A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

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A Critical Analysis of the Private Language Argument

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DEDICATION

The Private Language Argument takes many different forms. With this in mind, it is very difficult to derive general conclusions regarding the possibility of a private language that would apply to every argument. While there are many different private language arguments, each one aims at the common conclusion that a private language is not possible. One of the goals of this work is to set the parameters for establishing the possibility of a private language, outside language describing sensations, by examining three different facets of language use. The three different facets I present are language describing sensations, the criteria for correctly using words and expressions, and Wittgenstein’s paradox. With respect to language describing sensations, I apply this facet of language to the private language arguments of Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In Chapters 2 and 3, respectively, I effectively conclude that due to the nature of this kind of language, it is appropriately categorized as private. These conclusions drive a wedge between language describing sensations and language not describing sensations. It is here I conclude that a private language is possible with respect to language describing sensations. In Chapter 4, I examine Wittgenstein’s requirements for the correct use of a word or phrase and conclude, with the help of A.J. Ayer, that Wittgenstein’s criteria for correctly using a word or a phrase are too strong. Finally I examine the most difficult obstacle for an advocate of a private language, the Wittgensteinean-Kripkean paradox. I effectively conclude that the most problematic obstacle for an advocate of a private language is the Wittgensteinean-Kripkean paradox; the reader is left with the task to decide how vicious this paradox is. This work is best described as embryotic; the conclusions derived here are meant to set the framework and the parameter for a more well rounded discussion for the possibility of a private language.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A commonly held position in the philosophy of language is that it is impossible for a private language to exist. To take the statement “A private language is impossible” at face value would be a mistake because we must first ask in what sense is the term ‘private’ being used? Second, what conditions and rules are in place that makes a series of words a language? In the strong sense of the word ‘private’ where the term means that the meaning of the language, and subsequently the words that go to make up the language, can in no way be communicated or understood by anyone except the user of the language, this sense of ‘private’ is adopted by many commentators of the private language conversation. There is, however, a weaker sense of the word ‘private’ wherein the meaning of a word can be shared and is shared, but only a select few individuals come to understand the meaning of the words. Coupling this latter sense of ‘private’ along with the commonly held position that a language is a system of rules used to communicate with others, it is possible there can be a private language as indicated by A. J. Ayer in the first part of a shared essay with Rush Rhees, “Can There Be a Private Language?”. Ayer responds to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s argument against a private language by essentially attacking the sense of ‘privacy’ in terms of the restrictions placed on justifying the meaning of words, Rhees defends Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein argues in his work, *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), that it is not possible to have a wholly private language.

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Suppose it were possible to have a completely private language. What would the philosophical ramifications be? How would this private language be formed? What would this private language look like? Furthermore, aside from the philosophical implications, how would this private language affect, if at all, the rest of the way we communicate with other individuals and other disciplines? All of the aforementioned questions are obstacles for any proponent of the possibility of a private language, and these considerations are beyond the scope of this project.

Wittgenstein is not the first or only thinker to advance an argument against the possibility of a private language. Keld Stehr Nielsen makes this known in the preliminary remarks of Wittgenstein’s work as he tracks the transformation of the private language argument from one of its major origins, the Vienna Circle, in his book, *The Evolution of the Private Language Argument*. It is important to reinforce Nielsen’s point that the title “The Private Language Argument” is misleading on two accounts. First, the definite description “the” ascribes the idea that there is a singular private language argument that has been passed around in the conversation of philosophy of language. This is certainly not the case; Wittgenstein was not the only thinker to propose a private language argument. Predecessors of the private language argument include but are not limited to Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, A. J. Ayer, Norman Malcom, Anthony Kenny, and Rush Rhees. Wittgeinstein’s version of the private language argument is one of most commonly discussed versions.

The second common misconception often associated with the private language argument is the title itself, “Private Language Argument,” which seems also to ascribe the idea that the argument attempts to advance and defend the idea that a private language is possible. As Nielsen comments, “it would be more appropriate to speak of the anti-private language argument.” While it would seem to be accurate and appropriate to refer to this


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 2.
particular strain of argumentation as the anti-private language argument, to break with convention could cause confusion. Nielsen gives a thorough and comprehensive overview of the private language argument, beginning with the dispute between Carnap and Neurath over the use and function of language and whether there can be a private language. Both Carnap and Neurath approached the problem of a private language from a verificationist position, though Nielsen is not the only philosophical historian that has tracked the transformation and the origins of the private language argument. In Jan Dejnožka’s paper, “Origins of The Private Language Argument,” Dejnožka claims there are “at least eight major origins of the private language argument.” Thus it cannot be said with any amount of accuracy that the conversation only included Carnap, Neurath, and Wittgenstein.

In the chapters that follow, I will present three major areas/problems for Wittgenstein and subsequently any private language argument. I do not claim these three areas are the only ones in the conversation. I intend to present the three areas as they struck me whilst reading the literature in the private language discussion. These three areas, while subtly related, must be examined before a sufficient discussion can take place regarding the possibility of a private language. The first area I address in Chapters 2 and 3; this is the problem of qualia or sensation and the sensation language. I claim in these chapters that in the case of sensation language each sensation term such as ‘hot’, ‘thirst’, ‘hunger’, etc. can be conceived as having a private meaning in two different senses, a strong and a weak sense. In either the strong or weak sense, I claim words of these kinds are fundamentally private. If Wittgenstein and company insist on maintaining sense language is not private, they will have to give an account of sensation and sense language that is translated into a publicly accessible report, e.g., an equation for the thirst sensation, etc.

The second area I address is in Chapter 4, and it stems from Ayer and Rhees’ essay. Ayer and Rhees’ essay addresses the issue of privacy in terms of justification of words.

6 Ibid.
According to Ayer, Wittgenstein’s restrictions on justification are too strict. Wittgenstein calls for an independent test to check for correctness, however, Ayer notes that another test would have to be conducted to see if the independent test was correct. Given Wittgenstein’s comments on justification, Wittgenstein denies the memory of a subject is adequate for justifying the use of words in a private language, thus there cannot be a private language. If we adopt Ayer’s conclusions and soften the restrictions of justification, the possibility of a private language comes one step closer.

In Chapter 5, I address the third area, which is the rule-following paradox. I find this problem to be the most vicious and given the parameters of Saul Kripke’s discussion of the issue, we could bite the bullet in terms of the possibility of a private language and allow for such a language to exist, appeal to a theory of meaning that would rescue language from the paradox, deny the paradox (as Kripke presents it) has any meaningful force, or deny the possibility of a private language completely. Kripke develops the paradox as it struck him and immediately recognizes the paradox is not primarily aimed at the private language debate but that the paradox applies to other languages as well. The basic idea of the paradox is that no rule can explain the meaning of a term or the course of action taken in particular instances because in each case, another rule can be made out to agree with the behavior the first rule was used to explain. For instance, no rule can dictate what I should do in any given situation such as performing certain mathematical functions because I can always make a rule that agrees with what I did. I.e., I can make rules that alter other rules, and I can make rules that agree with any course of action. This translates to the private language scenario in the sense that I can always make up rules in my private language to account for my mistakes or other instances in the case that I forget the former rules put in place or if I feel capricious. In the end, the paradox reinforces the idea that my behaviors are consistent with many different rules, as such, there is no one rule to direct my behaviors. Thus, in the case of a private language, how would I know which rule to follow for the use of my words? Kripke develops the paradox using a simple mathematical addition problem and ultimately concludes there is no answer to the paradox. Before I go on to discuss the various problems I have outlined, I will first get behind the Private Language Argument, hereafter abbreviated ‘PLA’ conversation, and explore the motivations and the stakes for the ongoing conversation. What this thesis aims at is to lay down the preliminary remarks and arguments for a more complete
discussion of meaning and the nature of meaning by exploring three distinct but related areas. After exploring these areas will we be in a better position to advance an argument for a private language, which is based on the privacy of the meaning of words. The discussions in Chapters 2 and 3 regarding the meaning of words or describing sensations acts as the perfect springboard for both the remaining chapters and an argument promoting a private language.

**MOTIVES FOR THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT**

The motives presented here for the PLA roughly outline what is at stake for thinkers and linguists of various disciplines. Dejnožka identifies eight origins of the PLA in his essay “Origins of the Private Language Argument.” While the terms ‘origin’ and ‘motive’ are not logically identical concepts, it will at least be shown that they are roughly connected within the discussion of the PLA. Dejnožka claims Johannes Herder defines ‘origin’ as implying cause, source, or beginning. If something is caused or begun, there is some motive connected with the action. For example, if I drink water, my motivation for doing so would be to quench my thirst. Likewise, if I were to go for a swim, my motives for doing so would be to cool off from the weather. Thus, given Dejnožka’s analysis of the origins of the PLA, the motives for advancing the argument could also be derived. I will interpret motive here in a narrow sense as applying to only human action. Human action usually entails or involves a telos, but to say there is a telos for every event be it human or not is a claim too bold to make. My other motivation for interpreting motive in this narrow way is to keep the focus on the forthcoming conversation; I am not concerned whether there was a motive behind the origins of the sun or the existence of the universe. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, I will only present the first three motives for the PLA. I do not intend that by excluding the other five motives Dejnožka discusses that these origins are less important or that these origins bear less weight on the private language discussion. By presenting the first three motives, I aim to give a small insight into the larger picture of the PLA conversation.

8 Ibid., 59.
The first origin of the PLA Dejnožka presents is from a verificationist background. In order to present an accurate picture of the verificationist origins of the PLA as Dejnožka gives it, it is necessary first to give the framework of verificationism and the relationship it has to the PLA discussion. According to Nielsen, a strand of verificationism started around 1932 in the Vienna Circle. The Vienna Circle comprised a group of philosophers scientifically oriented and trained in various hard sciences. They were concerned not with the questions of academic philosophy but of the advancement and knowledge of scientific inquiry. Philosophic questions regarding the possibility of knowledge were rejected for a direct concern regarding what comprised knowledge. Since traditional philosophy had failed to account for science, members of the Vienna Circle deemed it must be replaced. There had to have been a justification for scientific knowledge. Insofar as any scientific claim like ‘Water is H₂O’ is to be justified, the justification must account for how claims like these could be deemed meaningful. Rudolf Carnap proposed that methods of justifying scientific claims included analyses of how claims could be accepted as meaningful.

Carnap, a prominent member of the Vienna Circle, was focused on how the claims of science could be meaningful and verified, thereby justifying those claims. The method Carnap utilized was in essence “paradigmatic of logical empiricism, the methodology generally taken to characterize Vienna Circle philosophy.” The formal sciences were subsumed under mathematical logic and could be utilized to reduce all scientific concepts to a single category. As Nielsen describes Carnap’s project, “Carnap’s thesis was that every scientific concept could be rationally reconstructed from elements in that basic domain by exclusively logical means.” What Carnap’s thesis amounted to as Nielsen presents it is that every scientific concept could be logically rebuilt from some basic fundamental principle. Thus by having a fundamental set of objective elements, one could logically derive all concepts of knowledge and science. Since Carnap honored the empiricist tenet regarding

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10 Ibid., 11.
knowledge, that all knowledge is derived from experience, the fundamental elements would be a phenomenalist language: a language based on the phenomenally given, or knowledge based on the immediately given. The basic idea behind Carnap’s thesis as Nielsen presents it is, “all science proceeded analytically from what was given in experience and hence verified directly.”\(^{11}\) From this motivation of having all scientific claims be empirically verified comes verificationism and the verification principle: any proposition that can be empirically verified either in practice or in principle is meaningful but also meaningful propositions must be verifiable. Suppose, for example, I wanted to verify the proposition “There is an African elephant in the hallway.” In order to assign a truth-value to this proposition, all that is necessary is to go into the hallway either to confirm or to deny the presence of an African elephant in the hallway. On the other hand, the proposition, “There is an African elephant on the moon,” is verifiable in principle. While it requires great effort to verify this proposition, it can still be assigned a truth-value. On the other hand, statements where there is no empirical verifiability either in practice or in principle are deemed neither true nor false but meaningless. It makes no sense to speak of souls, immaterial minds, God, immaterial essences, etc. for propositions regarding these objects can not be verified or falsified. So to construct a language wherein all propositions can be translated into the language of science would yield a language without the complications of meaningless statements.

The second origin of the PLA Dejnožka proposes is from a Naturalist/Pragmatist background. The origins of the PLA from the pragmatic domain according to Dejnožka are numerous, and the interplay between thinkers is extremely complicated. The important and relevant point to consider from this section is that “[Otto] Neurath’s own theory of truth is pragmatic and behavioristic. It is concerned with how well sentences cohere into a theory, and theories for Neurath are physical markings concerning the behavior of the physical world.”\(^{12}\) If a language user had created a private language, it is conceivable that statements

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., 68.
in this private language would not cohere with language users outside of the private language. The result of not knowing whether two statements cohere with reality or other theories would not yield practical results. Given Neurath was a pragmatist regarding truth, any possibility of a private language would be outright rejected. If sentences regarding the nature of the physical world did not accurately capture the nature of the world in a way that was consistent or practical, then those sentences would have to be deemed meaningless and as such rejected. Thus the possibility of a private language would have to be rejected.

The third origin of the PLA comes from a materialist background. Dejnožka presents the possibility that both Wittgenstein and Carnap were greatly influenced by Karl Marx’s materialism. As Dejnožka explains that Marx’s materialism entails the theory that language is a product of social intercourse. The conception that language was a product of social relations is found in Marx’s famous work, *Das Kapital*. The theory “that [both] language and consciousness are essentially social” can be traced back through Engels and Feuerbach to Hegel. Adopting this view that language has its origins in social relations or more specifically a materialist background, it is clear that there can be no possibility of a private language because if there were, individuals could not be able to effectively communicate with one another. Since social relations continue essentially because of the existence of a public language, it is clear that advocates of Marx’s materialism would advance some version of the PLA. Dejnožka’s last remark in this section notes that Marx’s materialism entails the view that “language and consciousness are literally communal properties.” Marx required language to be public to make his system work.

The origins of the PLA presented in Dejnožka’s essay all include a public aspect. Insofar as the verificationist background is concerned, a proposition is meaningful if it is publicly verifiable. The pragmatist background is concerned with the public practical

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 71.
consequences of the meanings of words or phrases.\textsuperscript{17} All in all, the motivations/origins for a PLA stem from a diverse philosophical background, each concerned with the public aspect of the meanings of the terms used in the language. A second major concern for advocates of the PLA is what constitutes the meaning of words. What does meaning consist in? What is the nature of meaning? What does meaning mean? How do words get their meaning? Does meaning consist in the head or in the external world? These questions of meaning go beyond the scope of this essay, however, in order to have a well-rounded discussion, I will present two different theories of meaning. The first account is John Locke’s wherein meaning consists of the contents of the mind, and the second account of meaning is given by Hilary Putnam, who claims that meaning is not solely in the head but is in the external world. While these two accounts of meaning are opposed, they are meant to be examples as to the problem of meaning.

