary or appropriate way of dealing with, for example, the problem of other minds. As I view the matter, our aim should be to get us back, by indisputable steps, to the position we were in before being swept up in that problem. How is that to be done? How can we justify to the sceptic the way we commonly think and talk about other people? – That's the wrong question to ask. We owe the sceptic no justification. Rather, our job is to challenge the sceptic's attempt to *create* a problem of other minds. And an important step in that direction is to dispose of Cartesian bodies, which means showing in a detailed way that we cannot, when all is said and done, make sense of that idea. When we do this, we find that in our dealings with others we are confronted, not with the inscrutable brick-like bodies that leave philosophers dumb-founded, but with our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, friends and neighbours, all untainted by metaphysics of any sort. We are now back on familiar ground. It is here that we can understand what Wittgenstein meant when he wrote (see above): 'While thinking philosophically we see problems in places where there are none. It is for philosophy to show that there are no problems'. We find that we can no longer generate the problem of other minds, that we cannot get it off the ground.[49]

[48] *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. 1, §1063.

[49] The only philosopher I know of who consistently and successfully conducts his philosophising in a way similar to the way I have tried to describe here is Frank Ebersole. See his books *Things We Know* (Xlibris,

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It looks to me as though Harré sees things very differently. He thinks it necessary to introduce various bits of philosophical machinery, such as 'animated bodies' and a life-conferring 'attitude'.[50] His aim is to devise a concept of a human being or person using a philosopher's materials. The upshot is that he cannot in this way recover our pre-philosophical state, in which the problems no longer exist.

The fact that Harré has not shown that the idea of Cartesian bodies cannot be made sense of, puts me in mind of what Arthur Murphy once said of G. E. Moore's attempt to dismiss skepticism while clinging to the idea of sense-data. He said: 'Moore rejects the sceptical conclusion, but he seems, at least at times, to have retained the assumption from which it was naturally derived'.[51]

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2001), *Meaning and Saying (*Xlibris, 2002), and *Language and Perception* (Xlibris, 2002).

[50] He also regards as philosophically essential a distinction between first-person avowals and third-person descriptions of what is thought, felt, etc. I think that this is a thoroughly bogus idea. Sometimes, of course, we react to pains by groaning or saying 'Ouch', which Harré thinks of as 'expressions of pain'. But when I go to a doctor and describe for him the aches and pains in my lower back and the tingling in my feet, I may say, for example, 'It feels like a mild electric shock'. Is that not descriptive? We should also ask how the idea of expressive language is to apply to cases in which one says, for example, 'My after-image has gone from pink to green' or 'I am thinking about your tax problems'. Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians never bring up such examples when discussing this subject; they invariably talk about pains. This constant use of pain as a paradigm is an obvious case of a one-sided diet of examples. So let us hear no more about that supposed distinction.

[51] 'Moore's Defence of Common Sense' in *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore*, ed. Paul Schilpp (New York: Tudor, 1952), 316.

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