

The proposition that the meaning of words is a function of their use (20) allows us to propose a relation between the idea of private objects, like 'S', to publicly accessible objects, like the colour blue or heaps: one can take the linguistic activity that occurs in respect of either kind of object as being a different aspect of a unified field of linguistic activity. The implication is that analysing our talk of private objects does have bearing for our talk of public objects. Although this approach leaves open the question of whether there is anything further to say above and beyond the use function in accounting for the normativity of language, the benefit of this approach is that it draws greater attention to the role of intentionality, and metaphysics, generally, as we attempt to draw up a final account of meaning and language.

Starting with 'S', let's grant Wittgenstein's stipulation (13) that this sensation is always changing (in what way we are unable to say, however, given it resists definition) but that the diarist, deceived by memory, does not notice the change and keeps noting 'S' for all occurrences. Even so, in the initial instance, to speak about the correctness or incorrectness of the use of 'S' is meaningless. (This is what Wittgenstein also seems to be saying: "I have no criterion of correctness...And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right' (6).") There is no right or wrong to the matter at this stage for there is simply the fact of the term's use. It is a fact that the diarist experiences a certain sensation and gives it a name: 'S'. Complications arise with any subsequent use, understandably, since, if the recurrent experience is supposed to be qualitatively or quantitatively different than the previous manifestation (in what way we cannot

say), it would appear that then the question of correctness arises if only due to the potential inconsistency in using the one term ('S') across the varying experiences. But, in a sense, this concern merely begs the question for there do not seem to be any logical criteria for saying that subsequent usages of 'S' are, strictly speaking, incorrect (since we have no definition of the sensation), and, in any event, it is not self-evident that mere inconsistency in the occurrences themselves is sufficient for such a conclusion. (From this standpoint, it would appear that the issue of correctness or incorrectness of usage could never arise in any robust, objective sense because such judgments depend, at the very least, upon the prior intelligibility of the phenomenon and the degree to which it is accessible to definitions, that is, to a broader range of language.)

At the very least, then, unless one is committed to some variety of Platonism whereby each sensation instantiates a timeless and eternal object against which one can judge both the correctness of each and every use as well as the uses *inter se*, 'S' simply has a range of significations. This suggests, in turn, that, at best, 'S' is vague or generic, but, if that is so, is there any relevant difference, from this standpoint, between using 'S' and the practice, say, of using 'heap' to name the broad variety of assemblages of physical objects set one upon another in disorganized fashion? Our ordinary words can be vague, yes, whether applied to physically existing objects or to exclusively mental phenomena, but vagueness alone does not appear to void a term's functionality. In either case, whether it is the experience of an exclusively internal sensation, or the experience of heapness as stimulated by an external

arrangement of objects, the unifying fact appears to be that the object is an object of our attention and is manifest to our minds, and that against or upon or besides that object of attention we are somehow able to correlate or coordinate with it a symbol or sound pattern (typically both) which itself appears to have a mental aspect and which, in our minds, is able to stand as an abstraction for (or a reduction of) that phenomenon. Setting to one side the metaphysics of the matter (no mean thing), the only difference between the two cases is that with physically existing objects we simply take it as a given that what we see with our eyes exists as we see it independently of our minds.

Even though the 'S' experiment only contemplates an audience of one, 'S' still has functionality in the manner described, if only to the diarist himself. It identifies a recurring experience for which no existing term satisfactorily applies. But that there is only an audience of one at a given time should not be sufficient to suggest that private objects like 'S' have no significant role to play in accounting for the way language is used (13). Something else is needed to banish private objects to the realm of the pure subjective such that they have no relation to public objects. Is the experience 'S' incommunicable? In one way, yes, but in a way that makes it no different than the private experience of 'blueness' or of 'pain', both of which have social and linguistic currency and thus are public objects of a kind. It is possible that the diarist has simply identified new emotional terrain in the same way that poets of the past may have identified 'love' or 'hate' or 'gloom' or 'despair', which, until then, may have gone unremarked upon because they were uncertain sensations for which there were no words. The present lack of currency of 'S' does not necessarily mean that it has no currency or that it won't have currency

in the future. But even if the experience is one that is shared by no one else in the world, it is identifiable as 'S' and there is no absolute impediment to its having broader currency: it can be the subject of a thought experiment; it can be the subject of (a perhaps futile) discussion between the diarist and his therapist; it can be the subject of discussion over a drink with a friend.

Taken in this way, the 'S' thought experiment is a genesis story of how new terms may be brought into being, or how the meanings of established terms may shift. That there are linguistic groups among whom certain terms have acquired currency, that these groups are made up of individual minds, that there is no reason to assume that these groups have emerged *ex nihilo* with a full complement of usable terms, it would be necessary that individual members of that linguistic group would, from time to time, observe and name phenomena which until then went nameless. The term may at first function simply as a placeholder, a black box of meaning, a generic term at best, but its meaning would develop (or, be discovered) as its currency or use value, for whatever reason, expands, and, in so expanding, the private object which is a potential public object becomes a public object in fact though one that is located solely in individual minds. The ontological nature of the object does not seriously undermine this account. In a way one can go further and say that in the very use of 'S' (a public symbol) in a ceremony of association with the feeling it refers to (6), the diarist has already branded his private object as public property, such that it is rendered available for public view (if only potentially and in a limited manner.)

But that still leaves open the question of what account we give for the normativity of usage, whether of 'S' or 'heap' or 'blue'. For starters, whether we are discussing new terms to identify heretofore undescribed (or indescribable or incommunicable) mental experiences, or well-established (though vague) terms to describe public objects, terms have a use value precisely because we take them to identify objects (or their parts) which are constitutive of our experience, objects that are intimately bound up with our intentionality, and are, for us, the most immediate aspects of concern in our lives in this world. If we wish to avoid the pragmatic approach (as being too easy a solution)—that mere agreement among speakers or a statistical preponderance in the way a term is used accounts for its normativity—then it is presumably the real world which, somehow, must also be involved in any account of normativity. But, in the case of purely mental phenomena, what sort of "real world" could we be talking about? In what sense could one use these words without falling into paradox, nonsense or solipsism? How can the real world, in any robust and meaningful sense of this term, be, at base, anything other than mind independent? But how can mental objects be of the world if mind independence is the *sine qua non* of the real world? Is there some way of avoiding such nonsense talk with a better delineated sense of what one means by terms such as "real", "world", "intentionality", and "mind-independence"? I believe there may be such a way, and, in any event, I am not yet ready to abandon the view that the norms for language are anchored in this real world (even if broadly conceived), but I realize, also, that I have gone charging into the hoary realm of metaphysics, and, in so doing, have gone beyond the modest scope of these reflections.