**MEANING AND LANGUAGE**

The relationship between language and what the words constituting that language mean has perplexed thinkers since Aristotle. One major question regarding the nature of meaning is whether meaning is in the mind. E.g., the meaning of the word ‘dog’ is the contents of my mind, i.e., the idea or mental image. This account of meaning, the meaning of a word is the mental image in the head, is proposed by Locke in his work, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.\textsuperscript{18} For Locke, meaning is in the mind. I.e., the meaning of the term is the mental image or other idea associated with that particular word. I will ultimately reject Locke’s account of meaning, not because of the privacy associated with the account but for other reasons, which will be presented in the forthcoming section.

A second account of meaning that I will present and show is consistent with a private language is Putnam’s externalist account of meaning. Putnam gives his account of meaning

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

in “Meaning and Reference,” where meaning consists not in the ideas or contents of the mind, but meaning is a function of both the causal connection I have with the object and the surrounding linguistic community.\textsuperscript{19} To illustrate this point about meaning, Putnam uses the Twin Earth example, which I will explain later. Putnam’s account of meaning is more sophisticated and complete than Locke’s, and there are elements contained within that will help advance my argument for a private language. The two elements I am referring to are the causal connections (or causal connection) between the subject and the object of the external world, and the linguistic community.\textsuperscript{20} For instance, if meaning exists as a causal connection with the material object and the surrounding linguistic community, then the meaning of sense language consists in the causal connection I have with the object and the surrounding linguistic community. For objects such as cotton, silk, smooth tables, sandpaper etc., or for propositions containing a word describing a sensation, there is something more, which is the actual feeling had by the experiencing subject. With respect to the surrounding linguistic community, Putnam would no doubt agree that the linguistic community comprises other members aside from a single subject; however, I will extend the linguistic community to include only a single subject. This is imperative for my argument, and I will revisit this point when I discuss Ayer’s argument.

Before I proceed further, I will present Locke’s account of meaning followed by Putnam’s account of meaning. The presentation of these two accounts of meaning is meant to show that, on the one hand, the problem of the meaning of words is one that is still contended, and secondly that the problem of meaning has a direct relationship with the PLA. If it turns out that an account of meaning can be given that allows for a private sense of terms, even if the private sense of the word is weak. I.e., if the weak private sense of the word allows that some understanding is available to outside language users, then it will be


\textsuperscript{20} Whether there are multiple causal connections or a single causal connection between the object and the subject is not the question for both hypotheses are equally compatible with my argument. I do not favor one interpretation of ‘causal connection’ over another.
possible for a private language to exist. Wittgenstein might accept my conception of a weak private language, but this is not fatal to my project. If I can apply a theory of meaning that allows for a weak sense, then it opens the possibility for a strong sense where language can be private, one that Wittgenstein would reject. Since the main PLA under investigation is Wittgenstein’s private language argument, the account of meaning Wittgenstein proposes in Philosophical Investigations will be shown to be problematic. It will be shown that Wittgenstein’s PLA does not affect certain aspects of language, specifically sense or qualia language.

An explicit account of Locke’s theory of the meaning of words is presented in Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding, specifically in book III chapter II: “Of The Signification Of Words.” The principle and important point of departure for Locke’s theory of meaning is that ideas are private objects that exist within the bodies of language speakers. Since ideas are invisible and hidden from others, there must be an external way for two individuals to communicate their ideas to one another. For instance, my idea of a dog exists in my mind, and my mind is not directly available or accessible for others to see the content contained therein. If I wished to share the content of my mind with others, I would need a sensible procedure to transfer the contents of my mind to other language users. The external procedure to transfer the contents of my mind to others is the use of words as a signification of the ideas of my mind. Thus words stand as signs of not only my ideas but the ideas of others; Locke claims that the relationship between words and ideas exists:

not by any natural connection, that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea. The use then of words, is to be sensible marks of ideas; and the ideas they stand for, are their proper and immediate signification.21

The meaning of a word, according to Locke, is the idea that is associated with the word. I.e., for any general term G, there is an idea i that is associated with G such that the equation for

the meaning of terms is Gi. For general terms like ‘pen’, ‘dog’, ‘tree’, etc., there are ideas associated with these terms. In the case of singular terms, the equation would be something like for any singular term S, there is an idea i, either simple or complex, associated with it such that the singular term exists in conjunction with a general idea. What I mean here is that singular terms like ‘green’, ‘extended’, ‘tall’ etc. do not exist vacuously; these terms, which denote ideas, always accompany objects, and the result is a complex idea, which in this case is a tree. Through abstraction, I understand the idea of a tree and apply this term to other objects. The singular term equation would be (Si & Gi). I get the singular term ‘green’ from the general term ‘tree’. These terms arouse within my mind certain ideas, i.e., whenever I hear the word ‘tree’, what comes to my mind is a tall plant object with green leaves that emits oxygen. So associated with the general term ‘tree’, there exists a general abstract idea of tree, which is constituted by a plethora of simple ideas.

Locke continues to explain the nature of words and that people use words as external symbols to “record their own thoughts for the assistance of their own memory; or as it were to bring out their ideas, and lay them before the view of others: Words in their primary or immediate signification stand for nothing, but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them….”22 The main purpose of words, among the other uses as Locke lays out, is to communicate with others, yet the meaning of words is the idea associated with the word. The words I use to represent my ideas cannot be applied to anything but my ideas. If this were possible, according to Locke, then words would on the one hand represent the ideas I have associated with that word and on the other hand those same words would represent other ideas that are not mine; the result of this position is that there would be no signification of words at all.23

Locke provides a vivid example of the term ‘gold’ to illustrate his conception of the meaning of words.

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 138.
A child having taken notice of nothing in the metal he hears called gold, but the bright shining yellow color, he applies the word gold only to his own idea of that color, and nothing else; and therefore calls the same color in a peacock’s tail, gold. Another that has better observed, adds to shining yellow, great weight: And then the sound gold, when he uses it, stands for a complex idea of a shining yellow and very weighty substance. Another adds to those qualities, fusibility: And then the word gold to him signifies a body, bright yellow, fusible, and very heavy.24

Locke continues, in the example of gold, another language user associates another idea with the term ‘gold’. This series of adding more complex ideas to the shiny yellow object is evident for a miner or metallurgist who has extensive expertise working with gold. A metallurgist, for instance, would have more ideas associated with the metal gold than someone who only understands gold as a shiny yellow metal. While each individual in Locke’s example shares the same word, each individual has either a differing simple or complex idea of what gold is.

For Locke, words do not only signify the ideas had by language speakers; there is a secret reference to two other phenomena. First and foremost, “they [people] suppose their words to be marks of the ideas in the minds also of other men, with whom they communicate.”25 This is an implicit assumption Locke claims language users employ when they engage in conversation. It is only natural for language users to work under this assumption when discoursing, for if both language users are intelligent human beings having access to the same objects and therefore deriving the same ideas, it is natural that this belief be shared among people. It is enough, Locke claims, that so long as the language and words used are commonly accepted among the language users of that particular area or country, the users think the ideas are the same. This point is one of great importance for the PLA debate because if (adopting Locke’s theory of meaning) in the case of Wittgenstein, two particular language users are using the same language but differ in their ideas, then it would not be the case that they use the language to signify the same idea and hence each user of the language

24 Ibid., 138-39.
25 Ibid., 139.
would have a private understanding of the word in a weak sense, for each language user would share the same word but have a private understanding of the word. This point will be revisited and revised in Chapter 3 when I discuss Wittgenstein’s PLA.

The second phenomenon, which is also an assumption according to Locke, is that language users “often suppose their words to stand also for the reality of things.” Locke supposes that language users think their words are referring to particular states of affairs in the external world. When someone utters the proposition, “The tree is tall,” the utterer is making a definitive claim about some state of affairs in the external world, namely that some particular tree is tall. Of course, further assumptions that are being made here are that the utterer is a competent, sober speaker, and that this particular individual is saying something true, and the context is appropriate to warrant such a proposition, and assuming these conditions obtain the proposition captures an accurate picture of reality. Locke claims that any statement regarding affairs of the external world is directed towards objects that we can sense. According to Locke, “it is a perverting the use of words, and brings unavoidable obscurity and confusion into their signification, whenever we make them stand for any thing, but those ideas we have in our own minds.” Locke maintains words are an indirect signification of external objects in virtue of directly signifying ideas. I will revisit the first assumption Locke advances regarding language users as a key component for a private language argument, and I will reexamine a version of this assumption as it compares with Wittgenstein’s PLA.

Locke’s theory of meaning entails that words mean ideas in the mind; thus this is an internalist account of meaning, i.e., meaning exists in the mind. The theory that the meaning of words is in the mind is intuitive as we can conceive and certainly have had experiences where we hear a word or use a word and an idea is elicited from the use or from hearing that term. Yet Putnam’s account of meaning directly opposes Locke’s in that meaning is not just

26 Ibid., 140.
27 Ibid.
contained in the mind, but meaning is partly a function of the causal relations I have to the object and the linguistic community. Given Putnam’s position of meaning, it is clear he rejects Locke’s overall conception of what words mean. It is now that I turn to Putnam’s essay “Meaning and Reference” to illustrate the conflict of accounts of meaning between Locke and Putnam.

Putnam’s main concern in “Meaning and Reference” is showing that meaning is not solely a matter of being in the correct psychological state but that meaning partly consists in the constitution of objects in the world; to make this point, Putnam employs the twin-earth thought experiment. Putnam first describes the traditional position regarding meaning, describing it as one that had typical consequences; the traditional position regarding meaning entailed that the meaning of a term was a concept to be grasped, i.e., to understand the meaning of a term is to grasp the concept of that term.28 Putnam goes on to describe how Frege rejected this position and argued “meanings are public property – that the same meaning can be ‘grasped’ by more than one person and by persons at different times. He identified concepts (and hence ‘intensions’ or meanings) with abstract entities rather than mental entities.”29 Frege moved away from meaning consisting in mental objects to meaning as an abstract concept, yet meanings’ being abstract objects and still being able to be grasped by individuals still entails that grasping the meaning of a term is wholly a psychological act.

Putnam proposes that with the traditional account of meaning there are two assumptions that have remained unchallenged; Putnam will show these two assumptions cannot be satisfied jointly by any condition. The first assumption is:

1. That knowing the meaning of a term is just a matter of being in a certain psychological state (in the sense of "psychological state," in which states of memory and belief are "psychological states"; no one thought that knowing the meaning of a word was a continuous state of consciousness, of course).30

29 Ibid., 699-700.
30 Ibid., 700.
The second assumption:

2. That the meaning of a term determines its extension (in the sense that sameness of intension entails sameness of extension). Putnam will explicitly show that the second assumption is false via the twin earth thought experiment. It was often held that intension determined extension. I.e., intension determined what exactly the word referred to, yet Putnam will argue that it is possible to have the same intension with differing extensions yielding the ultimate conclusion that meaning is not solely mental. To reach his conclusion, Putnam proposes a thought experiment where there is a Twin Earth identical in every way to actual Earth except for a few subtle differences. There are even Doppelgangers – identical copies of the residents of Earth – on twin earth. Putnam explains a main difference about Twin Earth; “the liquid called ‘water’ is not H₂O but a different liquid whose chemical formula is very long and complicated. I shall abbreviate this chemical formula simply as XYZ.” Twin Earth water, XYZ, is indistinguishable from Earthian water at normal temperatures. Putnam further posits that the lakes and oceans on Twin Earth are not filled with H₂O but XYZ. So far, the picture Putnam has painted is that there is Earth where the term ‘water’ refers to H₂O, the stuff that fills the lakes and oceans on earth, that Earthians shower with and drink; there is Twin Earth where the term ‘water’ picks out that stuff that fills the oceans and lakes of Twin Earth. I shall suppose the Twin Earthians also drink and shower with XYZ much like the residents of Earth participate in these activities with H₂O. Putnam does not make this explicit, however I think it is safe to assume this to be the case given Putnam’s thought experiment.

Putnam has set up the general parameters of his thought experiment, and then he proceeds to make his argument. Putnam supposes a space traveler from Earth traveled to Twin Earth. The space traveler would report back to Earth that the term ‘water’ meant the same on Twin Earth as it does on Earth. Putnam explains, however, that the traveler would be corrected once she discovered the actual chemical composition of Twin Earth water was

31 Ibid.
not H₂O but XYZ. A similar occurrence would apply to a resident from Twin Earth visiting Earth; she would report back to Twin Earth that the term ‘water’ meant the same thing on Twin Earth as it does on Earth, yet she would also be corrected once she discovered that ‘water’ on earth meant H₂O. Putnam explains, “there is no problem about the extension of the term ‘water’: the word simply has two different meanings (as we say).”³³ In the case of Earth, the term ‘water’ picks out those compounds comprising H₂O, and in the case of Twin Earth, the term ‘water’ picks out all those compounds comprising XYZ, thus there is no problem with the idea that the extension of ‘water’ is different on Twin Earth than it is on Earth.

Putnam then proposes to roll the year back to 1750. At this time, any Earthian English-speaker would understand the term ‘water’ differently in that she would understand water as the clear, odorless, thirst-quenching liquid, not as the chemical compound H₂O. The same idea holds for the Twin Earthian English-speaker; she would understand the term ‘water’ as the clear, odorless, thirst-quenching liquid, not as the chemical compound XYZ. Putnam continues to propose that Oscar₁, the resident Earthian English-speaker, and his Doppleganger Oscar₂, the resident Twin Earthian English-speaker, both identical in every way down to their interior monologues and thoughts, both understand the term ‘water’ as the clear, odorless, thirst-quenching liquid, and hence are in the same psychological state. This thought experiment illustrates that the extension of the term ‘water’ is not solely a function of the psychological state of the speaker according to Putnam. I.e., the extension of a term is not determined by the psychological state of the speaker.

Another example Putnam employs to illustrate the point that extension is not determined by being in a certain psychological state is the elm/beech example. The elm/beech example is a non-fictional example intended to illustrate that meaning is not solely a function of one’s psychological states. Putnam confesses he cannot tell the difference between an elm and a beech. The extension of ‘elm’ is the collection of all elms, and the

³³ Ibid.
extension of ‘beech’ is the collection of all beech trees. The twist is that Putnam’s concept of an elm is the same as his concept of a beech, so the difference in meaning between ‘elm’ and ‘beech’ is not one constituted by a psychological state. Putnam concludes, “It is absurd to think his [Putnam’s doppleganger] psychological state is one bit different from mine: yet he ‘means’ beech when he says ‘elm’, and I ‘mean’ elm when I say ‘elm.’” The conclusion Putnam reaches is that meaning is not solely a product of being in a certain psychological state. It is possible, therefore, for terms to have the same intension but a different extension.

