

# **Wittgenstein on Private Language**

# Formulae

- Example: (a) a set at an order of +2 [0, n, 2n, 3n]
- ◆ Formulae impose structure on unbounded information.
- ◆ Because the possibility of the application  $a$  in a set is infinite, in the course of learning what  $a$  means in a set from 0-1000, someone ( $x$ ) may continue the set with [1000, 1004, 1008].

# Formulae

- The paradox: Student  $x$  could interpret  $a$  in an infinite number of ways, such that without a publicly agreed upon interpretation,  $a$  means everything and therefore nothing.
- The meaning of  $a$  is determined by a public process of agreement.

# Formulae

- “And hence also ‘obeying a rule’ is a practice. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule ‘privately’: otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it (202, p. 4)”

# Private Language

- Private language is language developed within the mind without reference to how others use language.
  - ◆ Therefore, because words of a private language can only be understood by their authors, they must refer to “immediate private sensations”.
- “The proposition ‘sensations are private’ is comparable to: ‘one plays patience by oneself’” (248, p. 6)

# Public Language and Sensation

- If sensations are private, why does it seem as if we can discuss them?
  - ◆ We can discuss publicly assigned manifestations of those sensations (i.e., crying, smiling). In doing so, we are not referring to the sensations, but using descriptions of correlated behavior in their place.
  - ◆ There is no way for us know with certainty about anyone else's mental states besides our own.
    - Sensations are not necessarily accompanied by

# The Black Box

- Linguistic designation does not imply public definition
  - ◆ Imagine that everyone had black boxes and that, publicly, everyone referred to their contents as ‘beetles’. No one could look at anyone else’s beetle.
    - The definition of ‘beetle’ in language would therefore be ‘that which is in the box’, not beetle as is commonly construed.
    - C: Our designation points to variable objects in a consistent location, or, in the case of emotion, our designation points to sensations whose commonality is demonstrative, not inherent.

# Relative Private Meaning

- In order to assign private words to private sensations, we should have to first identify sensations consistently such that they could be picked out by the same designator.
  - ◆ e.g. writing 'S' whenever one feels that sensation
  - ◆ This is impossible because sensations and the mind are shifty frames of reference.



# Examples

- Justification must be independent of the thing that one justifies
  - ◆ Train ticket
  - ◆ Clock
  - ◆ Bridge
  - ◆ Left, right hand

# Affirming the Consequent

- If 'S' then 'increased blood pressure' (IBP)
  - ◆ If I record the consequent, IBP, on each of its occurrences in conjunction with S, I shall infer 'S → IBP'.
    - But, though IBP is demonstrable and objective, S is not. Thus, if I mistake, as is natural in language, the logical relation for  $S \leftrightarrow IBP$ , if I see IBP, I shall be inclined to say S.

○ IBP does not imply S: S implies IBP. Similarly, any

# Group Assignment

Affirm or negate the following statements:

1: The example in section 267 on page 8 proves that we cannot assign meaning to private sensations.

2: Private meanings are not uniquely subject to claims of skepticism.