The presentation of Locke’s account of meaning and Putnam’s account of meaning was not intended to definitively refute Locke’s account or to definitively prove Putnam’s theory. While Locke’s account of meaning is intuitive and does apply in certain cases, e.g., instances of sense language, it is easily refuted by Putnam’s account of meaning. I accept Locke’s account of meaning in the sense that there is an idea associated with sense language. E.g., when I use the word ‘cold’, certain situations or objects that are cold come to mind. I may use the word ‘cold’, and an idea of a cube of ice might come to mind, or I might remember an instance when I was cold and desired a jacket. In these instances of sense language and sensations is where I adopt Locke’s account of meaning, yet I reject Locke’s account when applied to common external object terms.

It has been shown that Putnam’s Twin Earth thought experiment, wherein it is possible for two terms to have the same intension but differing extensions, easily refutes Locke’s account of meaning. I accept Putnam’s account of meaning as it applies to natural kind terms as shown in Putnam’s thought experiment and qualia. For the purposes of this project, I will adopt Putnam’s conception of meaning and apply it to the private language debate, specifically Wittgenstein’s PLA.

Locke’s theory of meaning is problematic via Putnam’s discussion, but there is also

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34 Ibid., 704.

35 I use the term ‘object terms’ to refer to the set of those words that pick out a definitive external material object. For instance, ‘chair’ picks out those objects people use to sit, ‘water’ picks out that compound comprised of H₂O, etc. The scope of this term is reserved strictly for external material objects. When I refer to non-external objects, in this case, sensations, I will reserve the term ‘qualia’ for these objects.
another concern regarding Locke’s theory of meaning as a theory of meaning in terms of a private language. Since Locke proposes the meaning of words is the mental image or other ideas associated with the word, and these mental images are private, there is no way to know what two individuals mean by their use of words like ‘pizza’, ‘car’, or ‘salad’. So, under this theory, some parts of language become private.\(^{36}\) These problematic aspects of Locke’s theory of meaning are motives to turn to a different more complete account of meaning that allows for language to be public on the one hand and the possibility of a private language. Putnam maintains meaning to consist in both some causal connection to the external object and a division of labor in the linguistic community. I will maintain, with the help of Ayer in the discussion in Chapter 4, that in the case of a private language, the causal connection is present between the subject and the object and that the linguistic community can consist of only one person.

One important question to ask is in what sense does one mean by the phrase ‘private language’? Some maintain by ‘private language’ what they mean is a language that exists for the use of one and only one person, while others might maintain the hypothesis that ‘private language’ means a language exclusively used for purposes amongst an elite group, a club, or perhaps a very reclusive hermit wishing to keep all thoughts notated but private in case those notes were to obtained by someone other than the hermit. Whatever the case may be regarding the scope of ‘private language’, whether it applies to a single person or a small group, my argument applies to both instances. If Putnam advocated for a possibility of a private language, he might prefer the scope of the language to be of the latter meaning, i.e., a private language exclusively for the use of a small group. This conception of a private language would make the idea of a linguistic community more rounded, for there would be

\(^{36}\) This point of the privacy of language only applies to cases where there is a mental image associated with the word, i.e., ‘dog’, ‘pen’, ‘pizza’, etc. In other cases with words like ‘certain’, ‘about’, ‘of’, etc. where no mental image is associated with these words, this point does not apply. This theory of meaning does not make language wholly private, but it does not allow for language to be public in instances where certain words have an associative mental image. Putnam’s account of meaning, on the other hand, allows for language to be public, and with the interpretation I will give of Putnam’s account with the help of Ayer, there will be the possibility of a private language, which is the wide scope of this work.
more than one user of this private language. Though it is not logically impossible for a linguistic community of a single member to exist, a private language is possible under Putnam’s conception of meaning.

Putting all contentions aside regarding both Locke’s and Putnam’s account of meaning, it should be clear that the problem of meaning shown by the presentation of two accounts of meaning is one that has and will have a direct bearing on the question of the possibility of a private language. The idea of a private language entails the private meaning of language; this fact is simple and intuitive. Suspending the simplicity of the aforementioned fact, which is one that will be explored in terms of investigating the possibility of the private meaning of words, I must distinguish between two kinds of language. The term ‘language’ is ambiguous because there are different kinds of words that exist in a language; one general category of language is for words that have an object reference: any word like ‘chair’, ‘table’, ‘the president of the United States’, ‘the author of *Moby Dick*’, etc. These words and phrases refer to particular objects or groups of objects. The second category of language is sense language, words that refer to sensations or experiences: ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘tingly’, ‘nauseated’, ‘pain’, ‘the feeling of being watched’; these words refer to particular sensations and experiences had by a person. It is this second category of language that will be primarily under investigation regarding private language in Chapter 3, but I will extend attention to object words in Chapter 4. It will be shown that when I address the three problems I mentioned at the beginning of this essay to a PLA, the possibility of a private language becomes less radical.
CHAPTER 2
PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENTS

Before I discuss Wittgenstein’s PLA, I will first present Carnap’s and Neurath’s PLAs. The presentation of these two PLAs is meant to lay the basic foundation of what a PLA is meant to achieve. Neither Carnap nor Neurath is the main attraction of this project, but it is both necessary and helpful to present and explain two PLAs from two thinkers that came in conflict with one another regarding the purpose of language. Both Carnap and Neurath were members of the Vienna Circle and as such subscribed to verificationism, however, their differing views of what language was meant to achieve eventually yielded conflict. Another reason for presenting these two PLAs is that there are strands from both Carnap and Neurath that have influenced Wittgenstein’s own thought and his PLA. Since Carnap’s PLA involves qualia language, I too shall follow suit and treat both Carnap’s and Neurath’s PLAs with respect to the problem of qualia.

CARNAP’S PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

Nielsen’s discussion of Carnap’s PLA is thorough enough to understand the motivation behind Carnap’s formulation of the argument and the argument itself. Nielsen describes the importance of understanding Carnap’s argument by first presenting the motives behind the argument. According to Nielsen, Carnap’s conception of philosophy was one where “philosophy trades, not in elucidations, but real sentences and can produce knowledge.”37 Carnap found the purpose and aim of philosophy was to acquire knowledge,

37 Nielsen, Private Language Argument, 14.
and this acquisition came through language. Carnap’s principle aim in his work *Unity of Science* was to promote physicalism – the view that every meaningful sentence could be translated into other sentences containing purely physical language – i.e., any meaningful sentence could be translated into terminology from physics or some language from the physical sciences.\(^{38}\) Carnap’s project entailed that all meaningful language could be translated into a language consisting of physical terms. The translation of language into a language of physical terms would also apply to what Carnap called protocol sentences – sentences describing the immediately given. Protocol sentences included among other things sentences about sensations.\(^ {39}\) Nielsen describes the relationship between physical language and protocol language:

> From a bundle of physical sentences one could *derive* protocol sentences which a person could then compare with his own protocol to see whether they obtained or not. A protocol sentence could then be *translated* into a bundle of physical sentences. This last claim was the physicalist hypothesis whose defence was Carnap’s main project in *The Unity of Science*.\(^ {40}\)

According to Carnap, the bundle of physical sentences ‘Fire increases the movement of surrounding air molecules’, ‘The increasing speed of the molecules produce energy’, and ‘The produced energy radiates outward’ could be translated into the possible protocol sentence, ‘Fire radiates heat’. From the translation of a bundle of physical sentences to a protocol sentence, I can juxtapose the resulting protocol sentence with my immediate experience of the fire to see if the translation corresponds with reality. It was maintained the reverse translation was possible; a protocol sentence could be translated into a bundle of physical sentences. The protocol sentence ‘Fire radiates heat’ could be deconstructed into a bundle of sentences containing physical terms. Carnap’s view of physical sentences and protocol sentences is a two-way relation, i.e., physical sentences can be translated into protocol sentences, and protocol sentences can be translated to physical sentences.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 15.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
There is, however, an obstacle Carnap had to overcome, the fundamental objection of physicalism, the assumption of a two referential domain. On the one hand, there were sentences that described physical events such as the physical event of snow, but then there were psychical sentences that were non-physical such as those describing a memory of a past event of falling snow; these were the two domains, physical events and psychical events. Nielsen uses Carnap’s example of rain as the physical event and the memory of rain as the mental event. During a rainstorm, I may have a memory about a time I walked in the rain with my older sister. This would be an example of the physical event of rain making a reference to a sensational domain. In both cases of the rain example, a reference was made to a sensational domain that cannot be experienced by anyone except the speaker. Consequently any proposition describing this private experience would not be able to be understood by anyone because no one but the speaker has access to the experience; the result of this position yields a private language. The opponent’s claim of assuming a referential domain implied that protocol sentences were private; thus to overcome the objection, Carnap had to propose a private language argument. I will present Carnap’s private language and then elaborate on each statement in the argument. Carnap’s PLA argument goes as follows:

1. Suppose sensational and physical domains are not shared between subjects.
2. If a proposition P is uttered by a speaker S1 referring to either her physical or sensational domain, then another speaker S2 cannot determine whether P is true.
3. A proposition means nothing more to a speaker than what can be tested about it (Verificationism).
4. Therefore, proposition P is meaningless to S2; S1 cannot communicate anything by uttering P.
5. Intersubjective communicability is a fact; sentences about the sensational and the physical are intelligible to more than one subject.
6. Therefore, given the above inconsistency, we must reject the initial assumption with regard to both the sensational and physical domain.41

41 Ibid., 185.
This is Nielsen’s presentation of Carnap’s private language argument. Carnap’s initial assumption entails that sensational and physical domains are separate for each speaker. Adopting Carnap’s assumption, (2) entails that if S1 utters a proposition like ‘I hurt’ implying that S1 is in pain, thus referring to the pain sensation of S1, where pain belongs in the sensational domain, then S2 who is presented with S1’s utterance will not be able to understand the utterance ‘I hurt’ because this proposition belongs to S1’s sensational domain, and this domain is not accessible to S2. According to Carnap, (3) obtains; a proposition is meaningful only if verifiable. Therefore, from premises (2) and (3) the implication is that the proposition ‘I hurt’ uttered by S1 cannot be communicated to S2 because the sensation domain of S1 is private resulting in referential privacy. Premise (4) cannot be true, however, because of (5), which Carnap maintains as true. According to (5), two individuals can consciously communicate and understand propositions about the sensational and physical domain of different speakers. For instance, S2 consciously understands S1’s proposition, ‘I hurt’. This is verifiable in a number of different ways. I could infer from S1’s behavior that she is in pain, I could ask what caused the pain, I could ask where the pain is, I could also offer to help alleviate the pain, etc. Thus, given all these verifiable states of affairs, I understand ‘I hurt’. The inconsistency in the argument is between (4) and (5). As Carnap claims, one speaker can understand propositions about sensations uttered by one speaker to another because of intersubjective communicability, which contradicts (4), a proposition uttered by one speaker is meaningless to another. Hence we must logically reject the assumption that physical and sensational domains are not shared between speakers.

In Carnap’s argument, there is level of accepted privacy in a linguistic framework. Nielsen explains via Carnap, “‘Now thirst’ in the original protocol of S2 has no entity ‘I’ which can be replaced by ‘S1’. Accordingly, ‘He is thirsty’ cannot be understood on analogy with the situation in which I feel thirst.”42 What this yields is that if a protocol sentence such as ‘Now pain’, or to use Carnap’s example, ‘Now thirst’, presents what is immediately given

42 Ibid., 17.
in experience, then in a given scenario where S1 utters something to the effect of ‘Now thirst’ to S2 where it is empirically proved that S1 is thirsty but S2 is not, S2 cannot understand the content of S1’s sentence. The proposition ‘Now thirst’ only describes a present state of affairs of a certain singular subject and not of any others. Thus Carnap is forced to accept the privacy of the immediately given, but he is not willing to concede to the privacy of the protocol language.

I take issue with premise (3) in Carnap’s argument. Premise (3) utilizes the central tenet of verificationism, however, there are two problems with (3). The first problem is that verification can go on *ad infinitum*. In order to verify if a statement is true, I can appeal to an endless series of justification statements, which, in turn, need to be justified as meaningful; I would never be able to justify the proposition. Ayer makes a similar remark in response to Wittgenstein, and I address this in Chapter 4.

The second issue I take with (3) is that it allows for logical behaviorism or some form of this kind of behaviorism. Behaviorism, or logical behaviorism, refers to the theory that any and all statements of mentality are statements about a subject’s behavior. Carnap describes behaviorism in his essay, “Psychology in Physical Language,” as “the thesis that *every sentence of psychology may be formulated in physical language*. To express this in the material mode of speech: *all sentences of psychology describe physical occurrences, namely, the physical behavior of humans and other animals.*”43 In order to verify the truth of a protocol sentence, I would have to appeal to some medium that would provide the evidence for the truth of the statement. One way I might accomplish this task, in fact a way that many people do verify protocol statements from other speakers, is to appeal to the speaker’s behavior. If I yelp a rather unpleasant sound, and grimace as I do it right after I step on a Lego building block, one might conclude I am in great pain (though this is only contingently

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true). It could be the case I am only pretending to be in pain and show no outward or inward
signs of being in pain. Suppose in other cases one might say, “Mrs. Q is hungry,” and this
would be justified by describing certain behaviors of Mrs. Q; she might be staring at food,
rubbing her abdomen, drooling at the site of food, she might order or prepare a large meal for
herself, etc. In cases like these where I show no outward or inward response to being in pain,
any proposition regarding my being in pain would be false unless I had a disposition to
behave in such a way. In this respect, premise (3) in some instances allows for behaviorism.
In the interpretation of (3) where behaviorism is allowed, I do not maintain that (3) strictly
implies behaviorism or that behaviorism is the only interpretation of (3).

One might claim an identity theory where mental states are identical to brain states. If
we suppose brain states are mental states, we can accept (3) without being committed to
behaviorism. This would rescue us from the objections of behaviorism, for behaviorism
could be false, but we would still be able to verify mental statements. An identity theory does
not run into the same issues as behaviorism does, however, there is a still a potential concern.
If mental states are identical to brain states, one could verify any mental state of a human
subject, assuming the human subject was conscious. If I am not conscious, my mental states
would not reflect in my brain state. I take sensations to be included among the collection of
mental states. Other mental states would include beliefs and desires, and I take these states to
exclude sensations. I do not have a sensation accompanying my belief that the world is
spherical in shape or the United States of America is in the northern hemisphere. In cases
where my mental state consists of a sensation like pain, there would be a corresponding brain
state. To verify my mental state, one might prick my finger, punch me, or slap me, which
would result in my feeling pain in the afflicted area. It is conceivable that my mental state of
pain would be a corresponding brain state. This account fails to explain or address the
sensation of the mental state; I could feel a tickle, or thirst, or complete relaxation.

With respect to behaviorism, two speakers claim to understand one another because
each finds their outward responses appropriate. This is most likely due to the surrounding
linguistic community. When learning a language and learning what certain sensation words
mean, the members of the surrounding linguistic community teach the responses they find
appropriate. I speculate Carnap would agree with Putnam’s theory of meaning in virtue of the
causal connections between the subject and external objects in the world and the surrounding
linguistic community. On the other hand, one can accept how sensation talk is learned without accepting behaviorism; this might be through adopting an identity theory or some argument by analogy. Carnap’s argument allows for behaviorism and thus is susceptible to the vicious objections of behaviorism.\textsuperscript{44} If I reject behaviorism, I can adopt an identity theory or an argument by analogy to account for the meaningfulness of sensation talk. I can appeal to an argument by analogy or an identity theory to overcome the shortcomings of Carnap’s argument, but these schemas are not without shortcomings, hence I reject Carnap’s argument given the above considerations.

Carnap’s motive for proposing a private language argument was an attempt to explain scientific knowledge, however, there was a stress between protocol sentences of the immediately given and sentences of the physical world. There is talk about physical objects and physical phenomena such as the wind, the rain, the sun setting, etc., yet all these experiences are also tied up with the immediately given. It was still maintained that the immediately given in an experience was the objective foundation for scientific knowledge. Since what was immediately given in experience was considered private, any protocol sentence describing the immediately given would be “unrevisable and without justification.” Carnap left science the task to be concerned with the nature of the immediately given. Nielsen explains the peculiarity with Carnap’s position that since there was stress between the semi-privacy of protocol sentences and the correlate phenomena, the function of translating protocol sentences into physical sentences would have to be revised. There was, however, no way an appeal could be made to mediate the tension between protocol sentences and their physical counterparts while also maintaining that protocol sentences could not contradict one another. As Neurath saw it, Carnap was not prepared to adopt the consequences of what he was proposing.

\textsuperscript{44} For a more complete refutation of behaviorism, consult Putnam’s essay “Brains and Behavior,” in Readings in Philosophy of Psychology, ed. Ned Block (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 24-36. In this essay, Putnam chiefly attacks logical behaviorism, and it is precisely this position I am rejecting, entailed by parts of Carnap’s PLA.
NEURATH’S PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

One of the main contentions between Carnap and Neurath was not only the role science was meant to play in language but also the nature of protocol sentences. What will be made evident is how much more radical Neurath’s approach is to protocol sentences compared to Carnap’s. Neurath identified two main problems with Carnap’s framework: “first, Carnap’s system failed to represent actual scientific practice. Secondly, it was not radical enough; there were still a number of idealistic elements in it.” Neurath took issue with Carnap’s claim that protocol sentences are unrevisable because unrevisable protocol sentences assumed atomism wherein the truth of sentences are independent of one another. According to Neurath, there was no reason why two protocol sentences could not contradict one another. In a case where two protocol sentences contradicted one another like ‘Thirst now’ and ‘Not thirst now’, it is obvious that one would have to be discarded based on scientific investigation. Nielsen explains protocol sentences could be revised because they were part of scientific discourse, thus a protocol sentence could not be accepted without proper critical assessment. In short Neurath’s PLA was meant to refute Carnap’s conception of the protocol sentence. For Carnap, a protocol sentence contained the immediately given, however, Neurath’s argument will show that protocol sentences could not be private or “correspond directly to the immediately given.”

Like Carnap’s PLA, I will present Neurath’s PLA in a similar fashion and explain each statement. I will then make some comments on Neurath’s argument, and finally I will show the tension between Carnap and Neurath. Neurath’s PLA is:

1. Protocol sentences are revisable. This follows from the fact that they are scientific claims, for scientific claims are capable of evaluation and hence can in principle be overturned.

2. Suppose that at t₂ we want to evaluate a protocol sentence P used by S at t₁.

45 Nielsen, Private Language Argument, 20.
46 Ibid.
3. Protocol sentences, indeed all sentences, are physically instantiated strings of symbols.

4. Therefore, the only way to evaluate $P$ at $t_2$ is to compare it with the set of physically instantiated strings of symbols, which one holds to be true at $t_1$.

5. A sentence means nothing more to a speaker than what can be tested about it (Verificationism).

6. Therefore, the meaning of $P$ cannot be a particular sensation, because we would not check $P$ by comparing it to an immediately ‘given’ or sensational domain. Indeed since the evaluation of $P$ occurs by comparing sets of physical strings of symbols, $S$ has no privileged way of evaluating $P$.47

The first premise of the argument describes the reevaluation of protocol sentences. Consider the ‘Now thirst’ example. This protocol sentence is a scientific claim in that it is describing a physical phenomenon affecting some biological being, in this case a human. Scientific claims can be overturned by new evidence that contradicts the previous claim. A common example of this occurrence is when the belief was held that the earth was flat and to sail too far would result in falling off the earth. This belief was supposedly grounded in the sense data of subjects when they stood on beaches and looked out to the horizon and saw the flatness of the ocean. This claim of the flatness of the earth and the supposed evidence provided to support this claim was overturned by scientific breakthroughs when it was discovered that one would not sail off the edge of the earth no matter how far one sailed on the ocean. It follows that since protocol sentences are scientific sentences and scientific sentences can be overturned, protocol sentences can be overturned.

According to the next statement in the argument, Neurath imagines that some subject $S$ utters a protocol sentence $P$ at a particular time $t_1$, and then at some later time $t_2$, the scientific community, in this case let’s assume it is Neurath, wants to investigate the truth of $P$ at $t_2$, which was uttered by $S$ at $t_1$. It is as if I utter the protocol sentence, ‘Now thirst’ in the morning and Neurath wants to investigate that protocol sentence in the evening.

47 Ibid., 185-186.
The way I shall interpret (3) is that for any protocol sentence S, it is physically instantiated in the external world and is represented via symbols. What I take Neurath to be saying is that for any protocol sentence such as ‘Now thirst’, this sentence is nothing more than a string of symbols meant to represent some physical phenomenon. I.e., protocol sentences, and all other sentences for that matter, are equivalent to equations of the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{48} Much like part of the theory of special relativity is equivalent to \(E=mc^2\), so does the sentence, ‘Now thirst’ represent the phenomenon of a subject’s thirst. Thus what Neurath aims to propose is that not only are non-protocol sentences physical instantiations but so are protocol sentences.

The intermediate conclusion (4) is derived from (3) such that in order for one to be able to accurately investigate the utterance of \(P\) at \(t_2\) is to appeal to the set of physical sentences already accepted at \(t_1\). Thus, if I wish to investigate a past utterance of \(P\), I must appeal to the set of equations I accept as true to correctly justify the evaluation of \(P\). In order to properly evaluate my utterance of ‘Now thirst’, I must appeal to other “physically instantiated strings of symbols” I consider true. I.e., whenever I am thirsty, I believe my body is in a certain physical state, furthermore, I believe my body is in this certain physical state consistently whenever I am thirsty. If my body is in this physical state when I am thirsty, there will be a particular physical phenomenon in my body. Therefore, I can conclude that \(P\) when uttered was true.\textsuperscript{49} The fifth premise is the hammer that puts the nail (the conclusion) in the coffin for the argument, for it makes evident the meaning of a sentence is that which can be described in physical terms. Neurath’s conclusion is fairly straightforward in that it rejects

\textsuperscript{48} The term ‘equation’ is meant to give character to the physical explanation of certain phenomena. E.g., the equation of the term ‘Heart attack now’ is a set of descriptions illustrating the current metabolic processes of some member of the \textit{animalia} kingdom. In another way, we might represent the phenomenon of hunger with the equation ‘Hunger now’.

\textsuperscript{49} I assume Neurath would include the appropriate behaviors in the set of phenomena yielded by the bodily condition of being thirsty. These behaviors as well as the physical condition of the body could be explained in physical sentences. Such behaviors might include sluggishness, constant swallowing to keep one’s throat moist, perhaps even vocal requests for water or some other thirst quenching liquid, etc. These behaviors would imply the utterance ‘Now thirst’ when uttered is true.
that the meaning of a protocol sentence is a particular sensation. The same considerations regarding the verificationism premise in Carnap’s argument apply here as well.

The argument proposed by Neurath pushes the PLA to the extreme by rejecting any degree of privacy in a scientific linguistic framework. Neurath’s private language argument was motivated by deeper issues plaguing scientific language. Nielsen explains, “to Neurath, the unified language of science was just part of an ‘ordinary natural language’ and therefore contained imprecise, unanalyzed terms and linguistic conglomerations.”\(^{50}\) The problem Neurath saw with the inevitable intermingling of ordinary language and scientific language was that the ordinary language contaminated scientific explanations with vagueness and ambiguities. Neurath paints this picture with his famous boat simile:

> We are like sailors who must rebuild their ship on the open sea, never able to dismantle it in dry-dock and to reconstruct it there out of the best materials. Only the metaphysical elements can be allowed to vanish without a trace. Vague linguistic conglomeration always remain in one way or another as components of the ship. If vagueness is diminished at one point, it may well be increased at another (Neurath, 1932c, p 201).\(^ {51}\)

There is, therefore, according to Neurath, no way to get out from under the problems that come with ordinary language when attempting to do scientific inquiry.

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**The Conflict Between Carnap and Neurath**

A main tension between Carnap and Neurath is the nature of the protocol sentence, which, ironically, is the same element that leads these two thinkers to reject a private language. A deeper contention between the two thinkers, though, is their approach to and conception of philosophy and science. Nielsen explains Carnap and Neurath diverge on their approaches to science and scientific practice including scientific justification for the meaning of sentences. As far as Carnap was concerned, the duty of the philosopher was to provide an abstract, clarifying, framework for justifying scientific knowledge as true. Carnap ultimately

\(^{50}\) Nielsen, *Private Language Argument*, 21-22.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 22.
conceded that scientific claims might rely “on an intuitive grasp of the claim requiring philosophical justification.” Neurath, on the other hand, was concerned with scientific practice and how claims of science could be justified during scientific investigation. Neurath’s concern regarding justifying the claims of science would ultimately influence his views of language.

The disagreement between Carnap and Neurath on the deeper levels of the place of philosophy and science is shown in their respective approaches to the protocol sentence. Nielsen explicitly points out the disagreement between Carnap and Neurath is “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.” It is evident both Carnap and Neurath face the same problem, as noted by Nielsen, and while these two thinkers may not be explicitly concerned with the possibility of a private language, since their worries include matters more concerned with science and the justification of scientific matters, it would not be unfair to ascribe their arguments to the category of PLAs concerned with the possibility of a private language. For if it is possible for a private language to exist, then propositions included in that language will not be accessible to others. It is conceivable there is the possibility of a private language. Included in this language are scientific claims where some of these claims are private, e.g., claims about sensations. The result, then, is that there are some private claims within science. Carnap and Neurath are important in this discussion because they heavily influence Wittgenstein’s PLA and provide the framework for Wittgenstein’s view of language.

There are three important points I will make that will require Carnap and Neurath to commit to a concern about private language regardless of their approaches to the proper conception of philosophy, science, and language.

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52 Ibid., 24.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 25.
1. What counts as a scientific claim? I.e., what is it to be a scientific claim?
2. The problem of sensations – the problem of qualia.\textsuperscript{55}
3. The problem of the meaning of language.\textsuperscript{56}

I will explain these three points and conclude that based on 1), 2), and 3), both Neurath and Carnap will be committed to a PLA that not only encompasses their respective projects and concerns regarding the function of language but also the philosophical community.

The first point, ‘What counts as a scientific claim?’ is formulated as a question but is meant to highlight those sentences that would be categorized as a scientific claim. According to Neurath’s PLA, a scientific claim can be any sentence describing some aspect of the external or internal world.\textsuperscript{57} The position Neurath outwardly adopts is Verificationism. Some sentences are verifiable in principle but not in practice like the sentence, “There is organic life on other planets.” This sentence is verifiable in principle but not in practice (at least not in practice given the current state of space travel and technology); this is the reason for the qualification of both practice and principle for the verification of sentences. Neurath would not accept the sentence “There is organic life on other planets” as meaningful because it is not verifiable in practice. This reinforces Neurath’s insistence that meaningful scientific claims must be verifiable in practice. For instance, the claim ‘I am tired’ would be counted as a scientific claim for it satisfies the criteria that a scientific claim must state something about the external or internal world – the conscious spatio-temporal object, just now uttered ‘I am tired’. Though this is a reflexive claim, it still satisfies what it is to be a scientific claim. The proposition ‘I am tired’ also counts as a protocol sentence. Another example of a scientific claim that is not a protocol sentence would be ‘The liquid compound H\textsubscript{2}O when exposed to

\textsuperscript{55} I will continuously return to this problem and claim it to be a key component in the debate of the possibility of a private language. Though this problem is not new to the private language debate, my treatment of the problem and how it affects Wittgenstein’s PLA will, I hope, call for a retreatment of Wittgenstein’s argument.

\textsuperscript{56} This has been addressed in the previous chapter, and I will adopt the theory of meaning presented by Putnam. I will readdress this issue in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{57} I will include Carnap here as well, for both thinkers adopt and utilize Verificationism.
certain temperatures changes its form to a solid’. A simple presentation of this sentence would be ‘Liquid water freezes’. This sentence is also a scientific claim about some phenomenon in the external world.

So far 1) has set out the conditions of what counts as a scientific claim, and there are two types of scientific claims: those involving sensations or protocol sentences and those that are non-sensation sentences. Non-protocol sentences, sentences that do not explicitly contain some sort of sensation language, can be explained in simple material language terms like physics or some other hard science. For instance ‘Liquid H₂O freezes’ is easily explained via the language of physics and chemistry; I assume these languages to be physical languages; i.e., these languages explain the material/external world in terms of physically instantiated phenomena. The category of scientific claims and protocol sentences will be where the problem of explaining sensations in terms of a physicalist’s language arises. Before I continue the discussion regarding protocol sentences, I will draw a strict distinction between protocol and non-protocol sentences. This distinction will be more radical than Carnap and Neurath intended, but I will show why it is necessary.

The distinction I will make and then subsequently reject will make it clear why it is necessary to consider the possibility of a private language, the scope of which is not concerned solely with the scientific community but the philosophical, and potentially social science, communities as well. Carnap, and I assume Neurath as well, hold a similar, if not identical position, that protocol sentences include not only sentences about sensations but also “the immediately given.” Thus, for any protocol sentence ‘S’, the sentence could be (a) a sentence describing a sensation, (b) a sentence describing the “immediately given,” or (c) both (a) and (b). This is how the term ‘protocol sentence’ may be interpreted. I maintain that there is a distinction between (a) and (b). This distinction is temporal. An instance of (a) implies or refers to sensations in general, whereas (b) refers to sensations and or experience in the present. An instance of (b) can be uttered that does not contain a word or phrase referring to a sensation.

I take Carnap and Neurath to adopt (c), but I will show how this position is misdirected and that the appropriate way to understand a protocol sentence is by adopting (a) and reserving (b) for the category of non-protocol sentences. Take, for example, the sentence ‘Now thirst’. This is an appropriate protocol sentence for it satisfies Carnap’s and Neurath’s
conditions for what it is to be a protocol sentence. Carnap and Neurath both maintain that this sentence, since it is an example of (c), ‘Now thirst’, refers to a sensation, being thirsty, and some physical instantiation of the phenomenon, which occurs in the body of the subject. Therefore, it follows according to both Carnap and Neurath that this sentence can be explained via the physical sciences. There are two parts to this sentence. The first is the sensuous part: being thirsty; the second is the physical instantiation of material body desiring some liquid to satiate the desire for liquid. In order for this protocol sentence to be fully explained, both parts of the sentence would have to be expressed through the physical language. There is no way to explain the sensuous aspect of ‘Now thirst’ that would universally apply to all conscious cognitive subjects because sensations cannot be shared between two subjects. Behaviorism cannot be the fallback theory because of the objections with that theory, and another theory to explain that subjects feel the same sensation such as some identity theory may not capture the problem of sensations in its entirety.58 There is, however, a way of explaining the physical aspect of thirst that might apply universally to all conscious cognitive subjects. Therefore, only half of the sentence can be explained by the explanatory powers of the sciences; the other part of the sentence, ‘being thirsty’, cannot sufficiently be explained by scientific language. Since a protocol sentence under the c) interpretation can only be partly explained, (c) is not an adequate assignment of protocol sentences.

58 One might propose an identity theory to handle my concern, which would handle explaining the two parts of a scientific claim. I am hesitant to accept such a theory for two reasons: the first is that in some cases of spectrum inversion (see the discussion below in Chapter 3), an identity theory would fail to turn up any reason to accept that two subjects share the same or exactly similar sensations. A difference in brain states, in the case of spectrum inversion, does not entail that two individuals share the same or exactly similar feelings of a particular sensation. This becomes more of an epistemic problem rather than a linguistic. The second reason for my reluctance to accept such an identity theory would be that the proposed theory would fail to capture the sensation problem. If we were to adopt an identity theory to explain talk of sensations, a part of the picture would be left out; the brain state would be able to account for the mental state but would fail to explain the feeling of the sensation. If such a theory were adopted and applied, some other medium would need to be applied to account for the feeling of the sensation. Perhaps an argument by analogy might be sufficient to overcome this problem, yet I am hesitant to adopt the analogy line of reasoning for similar worries that I had about behaviorism.
The second option (b) for ‘protocol sentences’ is not a viable option either. For (b) refers to those sentences that contain what is immediately given in experience. It is unclear whether this includes sensations or not. What is immediately given could include sensations on the one hand, i.e., the feeling of thirst, or it could refer to some physical phenomenon in the material world like wool burning or water freezing. In the case of some physical phenomenon in the external world, it is not necessary there be a sensation associated with the occurrence, yet there may be a sensation present. For the sake of the discussion, however, I shall take (b) to refer to those sentences describing the “immediately given” in experience which do not describe sensations. I.e., sentences like “Water freezes,” or “The force of gravity has causal effects on material objects,” or “Fruit spoils,” etc. all describe what is immediately given in experience, however, these sentences do not describe sensations. I shall take the scope of (b) does not apply to sensations but only to the immediate experience of phenomena not describing sensations. If (b) does not apply to sensations, but only to what is immediately given, then some parts of language, namely sensation language, will be outside the scope of explanation from the sciences. Thus, (b) cannot be what is meant by ‘protocol sentences’.

The last option, a), protocol sentences include and only refer to sensations is the last assignment of protocol sentences, but this option will also have to be rejected. For each subject’s sensations, there is a particular feeling of that sensation for the individual. Each subject’s sensations are private. Therefore, any explanation of the feeling of each subject’s sensations would be private. Sensations cannot be explained in explanatory physical terms. Therefore, each subject’s explanatory equation of sensations cannot be explained in physicalist terms. For each sentence describing a sensation S, when S is uttered by a subject, there is a corresponding feeling yet this cannot be explained in physical terms. I am not claiming materialism is false; I maintain that with the current physicalist framework, sentences describing feelings are not fully explained via materialism.

Each interpretation of ‘protocol sentence’ yields a result that is undesirable because each interpretation yields a private result, sensations being ruled out as a viable candidate for what counts as a protocol sentence, or the sentence cannot be fully explained. Thus I reject the (a), (b), (c) distinction on the grounds that protocol sentences insofar as they are meaningful à la Carnap and Neurath are fully explainable in a physical language. The
distinction made between protocol and non-protocol sentences via (a), (b), and (c) is outside the explanatory powers of science to explain sensations.

To further deal with the second point, the problem of the sensation of the immediately given – the problem of qualia, I will utilize Thomas Nagel’s essay “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” Nagel’s essay is meant to show how any examples or analogies in the philosophy of mind have not sufficiently explained the relation between the body and mind. Nagel puts it more clearly, “I shall try to explain why the usual examples do not help us understand the relation between the mind and body – why, indeed, we have at present no conception of what an explanation of the physical nature of a mental phenomenon would be.”59 I will use Nagel’s thesis about the complexity of providing a sufficient physicalist account of mind as a tool to first show that Carnap and Neurath, if they wish to maintain that what is given in immediate experience in terms of qualia or sensations can be explained in physicalist terms, then they have to overcome the same obstacle as other philosophers that maintain a similar thesis, and second that Nagel’s thesis can be compared to qualia language in that the mind is comparable to qualia.

Nagel’s scope of which organisms have conscious experiences applies to beings outside my scope, nevertheless I shall adopt the scope of his assignment of beings which have consciousness for it also entails certain human beings.60 Nagel’s criterion for a being’s having consciousness is “fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is to be that organism – something it is like for the organism.”61 Nagel calls this criterion the subjective character of experience, hereafter abbreviated SCE. Nagel outright denies any form of reductive analysis can explain the subjective character of experience because the reduction is “logically compatible” with the absence of the SCE, or any intentional or functional states of mentality because these characteristics can be applied


60 I qualify my claim with the term “certain human beings” because I assume Nagel does not include certain beings like fetuses/embryos or the unconscious human being or other animals for that matter.

61 Nagel, "What Is It Like?," 436.
to automata and robots and these beings are thought not to have any experiences. Nagel’s argument includes the idea that if some phenomenon, any phenomenon, is to be reduced to physical terms, it must be founded upon an analysis of what is to be reduced to physical terms. Since an analysis of mentality leaves out part of the phenomenon, in this case it is consciousness that is left out of the analysis, the problem of explaining mentality in physical terms is inaccurately posed. Nagel continues to explain that to found a theory of mentality in materialist terms without properly accounting for the subjective character would be futile. Nagel concludes that without some proper explanation or presentation of the SCE, a proper physical theory of mind cannot be presented. Nagel does not deny a theory can be known or that one exists, only that with the present reductionist frameworks a materialist account of mind cannot at present be given.

Nagel more explicitly puts the nail in the coffin for physicalists wishing to provide an adequate account of mind when he explains that it is impossible to ignore the phenomenal aspect of experience in a reductionist’s account. If the physicalist wants to maintain her position, the phenomenal features of experience must be available to be translated into physical terms. It seems impossible to explain in objective physical terms the phenomenological character of experience because each SCE is connected with a single point of view. A theory of physicalism, according to Nagel, is likely to “abandon that point of view” – the point of view of the single subject. I will connect Nagel’s preliminary remarks in his essay to my forthcoming comments and overall project.

Nagel thus far has claimed that any material reductionist account of mind must also be able to explain the phenomenological aspect of mind. Thus the SCE is a part of consciousness that must also be given a physical account. Nagel’s concern entails the reductionist account of mind must account for the SCE, which contains a phenomenological aspect. In language, there are certain terms and sentences that are intimately connected with the SCE, and by consequence these terms describe a phenomenal character. For instance, the set of terms (i) ‘fear’, ‘happiness’, ‘pain’, and the set of sentences (ii) ‘I am afraid of the
monster in my closet’, or ‘I have a pain in my big toe’ refer to some subjective phenomenological aspect. In the case of (i), it would be accompanied by some subject be it human or not. In some cases any member of (i), would be used in an instance of (ii) such that the sentence ‘I have a pain in my big toe’ utilizes a member of the set of (i), but it need not necessarily be the case that a member of (i) appear in an utterance of (ii); there are utterances of (i) that are in isolation from (ii). Any utterance of a member of (ii) will describe a phenomenal character had by the utterer. The physicalist might object and propose that for each sensation there is a corresponding physical instantiation. For instance, every time I stub my big toe, electrical signals travel up through my body into my brain and then what follows are exclamations of pain and words of abuse. I will not contest this fact. I will maintain, like Nagel, there has not been a sufficient theory to explain the SCE. I.e., physicalism has not provided a sufficient explanation for the feeling of the pain in my big toe. More precisely the feeling of pain I have in my big toe cannot, as of right now, be explained in physical terms. This is the point Nagel is making, and though his aim is mind and not language, there are parallels between the two.

The concern Nagel addresses also extends to Carnap and Neurath; both argued the content of experience could be explained with a scientific physical language. There is, however, one major aspect of the private language conversation that seems to have been given a shallow treatment by both Carnap and Neurath. The concern I am raising is the meaning of words. To the defense of Carnap and Neurath, being of a particular philosophical background that intimately included science, a sentence was deemed meaningful only if it

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62 It is important to make clear both (i) and (ii) are not to be taken as exhaustive sets of terms or phrases containing a phenomenological character. There are also sets of terms that do not refer to a strict phenomenological character; e.g., ‘table’, ‘chair’, ‘tree’, ‘boat’, etc., even though the experience of these objects would have a strict phenomenological aspect. If any of these non-phenomenological terms were to be used in a sentence like “I see a boat over there” or “I see a chair right here,” these sentences automatically qualify as sentences referring to a phenomenological aspect. I.e., the experience of seeing the boat or the experience of recognizing and vocally acknowledging there is a chair would count as phenomenological.

63 I make the assumption that someone might have good reason to suppose a dog, cat, or rabbit has sensations of fear, pain, hunger, excitement, etc.
was testable; this is a strict demonstration of verificationism. The scope of verificationism, as of right now, does not reach or apply to certain parts of language such as sentences about another’s sensations; a subject can verify her own sensations, but I cannot adequately verify these sensations. Thus verificationism will have to be rejected as a viable account of the meaningfulness of a sentence.

One might object and claim that if behaviorism or an identity theory were true, sensation talk would be verifiable. In the case of behaviorism, however, the only information afforded to listeners would be that a subject has a particular sensation. A speaker S₁ has a sensation of pain and utters the sentence, “I have a pain” to S₂. The second speaker can verify S₁’s sentence describing the sensation but is wholly ignorant of what that sensation actually is. We might further suppose that simultaneously occurring with the utterance of the sentence S₁ winces, grimaces, and perhaps yowls. There is the problem of how we would know if S₁ was really experiencing pain. S₁’s behavior’s would indicate the sensation of pain, but it is conceivable that the sensation S₁ actually has would is what I might refer to as a tickle. On the other hand, suppose an identity theory were true. In the instance where mental states were identical to brain states, the same line of reasoning would apply here too. If brain states are indeed mental states, then here too the sensation itself, the feeling, is not included in the analysis of sensation. I might have electrodes hooked up to my brain and whenever I was in a particular mental state like desiring pizza, or having the belief that the earth was spherical in shape, or something of the like, my brain would be in a certain physical state which would be available to observers. My desiring pizza would be the result of my being hungry. The electrodes would detect my mental state of desiring pizza (being hungry), and it might turn out this particular brain state is B₅₂, but all the brain state measures or describes is my desire for pizza; this measurement does not contain the sensation itself, i.e., the sensation of being hungry is not included in the report.

In order to show the possibility of a private language, I will have to appeal to a framework of language use with justification requirements that allow for a private use, and
subsequently a theory of meaning that when applied to these loose justification conditions would yield the possibility of a private language.\textsuperscript{64} Before I continue, I will address the qualia issue as it affects Wittgenstein’s PLA.

\textsuperscript{64} ‘Justification requirements’ refers to rules regarding the correct use of a word.
CHAPTER 3
WITTGENSTEIN’S PRIVATE LANGUAGE
ARGUMENT

Ludwig Wittgenstein argues in his work *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) that it is not possible to have a wholly private language. However, consider if it were possible to have a completely private language, what would the philosophical ramifications be? How would this private language be formed? What would this private language look like? Furthermore, aside from the philosophical implications, how would this private language affect, if at all, the rest of the way we communicate with other individuals? All of the aforementioned questions are ones that need to be answered for any proponent of the possibility of a private language. In the forthcoming remarks, I will present two of Wittgenstein’s assumptions about language, how Wittgenstein’s approach to language makes a presupposition about the users of a given language, and how language might be used that is not consistent with Wittgenstein’s argument against private language. I will first set up Wittgenstein’s view of language as it relates to his version of the PLA, then I will explain each assumption. After explaining each assumption, I will respond and show these assumptions are false. After I address Wittgenstein’s assumptions, I will present two arguments advancing two kinds of private languages, a Weak Private Language and a Strong Private Language. Before I proceed further with this essay, I would like first and foremost to note that while I use examples from the English language, my results are intended also to apply to all languages. The remarks in this thesis could apply to any of the other the natural languages: Spanish, French, German, Italian, etc. Before I present my account of a private language, it is first necessary to set up Wittgenstein’s view of language as it relates to his PLA in order to justify my remarks when I present my two arguments for a private language.

Wittgenstein’s view of language in PI takes a different approach than in his earlier works. In PI, Wittgenstein takes a more social view of language wherein language is meant
to be a medium for communication between two individuals. Wittgenstein has this to say in regard to language in section 242 of PI:

It is not only agreement in definitions, but also (odd as it may sound) agreement in judgments that is required for communication by means of language. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. – It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call “measuring” is in part determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.65

Interpreting this section from the text, one can infer Wittgenstein is proposing that language is a means of communication with others introducing a social aspect rather than a strong metaphysical view, wherein with language, more specifically, propositions are meant to describe or give an accurate picture of reality.66 It is clear while examining the other sections of PI that language is essentially a means communicating with others. Another passage that alludes to this view of language is the preceding section 241, “‘So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?’ – What is true or false is what human beings say; and it is in their language that human beings agree. This is agreement not in opinions, but rather in form of life.”67 The same consideration in footnote 66 can be applied to this passage of PI, yet Wittgenstein again implicitly assumes that agreement among multiple human beings is what makes a proposition “true” or “false.”

There is a distinction between potential agreement and actual agreement. Potential agreement refers to the possibility of two subjects’ agreeing on a judgment or a definition; i.e., the rule that governs the appropriate use of an expression can be shared between

\[\text{Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 94e-95e.}\]

66 One interesting interpretation of this section is that Wittgenstein does not qualify that at least one other person is required to agree in both judgment and definition; I believe this is an implicit assumption he makes regarding language and communication. It is conceivable that a person could agree with herself regarding judgments or definitions. She might take a word referring to an object and give it a definition at a particular time and then upon encountering that object again at a later time, she might recall her previous definition and present definition and judge as to whether she has correctly identified the object. Wittgenstein, however, will not deny this possibility due to the absence of shareable rules. This could be due to Wittgenstein’s strict requirements of verifying correct use of words. For the sake of the forthcoming discussion, I will accept Wittgenstein’s implicit assumption and assume that Wittgenstein means that it is at least possible the rules be shared with another person; whether another person is actually present doesn’t detract from agreement in judgment, definitions, and, consequently, communication.

\[\text{Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 94e.}\]
subjects. If I invent an expression or word and the rule governing this expression can be passed on to another subject, two subjects can potentially agree upon the use of the expression. Likewise, actual agreement refers to two subjects’ actually agreeing on the use of an expression, assuming they learned how to use the word. I.e., when one subject utters the proposition, “Water is a liquid compound,” a second subject having heard the proposition can agree with the first subject because she already knows how to use the word. In this instance, the subjects are said to actually agree with one another. A language cannot be fully private if the rules governing expressions are shareable/verifiable.

If a rule can be transcribed into a series of symbols that can be understood by a second subject, then it is possible for the rule to be understood. If it is possible for a rule to be understood, then it is sharable. It follows rules can be understood by other subjects. Rules by definition are the guidelines for the proper use of expressions, and since they can be translated into symbols, which can be shared with other subjects, rules cannot be non-shareable. Thus there cannot be a wholly or fully private language. Wittgenstein and I reach roughly the same conclusion, but we differ on the scope of our arguments. The scope of Wittgenstein’s argument seems to encompass all language, whereas I conclude there are certain parts of language, words and phrases describing sensations, which are wholly private. Wittgenstein’s argument against a private language can be inferred from various sections of PI. The relevant sections are from 257-270, and the argument is inferred from these sections. I will show how the forthcoming analysis of qualia leaves the door open for a private language, which will be the basis for my framework of a weak private qualitative language and strong private qualitative language.68

1. A language is a system of rules governing the use of the expressions in a language.

2. To count as a general rule, there must be criteria for determining whether one is obeying the rule.

68 What will take form with the two arguments, the weak private language and the strong private language argument, is a strict distinction in language. There is, on the one hand, language that describes sensations, and on the other, language that does not describe or refer to sensations.
3. These criteria must be public (shareable).
4. If a language were private, then the criteria for determining whether one were following the rules would not be public.
5. Therefore, language cannot be private.

To claim there can be a wholly private language would be too strong of a conclusion. I, however, claim there can be, and there is for that matter, a private language based on the fundamental privacy of language describing sensations. The phrase, ‘private language’, is meant to refer to the set of all words describing sensations.

To enumerate all of the relevant passages to show how language is essentially to communicate with others would be a task too great. If the skepticism regarding my claim overrides the evidence provided, then I advise readers to consult PI to confirm for themselves that language is essentially for communication with others.

Wittgenstein’s claim is further backed by Locke’s theory of language. Locke’s theory of language is one where words signify ideas in the mind of an individual. According to Locke, when words are used by individuals, “they in their thoughts give them a secret reference to two other things. First. They suppose their words to be marks of the ideas in the minds also of other men, with whom they communicate.” While Locke theorizes that words signify ideas of objects in the mind of a single individual, the supposition is made that these ideas also exist in the minds of others. So under this supposition, any two speakers S₁ and S₂ are able to use the same word because they share the similar ideas; S₁ and S₂ are able to use the word ‘dog’ because each has his own idea of what a dog is based on his sense experiences with dogs. The second reference made when words are used is that people often “suppose the words to stand also for the reality of things.” Locke claims that words stand for the ideas in an individual’s mind and that those words also refer to the ideas in the minds of other men. Through the exchange of words I am also exchanging ideas, which also refer to

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70 Ibid., 11.
Wittgenstein and Locke would not deny that language functions as a means of communication between individuals. Wittgenstein takes this conception further and claims that a private language is not possible given the parameters of the function and conception of language. To explicitly show this first point, I will advance two related arguments as they both conclude language as a means of communication, but in the second argument, the possibility of a private language is left open via Wittgenstein’s claim, premise (4). I will call the following argument the Hard Interpretation Argument (hereafter HIA):

1. Language is a medium to stand for the ideas in the minds of others as well as a medium to exchange meaning from one subject to another to describe the external and internal world (by Locke).
2. The exchange of meaning via words from one subject to another is called communication.
3. Communication requires agreement in both definitions and judgments (by Wittgenstein).
4. Therefore, at least one of the functions of language is to allow for communication with other individuals.

This formulation of the argument is meant to work under the implicit assumption Wittgenstein adopts, that agreement in definitions and judgments requires more than one subject to correctly verify the correct use of a definition or judgment. Given the PLA Wittgenstein will advance, an argument I will present shortly, this is the interpretation Wittgenstein would agree with. I shall call this interpretation the hard interpretation. The hard interpretation drives the idea that in order for there to be communication, there must be two subjects present. There is, however, another interpretation of (3) that Wittgenstein might disagree with. This second interpretation does leave open the possibility of a private language under a different interpretation of (3). If (3) is interpreted in this second way, the argument becomes the weak interpretation argument. I shall call this the weak interpretation argument (hereafter WIA). This weaker interpretation drives the idea that there does not need to be a second subject present in order for communication to take place. I will revisit this idea in Chapter 4.

My aim with the second (weaker) interpretation of (3) is not to deny communication between subjects; this is a fact I am determined and committed to maintain. On the other
hand, I am committed to the idea that words and phrases may be agreed upon by individuals to themselves with or without some prior experiences with other subjects. In the second of these instances where no other subject is required to verify a statement or proposition, consider instances where I am walking along a path alone and I see a sign that reads, “Danger Mountain Lions.” I repeat the proposition aloud or internally in my mind, and I conclude that mountain lions might be in the area and I ought to be careful or on the lookout for mountain lions. In this situation, I see the sign and agree with myself that mountain lions might be in the area. There is no other subject around to measure my proposition of being careful and render a verdict of “true” or “false” to my proposition.

A less radical example is my walking down a street alone, and I see a sign outside of a business that reads, “Closed.” Once again I am inclined to read the sign and make the proposition either vocally or internally, “This business is closed.” In this instance, too, there is no other subject around to agree or disagree with my judgment of whether the business is open or not. Of course these interpretations are soft in that I am assuming prior meaning with the signs. I.e., I understand the meaning of the signs as I read them and I draw certain conclusions based on my interpretation of the signs. One might also comment and say that the signs are substitutes for other subjects and are communicating certain messages in the absence of those subjects. I will not contest this point, however, there is a further condition that must be fulfilled. I must at least understand the meaning of the signs, and in this instance, I do and make judgments and draw conclusions based on those signs without the presence of another subject to affirm or deny my judgment. Hence this softer interpretation is maintained.

Consider another example that is slightly more radical; I draw upon Ayer’s example of the Robinson Crusoe abandoned on an island at birth. Our Crusoe grew up on the island without any prior language; thus he is left to ascribe meaning to the words, which describe objects in his surroundings. The word ‘water’ would come to describe an object, the liquid compound H2O. The liquid compound that is water would then be subdivided into two categories and be described as ‘drinkable’, and ‘non-drinkable’; the drinkable water would be the spring water found on the island whereas the non-drinkable water would be the ocean water. The only way Crusoe would make this distinction is through repeated trial and error. After some time, Crusoe would have an understanding of the distinction and ‘water’ would
describe a substance with a chemical compound of H₂O. We might further speculate that Crusoe would and could invent a word to describe the substance and then two different words for the drinkable and non-drinkable water. Through trial and error, once again, Crusoe would apply the words to the objects and come to regularly name them when presented with them. There is no logical inconsistency with Crusoe’s ascribing names to objects on the island and then through repetition naming them whenever he sees them. Crusoe would come to make propositions about objects, or in the case of water, substances, on the island such as “There is a spring of fresh water on the mountain” or “There are coconuts growing on these particular trees,” etc. Given Crusoe would be able to verify his own statements and come to agree or disagree with them without the presence of another subject, he would be working within a linguistic framework outside of any other social interactions or relations.

Superficially, Wittgenstein would allow that these two examples are of meaningful language use because the rules are shareable, however, when I introduce the notion of rule following, both examples become problematic with the notion of following a rule, a subject I will reexamine in Chapters 4 and 5. So I will not go into great detail here; I will simply allude to the problem. In the first example where I see the signs and no other subject is around to agree with me, the implicit assumption is I am following the rules of the language. If I am not following the rules or I am ignorant of how the phrases are used, it cannot be said of me that I am using the expressions correctly. The problem becomes more evident in the second example where there is no established language and I am left to my own devices. Who can say I am following my own rules? In this sense, it could be said the language is private because I am privately making up the rules for proper use of expressions.

Once again my aim is not to deny communication as that act where two individuals exchange ideas or propositions about the external or internal world. I aim to show that one need not have a second subject present to verify or agree with my judgments, even if the rules governing my language are shareable in principle. Wittgenstein would agree with this line of reasoning; the assumption is that the conditions of rule following are met. If, on the
other hand, the rules governing my language are not shareable in principle, there is no way to check that I used the word or expression correctly, and this is why Wittgenstein requires at least potential agreement between individuals. This leaves open the possibility of a private language in a loose sense, sharing the rules of the language is possible, if I choose to do so.  

Ayer will make comments about a Robinson Crusoe example, and I examine this in the next chapter. A nagging concern that seems to be more of an unfortunate choice of words and does not viciously affect the argument is the word “communication.” In the argument, “communication” is defined as an exchange of ideas from one subject to another. This is premise (2) and an uncontroversial one at that; Wittgenstein goes further and requires there to be agreement in both judgment and opinion for communication. When I claim it is conceivable that a single subject can agree in both judgments and opinions regarding propositions that come from that subject, this does not seem to align with the traditional definition of communication, yet the requirements set forth by Wittgenstein are still met, agreement in judgment and opinion is met. This concern seems to stem from the traditional conception of communication; an exchange of words/information from one subject to another and vice versa is what constitutes communication. It is not generally maintained that someone has a one-sided conversation with himself. Though while this is a popular position, and while it does not happen for the most part across the span of language users, is it not possible for a one-sided conversation to occur? In a very primitive way where propositions are uttered describing reality and one affirms or denies those propositions based on observation and experience both past and present, a one-sided conversation is possible. The constraint of what constitutes communication, namely a two-subject requirement, may be

71 There is an important contention to bring to the fore, which I hope will make this conversation clearer. In what sense is ‘rule following’ being used? This is not so much a contention rather than a question, but I believe this question opens the debate. Wittgenstein’s conception of following a rule, where one’s use of a rule must be checked by an independent source, a mental check will not be sufficient. This conception is too strong for two reasons. First, at what point does the line of verification end; Ayer makes this point. The second is if a single individual’s judgment for following a rule is insufficient, checking against the judgment of another individual seems no better. I will revisit these two contentions in the next chapter via Ayer. The view of rule following Ayer adopts is softer than Wittgenstein’s for Ayer allows that an individual can follow a rule she created.
expanded to include at least a single-subject requirement.

Now I shall address the first problematic assumption of how language is used between individuals à la Wittgenstein. Before I begin analyzing Wittgenstein’s assumption, I shall first present two relevant sections that allude to it. In *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (RFM), Wittgenstein states,

> It is true that anything can be somehow justified. But the phenomenon of language is based on regularity, on agreement in action. Here it is of the greatest importance that all, or the enormous majority of us agree in certain things. I can, e.g., be quite sure that the colour of this object will be called ‘green’ by far most of the human beings who see it.72

The other relevant section comes from section 239 of PI:

> How is he to know what colour he is to pick out when he hears “red”? – Quite simple: he is to take the colour whose image occurs to him when he hears the word. – But how is he to know which colour it is ‘whose image occurs to him’? Is a further criterion needed for that? (There is indeed such a procedure as choosing the colour which occurs to one when one hears the word “…”

> “‘Red’ means the colour that occurs to me when I hear the word ‘red’” – would be a definition. Not an explanation of what it is to use a word as a name.73

These two sections from Wittgenstein’s work allude to an important problem in philosophy: the problem of qualia. Briefly, according to Lily Hope Chumley and Nicholas Harkness, “the term ‘qualia’ is used to refer to perceptions and sensations ‘in’ or ‘of’ the mind.”74 Under the philosophical microscope, philosophers have grappled with the problem of whether the same sensations could be had by two different individuals or explained in terms of a physical manifestation in the individual. This problem is often discussed in the philosophy of mind, however, the problem of qualia for this discussion is quite relevant.

In the above sections, especially from RFM, one might interpret that Wittgenstein

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supposes that all users of a particular language share the same qualia or sensory perceptions of secondary qualities (taste, smell, touch, sight, etc.) According to this line of thinking, when one individual sees a green object, the immediate response is to say, “I see a green object,” signifying at the very least that this individual is having, among other things, a sensation of green, and for a second individual, when she sees the green object, she would say, “I see a green object,” signifying at least, among other things, a sensation of green. It follows, according to Wittgenstein, these two individuals are able to share the word “green” because they share the “same” experience of the color green and the same object in their view. The key word in this analysis is the word ‘agree’ found in RFM; this word, in a strong sense, implies that the experience of one individual is that of another, but I have shown that it is possible to allow that the word ‘agree’ does not have to include another subject. There is also a further reason to reject the claim that two subjects are able to share the same term because they share the same experience; the counterexample of inverted qualia provides a direct counter to Wittgenstein’s claim that two individuals have the same qualia.

Consider the examples of inverted qualia advanced by both Ned Block and Locke. In his essay, “Inverted Earth,”75 Block proposes two possible instantiations of inverted qualia, the inverted twin example and the inverted earth example. For the purposes of this work, I will address the former. Block asks us to imagine two identical twins, one of whom had color inverting lenses placed on his eyes at birth; the other twin’s eyes were left alone. We are then told that both twins were raised normally and each taught the language of their culture, etc. (let’s suppose it is the English language). However, when twin 1 (T1), the twin with unaltered eyes, uses the term ‘red’ to name all things red, the color that twin 2 (T2) sees is what T1 would call ‘green’; so, T2 adopts the term ‘red’ to name all things he sees as green. Though neither twin is aware of the other twin’s experience, both use the same term (‘red’) to denote two different sense experiences. While Block’s example of the inverted spectrum in

the twins is directed at issues encountered in philosophy of mind, Block’s example and his comments have ramifications with regard to how language is used to express qualitative experiences. The inverted twin’s sense experience example reveals Wittgenstein’s initial assumption about the use of language between two individuals as false. The initial assumption I am referring to is the one where since two individuals share the same term, it follows they share the same experience. The inverted qualia example contradicts this claim for while the two individuals use the same term, the quale of each twin is different. It would follow that because two individuals use the same term, it does not mean they share the same experience.

Locke’s example of inverted qualia also provides similar trouble for Wittgenstein. An insight of Locke’s inverted qualia scenario is proposed in the chapter, “Of True and False Ideas” in his work *Essay concerning Human Understanding*:

Neither would it carry any Imputation of falsehood to our simple ideas, if by the different structure of our organs, it were so ordered, that the same object should produce in several men's minds different ideas at the same time; v.g. if the idea, that a violet produced in one man's mind by his eyes, were the same that a marigold produces in another man's, and vice versa.\(^{76}\)

As was mentioned above, for Locke, words signify the ideas in the mind of an individual, and in the passage from the *Essay*, Locke proposes it is possible the same object could produce two different sensations in two different individuals while the word(s) both individuals use to refer to that object is/are the same. Hence, if we were to assume an actual case of Block and Locke’s scenarios, for any two individuals I\(_1\) and I\(_2\) and for any object O, O may be described by I\(_1\) and I\(_2\) using the same term(s) t\(_n\), and the associated qualia will produce different sensory experiences.

This argument also brings forward epistemological concerns about whether we know if two individuals are referring to the same sensation with their word use. Knowledge of a sensation is intimately connected to the existence of the sensation in question, which in turn

is connected to language. If I cannot know whether another individual has the same sensation I do when presented with a particular sense experience, how would I know then if I use the word to describe this sensation correctly? There are a few potential avenues to avoid this concern such as behaviorism or an identity theory, but none of them I find satisfactory for one reason or another. This concern of knowing if I am using a word correctly is related to Wittgenstein’s concerns of following a rule. This is an issue I address in Chapter 5.

A second concern is that Wittgenstein would agree with the conclusion of this argument, and hence there is no problem with an instance of inverted qualia or if all qualia were inverted for that matter. The issue of rule following and agreement would arise, if we were discussing the parts of language that were non-sensuous; Wittgenstein would find here there can be no privacy in terms of what the words refer to. I will suspend remarks regarding this second point in virtue of the discussion in Chapter 4, however, I will comment and propose that if Wittgenstein allows for privacy with respect to having qualia and describing that qualia, then similar considerations could apply to non-qualitative language. If this is the case, Wittgenstein would be inconsistent in his views of describing qualitative and non-qualitative language. The general aim here is not to prove that all language is private, but at the very least a private language, in Ayer’s sense, a language specifically and intentionally designed to be used by a single individual or a select few, is possible given the three problems I am addressing here: describing qualia (Chapter 3), the language justification requirements for correct use of words and phrases (Chapter 4), and the Wittgenstein-Kripke paradox (Chapter 5). These “problems,” as they might be described, do not pose any serious obstacle for a private language.

Recall Wittgenstein’s PLA, the inherent assumption in this argument is that there are objective standards governing the use of expressions, which is not altogether false. When we consider the problem of qualia, however, we find that as of right now there are no objective standards or criteria for whether an expression (an expression implying a qualitative state) is being used correctly. However, given the WIA regarding communication wherein there need not be a second subject present, Wittgenstein is remaining consistent, yet we could propose that premise (3) in Wittgenstein’s PLA could be interpreted to include a single subject. I shall proceed as if premise (3) in Wittgenstein’s PLA is interpreted in terms of the WIA conclusion. Recall the WIA conclusion is the interpretation that an independent standard
exists for both agreement and propositions for the correct use of expressions and propositions but only one subject is needed. Suppose objective standards exist for governing the use of expressions. This fact is contingent; it could be otherwise that there existed no independent standards governing the correct use of an expression. Hence, I take issue with this implicit assumption, which seems to be presented as a necessary fact. Take, for example, the utterance, “I am cold.” According to Wittgenstein’s PLA, there must be some objective standard(s) already in place to justify whether this expression is being used correctly. Since the expression contains a term describing a qualitative state, ‘being cold’, there would have to be some independent standard to measure whether the speaker of the expression was using this term or expression correctly. But qualia are private. Describing qualia is a subjective enterprise, which stems from a private experience; hence the description will have a private meaning. The result is that the meaning of qualia terms is private. It follows there is no independent standard for determining correct use of qualia terms. When speakers express terms describing qualitative states, there is no way of knowing whether the expression is used correctly in an objective sense.

Since there is yet to be an objective standard discovered or presented governing the correct use of expressions describing qualia, all that is afforded to language users is the standards each individual language user has for her qualia. So, when I use an expression describing a sensation, such as the proposition, “I am cold,” any competent English-speaking individual would be able to understand me, assuming I am cognizant, serious, using proper grammar, I am using the language of my own volition, and I am using the expression in an appropriate context, etc. Fundamentally, my use of the term ‘cold’ is a direct reference to my experience, and the other individual understanding what I said makes a reference to what he perceives to be coldness; thus when individuals use qualitative terms, direct references are made to the subjective experiences of the individuals in relation to the term. For any two individuals I₁ and I₂ and some qualitative term ‘t’, when I₁ uses ‘t’, the experience described by ‘t’ belongs to I₁, and I₂’s understanding of ‘t’ is solely because I₂ is referencing her own experience of ‘t’. Even if I₁ uses ‘t’ to describe I₂’s experience, the use of this term does not wholly describe I₂’s experience; I₁ understands his use of ‘t’ to describe I₂ only through his own firsthand experiences. To believe two individuals have the same experiences referred to by ‘t’ is to make the analogy that since I₁ and I₂ are anatomically and or physiologically
similar, then it follows that they likely to have the same experience referred to by ‘t’. Given
the previous analysis of Block and Locke, however, and the possible instance of qualia
inversion, we should not believe that solely because two individuals are physiologically
similar they will have the same sensory experiences.77 It is conceivable there are objective
standards governing the use of expressions describing qualia, and it is highly likely these
standards exist, however, the problem of the meaning of qualia language, and the existence
of qualia is a major obstacle that would have to be dealt with before any definite, objective
standards can be applied to expressions in terms of qualia language.

I now present my account of a weak private qualia language and my account of a
strong private language à la quale. My two arguments for a private qualia language depend
on much of the aforementioned remarks criticizing Wittgenstein. This is my argument for a
weak private qualia language:

1. Subjects have qualia, and these qualia are private.
2. Some words describe the qualia of the speaker (qualia language).
3. Subjects often use qualia language to talk about their qualia with other subjects.
   E.g., I describe my pain sensation to my doctor.
4. If some words describe the qualia of the speaker, then the meaning of qualia
   language is fundamentally private.
5. Therefore, the meaning of qualia language is fundamentally private. (2 and 4).
6. If the meaning of qualia language is fundamentally private, then we cannot know
   the qualia of other speakers.
7. Therefore, we cannot know the qualia of other speakers. (5 and 6).

What I have outlined is a rough argument for a private language aimed directly at qualia and
the language describing qualia. It is weak in the sense that while the qualitative states
between two individuals are unknown, two speakers communicate about their qualitative

77 I am not arguing there are no objective standards governing uses of expressions. For two individuals
often use the term ‘cold’ to reference the property of coldness; I1 and I2 could use the term ‘cold’ to talk about
the weather, ice cubes, or the proper temperature of a beer. Thus I take no issue with the use of terms. I merely
wish to argue that if there were objective standards regarding which qualia our terms refer to we would not
know what they might look like.
states to one another using qualia language, language utilizing any words that describe a 
qualitative state, words like ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘scared’, ‘elation’, etc., all of which imply some 
qualia had by a speaker of a language. While the use of the term describing the quale is 
objective in the sense that each individual knows what phenomenon the individual is 
referring to, both speakers are ignorant to the other’s qualitative states because the 
phenomenon being referenced is a reference to the quale of the individual that uses the word. 
I might be walking with a companion, and then I might trip on an uneven walkway and twist 
my ankle. Upon twisting my ankle, I might say, “Oh, that hurts”; this would indicate pain in 
my ankle. My companion would most likely comment, before helping me, “Oh, you must be 
in some pain.” This scenario illustrates my point that my companion knows what sensation I 
am referring to because I used some indication of pain and my companion is familiar with the 
sensation (only through her experiences) and words describing that sensation (once again 
through using the words herself through her own firsthand experiences), but is ignorant of the 
sensation itself.

Premises (4) and (6) are important to the argument, for they imply the privacy of the 
meaning of qualia language, which then results in the privacy of the quale. If one cannot fully 
understand the meaning of a word describing a quale, one would not understand what quale I 
am experiencing.

The argument for my weak private qualitative language does not only apply to 
sentences orally spoken about qualia; the above considerations also apply to images. This 
consideration I find to be one of the most important and interesting parts of this argument. 
Suppose I were to draw a picture. Suppose further, someone were to come upon my picture 
and inquire as to the meaning behind the image. The next words to be uttered from me would 
be the explanation of the image, “It [the image] represents my view of...,” or perhaps I might 
say, “the signification of this [as I point to the image] is how I feel about...,” etc. While the 
image is public, it is shareable to all, the meaning attached to the image, which is expressed 
by the words used to explain the image, is not; the meaning attached to the image, and 
consequently the words used to describe the image, are private in that they are derivative of 
some qualitative state even though the two speakers share the same language or some 
translatable language. An obvious consequence of this argument is that the meaning of qualia 
language becomes subjective. This seems to counter Putnam’s theory of meaning, but this is
not so. If we draw a strict distinction in language and create at least two categories of language, words describing qualia and non-qualitative language, we can still adopt Putnam’s externalist account of meaning as it applies to non-qualitative language and reserve a private subjectivist account of language describing qualia.

There is a complication with my argument for a weak private language. It is the case that my formulation for a weak private language does not apply to some other aspects of language that involve descriptions or judgments because descriptions and judgments do not describe qualia. The descriptions or judgments I am talking about are expressions like “There is a chair in the corner,” “The landscape is full of vegetation,” etc. It is sometimes the case when one encounters objects like paintings, landscapes, or everyday objects, that a feeling is elicited from or attached to that particular object. For instance, suppose I were to stand at the peak of a mountain with my climbing companion and I were to look down at the terrain and see all the flowers, and hills, rocks, vegetation, etc., and I were to think to myself, “I am filled with elation and awe by the sight of this view” or something to that effect. Let’s suppose, then, my friend exclaims, “Holy crap! Look how high we are! All those people look like little ants!” (He apparently does not feel the same way about the landscape as I do). While we are both staring out at the same landscape and certain feelings have been stirred in me while my friend remains “emotionless,” my companion still has some sort of qualia from the view of the landscape. This is the basis of my argument for a strong private qualitative language:

1. If two individuals share access to the same object perceptually, then one individual may attach a feeling to (or have a feeling elicited from) that object, which is not accessible to the other, and this feeling may be represented by a term.
2. Two individuals often share access to the same object perceptually.
3. Therefore, one individual may attach a feeling to (or have a feeling elicited from) that object, which is not accessible to another individual and may describe that feeling with a term. (1 and 2).

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78 Refer to Chapter 1 for Putnam’s theory of meaning.
4. The meaning of the term, which describes the feeling attached to or elicited from the object, is private.

5. If the meaning of the term is private, then any second observer cannot understand that term uttered by the first individual.

6. Therefore, any second observer cannot understand the term uttered by the first individual.

There are, in this argument, two lines of defense. The first is the individuals’ perceptions of the object had by the two individuals. The second defense is that with that perception is attached or elicited a quale associated with that object. Neither the perception of the object, nor the feeling is sharable with others. Because the feeling is associated with the perception of the object, one would have to “jump” into or adopt my perceptions to be able to see what I am seeing. To further illustrate this point, consider Gottlob Frege’s theory of sense and reference associated with language. The sense is the mode of presentation of the object and the reference or referent is the object that is being referred to by the word. The sense is supposed to be more objective than associated feelings while the referent is the wholly objective. In Frege’s essay, “On Sense and Reference,” Frege proposes a telescope analogy to illustrate this point:

Somebody observes the Moon through a telescope. I compare the Moon itself to the reference; it is the object of the observation, mediated by the real image projected by the object glass in the interior of the telescope, and by the retinal image of the observer. The former I compare to the sense, the latter is like the idea or experience. The optical image in the telescope is indeed one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of the observation; but it is still objective, inasmuch as it can be used by several observers. 79

In my example, the height of the mountain overlooking the landscape is comparable to the sense; the mode of presentation of the landscape is presented by the height of the mountain. The landscape, what is being referred to, is the referent; this is the objective part in my example. Frege’s theory of sense and reference reinforces the theory of a strong private

language because the referent, the landscape itself, and the sense, the height of the mountain, make possible a second Fregean sense and reference analysis. From the first sense (the height of the mountain) and referent (the landscape itself), an individual can describe a feeling (the referent) she has via language describing sensations (the sense). The two sense and reference analyses are intimately connected in that the first sense and reference, the height of the mountain and the landscape itself, give rise to the second sense and reference, the language describing the feeling and the feeling itself. A consequence of this view is that in the first sense and reference there is, more or less, objectivity; the sense is the objective presentation of the wholly objective referent. In the second sense and reference, the sense is more objective than the referent, which is wholly subjective.

An obvious problem with my proposed two arguments of a private language à la quale is that the strong version of a private language depends on or rests on the weak version of a private language. The weak private language entails qualia are private by consequence the meaning of language describing that qualia is private, which results in something of a private language. Two individuals may use the same word, but the word they use will most likely have different meanings. A second aspect of the weak private language argument is the referent, which is the sensation in this case, is private. The sensation, which is described by the word, cannot be seen or felt by anyone but the subject, which further adds to the privacy of this type of language. The same considerations of the weak private language apply to the strong private language. The only difference is that in the strong private qualia language argument, the feeling is elicited from the perception of a publicly accessible object like a painting, music, a landscape, etc. Therefore, all that is required is to falsify the claims made in the weak private qualia language argument and the strong private qualia language argument would come crashing down. While this objection makes a point, however, this objection could be applied to any theory. More importantly though, the objection does not pose too serious of a threat because given the analysis and presentation of qualia and the difficulties associated therein, it would be hard to show one of the premises are false.

A second objection to my weak interpretation argument that could be brought to this analysis is that my interpretation of Wittgenstein is too liberal. The other interpretations of Wittgenstein from other scholars interpret Wittgenstein’s PI stronger than what I have done here and that my interpretation of Wittgenstein’s PLA and what he says is too loose. For the
sake of the argument, however, and given Wittgenstein’s PI requires some interpretation, if we are allowed this interpretation of Wittgenstein, the analysis given above would be the result. Furthermore, if one is to analyze a particular scholar’s ideas, especially one that requires interpretation, it is important to explore all the possible avenues associated with that thinker’s philosophy. Assuming the interpretation given of Wittgenstein’s work is a possible interpretation, I am justified in my analysis.

Finally, while no theory is immune from criticism, as it has been shown with my criticism with Wittgenstein, it would require a thinker cleverer than I to show this analysis and proposal of my two theories of language false. If someone more clever than I, however, were to find an obvious flaw in my argument, then it seems that I would have to revisit this analysis to see if I could fix the problematic areas.

This chapter explored the possibility of a private language in terms of qualia. This chapter, furthermore, is a bridge to the next problem, justification requirements for the correct use of an expression. Thus far I have presented a problem for advocates of a PLA and that is the problem of qualia and the words describing those qualia. The second concern I will explicitly address in Chapter 4, but I have alluded to it here in the early part of this chapter in some detail, are Wittgenstein’s requirements for using an expression correctly. This is the main subject of discussion in the next chapter. In the first part of this chapter, I addressed assumptions made by Wittgenstein and showed how Wittgenstein’s view of language can be applied in a different way. In the second part of this chapter, I presented two arguments for a weak private qualitative language and a strong private qualitative language, and then I anticipated objections to my analysis. Though my arguments for a weak private qualia language and a strong private qualia language are incomplete in that the analysis required to sort out the fine details has not been provided, I have sketched a general direction to where I think these arguments (if they carried any philosophical weight) would go. I am not arguing with any rigor that language as a whole as we use it currently or have used it in the past is wholly private. My comments and arguments here are meant to show the possibility of a private language concerning qualia on the grounds that any given quale is private and by consequence language describing that language would also be private. This discussion completes my analysis of qualia and sensations. I will revisit these notions in a more general sense in the next chapter. Though my aim there will be to show Wittgenstein’s criteria for the
correct use of an expression are too strict, this would also include talk of sensations.
CHAPTER 4
AYER’S RESPONSE TO WITTGENSTEIN

Suspending for the moment my remarks regarding Wittgenstein’s private language argument, I turn now to A. J. Ayer and Rush Rhees’ essay, “Can There Be a Private Language?” Though I will only address Ayer’s comments because he, unlike Wittgenstein and Rhees, argues for the possibility of a private language, I find his arguments will aid in my overall project. In his preliminary remarks, Ayer admits outright, “it is obvious that there can be private languages. There can be, because there are.”80 Ayer goes onto describe particular instances of private languages that exist such as the jargon of family units or a guild of thieves; certain pirates, perhaps, might have a private language. I accept Ayer’s claim. His definition of a private language is a language “devised to enable a limited number of persons to communicate with one another in a way that is not intelligible to anyone outside the group.”81 It is conceivable to suppose that there are private languages where the scope of understanding applies to only one individual. The scope of Ayer’s definition goes beyond a single individual and encompasses small groups of individuals; this kind of private language, described by Ayer, is not wholly private because the rules of the language can be shared with other individuals. This conception of a private language is one that goes beyond language describing qualia. Once again, I am working under the distinction between the privacy of language describing qualia and the privacy of language not describing qualia. The latter is the subject of this chapter.

80 Ayer and Rhees, "Private Language?" 63.
81 Ibid.
One of the main problems that plague the private language conversation is the meaning of the word ‘private’. Taken in the strictest sense possible, ‘private’ means completely and wholly unavailable to anyone else except the subject, or in this case, the speaker; this sense of ‘privacy’ is one Wittgenstein denies as possible for a private language. It is both conceivable and plausible to maintain that Wittgenstein’s conception of privacy can be interpreted in such a way as to agree with Ayer. It will be shown here that this strict sense of the word ‘private’ is one that does not apply in this conversation. There is a blurred distinction, however, between transcribing common words into secretive symbols and inventing new words. Ayer describes, if, however, one were to stretch the method of translating common words into a secret language, one could be said to be utilizing a private language.

Ayer goes on to define what it is to be a private language, and I find this definition satisfactory for there is a key aspect he will note that makes the distinction between private languages and languages that are considered dead. Ayer’s definition of what it is to be a private language is “the fact that it satisfies the purpose of being intelligible only to a single person, or to a restricted set of people.”\(^{82}\) Thus, since certain languages are considered dead such as Latin or perhaps ancient click languages of ancient African tribes, these languages are not considered private, according to Ayer, because these languages being limited, in terms of being understood by others, was not initially intended; the fact that only a few people understand them or come to understand them is contingent. Before I continue presenting Ayer’s comments on the private language debate as it relates to Wittgenstein, I will draw a sharp distinction between Ayer’s comments and my own aforementioned remarks regarding a private language. Ayer’s conception of a private language in this weaker sense is not my primary concern in this chapter. What I am primarily concerned with in this chapter is Ayer’s comments about Wittgenstein’s requirements for the correct use of a word or phrase.

\(^{82}\) Ibid. My emphasis.
In short, I aim to show, via Ayer, that Wittgenstein’s requirements for the correct use of an expression are too strong.

Ayer sets up the discussion of Wittgenstein’s private language argument by discussing sections 258-270 of *Philosophical Investigations*. The two prime examples from Wittgenstein’s work that Ayer appeals to are the diary and the table/train schedule examples. I will present the diary example first as Wittgenstein does in PI:

I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign “S” and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. —— I first want to observe that a definition of a sign cannot be formulated. — But all the same, I can give one to myself as a kind of ostenstive definition! — How? Can I point to the sensation? – Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation – and so, as it were, point to it inwardly. — But what is this ceremony for? For that is all it seems to be! A definition serves to lay down the meaning of a sign, doesn’t it? — Well, that is done precisely by concentrating my attention; for in this way I commit to memory the connection between the sign and the sensation. — But “I commit it to memory” can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connection *correctly* in the future. But in the present case, I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem correct to me is correct. And that only means that here we can’t talk about ‘correct.’

Ayer does not pause to comment on this argument; he continues and explains the table/train schedule example, which he claims furthers the diary argument;

Let us imagine a table, something like a dictionary, that exists only in our imagination. A dictionary can be used to justify the translation of a word X by a word Y. But are we also to call it a justification if such a table is to be looked up only in the imagination? — “Well, yes; then it is a subjective justification.” — But justification consists in appealing to an independent authority — “But surely I can appeal from one memory to another. For example, I don’t know if I have remembered the time of departure of a train correctly, and to check it I call to mind how a page of the timetable looked. Isn’t this the same sort of case?” No; for this procedure must now actually call forth the *correct* memory. If the mental image of the timetable itself could not itself be *tested* for correctness, how could it

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confirm the correctness of the first memory? (As if someone were to buy several copies of today’s morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.)

Looking up a table in the imagination is no more than looking up a table than the image of the result of an imagined experiment is the result of an experiment.84 Ayer addresses the general argument made by Wittgenstein in these two examples, which is, that one cannot justifiably consult an imaginary table or name a private sensation from memory because there is no way to know if these methods reliably yield correct results; it is like thinking, “if it seems right, then it is right.” This line of thinking is what Wittgenstein has in mind with his version of the PLA.

First, Ayer takes issue with Wittgenstein’s claim that there must be an independent justification for the meaning of signs. The sign, Ayer describes, must be something that is both independent and recognizable by the subject. Any claim of a subject’s recognizing a sensation or object must be backed by further evidence, and this evidence in turn must be publicly accessible, according to Wittgenstein. It is insufficient for a subject to justify talk of a sensation or object by merely appealing to another sensation or memory, for what results is circular reasoning. Ayer objects to this point by claiming if Wittgenstein’s position is adopted, then every belief would need an independent justification. If a justification goes beyond the subject’s recognition, no claim could ever be verified, for no one would ever be able to recognize if she were using the sign that represents her sensation correctly.

Ayer presents Wittgenstein’s train schedule example to make this point clearer, and I shall do the same but modify it slightly. Imagine I am a waiter at a five-star restaurant and I wish to present a vocal explanation of the specials for the evening. In order to accomplish this task I must bring to memory the image of the specials board in the kitchen, and in order to do this I must first read the specials board and commit to memory the specials of the evening. If I, however, cannot rely on my senses to accurately relay the desired information, or if the words on the board are written with such poor penmanship and I can barely make

84 Ibid., 1005.
out the scribbles, then I am at a loss. Of course, I can always seek the assistance of my
supervisor or another waiter and inquire as to what the specials are, though I am now tasked
with understanding what they are saying and trusting that their testimony is accurate.\(^85\) Thus
if Ayer and I are to know if we are using the signs at our disposal correctly or not we must
depend on recognizing the behaviors and affirmations of others, otherwise we would not
know if we are using our signs correctly. This point in particular is one of the problems
Wittgenstein poses for an advocate of a private language user; if there is no independent
justification or independent test for me to appeal to, how can I know if the word or phrase as
I use it is correct? If I cannot recognize the test, or the justification for that matter, I am left to
my own justification, which in this case would be at least my memory.

Ayer rhetorically asks, “but if without further ado I can recognize such noises or
shapes or movements why can I not also recognize a private sensation?”\(^86\) Wittgenstein
referred to the instance where he writes a sign down whilst having a private sensation as an
“idle ceremony,” yet Ayer presses the question as to the difference between this and using a
conventional symbol to pick out a public object. As far as I am concerned, there seems to be
little, if no, difference between the two actions; the only difference is that in the one case the
sensation is private and cannot be pointed to in the traditional sense, and in the other one can
pick out the object to which I refer via an ostensive definition at the very least. Suppose these
two scenarios obtain. In the one case, if I wish to pick out a public object such as a table, I
can point to the table and write, “Table there.” Wittgenstein, I would assume, would not take
issue with this practice; suppose, too, I utilize this same method with other public objects.
Suppose then I write down a symbol, ‘H’, every time I have a burning sensation in my hand.
The only difference between these two instances is that in one case the object is accessible to
other subjects; others can see (generally) what I am pointing to whereas in the second

\(^{85}\) Ayer uses Wittgenstein’s example of a timetable train schedule. While my example differs slightly the
argument strain is similar.

\(^{86}\) Ayer and Rhees, "Private Language?" 68.
instance the object (sensation) is accessible only to me; i.e., the object is private rather than public.

Gesturing, however, is the key component that creates a split between the two above scenarios. Ayer explains when a subject uses a gesture she is able to make her meaning clear. If I want to pick out an object like a table, I might make certain gestures toward the table like pointing. A problem here is that I am assuming others can recognize my gesture and what I am communicating. It could very well be the case that my gesture might be misinterpreted; I point in the direction of the table, but I am really pointing at the chair that sits just adjacent to the table. In the second scenario, I cannot gesture to my sensation, but I would point to the general area of my sensation. In the case of appendicitis, I can say, “It hurts here,” and I would be pointing to my appendix, but I am only pointing to the location of the sensation, not the sensation itself. With regard to the second scenario, the gesture method fails. The result is words describing sensations cannot be given any meaning, for the gesture method fails and the sensation cannot be described using other words for those would need defining and justification too. This conclusion is Ayer’s interpretation of one of Wittgenstein’s arguments.

I will explicitly present Ayer’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s line of reasoning so it will be clearer to understand the forthcoming remarks. It is at least possible to communicate with a gesture or a pointing movement.87

1. Internal objects are not observable.
2. Sensations are internal objects.
3. We cannot point or gesture to what is not observable.
4. Ostensive definitions require pointing or gesturing to the object denoted.
5. Therefore, we cannot ostensively define sensation terms.

87 The implicit assumptions made here (and Ayer makes note of this, but I do not think these are unfair) are first gesturing or pointing has meaning already; when I gesture in this way or that way, my motions have a particular meaning I am using, which linguistically would translate to ‘this object’ or ‘that object’. Secondly, the gesture I make is recognized by others, i.e., other observers interpret my motions correctly and understand what I am trying to communicate. Third, I am clearly pointing at the object I wish to pick out or refer to; carelessness can result in my pointing to a particular object, but the observer picks out another. We might suppose that the pointing movement was among one of the first forms of communication.
Ayer continues and claims these internal objects cannot be defined in terms of other words because the words that would do the defining would have to be defined in terms of either an external object or an internal one; the latter option is not viable because of the aforementioned problem, and with the former options the question raised is, how can an internal object be defined in terms of an external one? One might suppose that for certain sensations like color sensations, we could point to the color and utter, “I get a particular sensation when I see this” and point to the object for which the individual is receiving the *green* sensation. There are a few problems with this response. The first can be formulated as a question: is the individual pointing at the object or the color? Second. Concerns about inverted qualia apply here. I am unsure of how an internal sensation would be accurately defined by both a word and an external object. I believe Ayer shares this concern as well, for he does not provide any possible method for using other words to describe internal objects.

The argument Ayer presented contains two assumptions, both of which he deems false. The first assumption is that “in a case of this sort it is impossible, logically impossible to understand a sign unless one can either observe the object which it signifies, or at least observe something with which this object is naturally associated.” \(^{88}\) This assumption implies that in order for me to understand a sign, I must either observe that to which it refers, or I must observe something to which the object is naturally associated. The second assumption Ayer deems false is “for a person to be able to attach meaning to a sign it is necessary that other people should be capable of understanding it too.” \(^{89}\) For the sake of ease and convenience, Ayer will address the second of these assumptions followed by the first; the second leads to the first.

To refute the second assumption, in order for a sign to have meaning, others must be able to understand the sign, Ayer presents a not-so-outlandish thought experiment. We are asked to imagine a Robinson Crusoe-type character abandoned on an island at infancy and

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\(^{88}\) Ayer and Rhees, “Private Language?” 69.

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 69-70.
subsequently raised by a wolf or some other creature until Crusoe is able to be self-sufficient; it is important to qualify the experimenting by noting the infant Crusoe does not have a language growing up. Ayer goes on to explain that it is conceivable that the now adult Crusoe will recognize different objects on the island as he goes about his daily activities. Crusoe will recognize drinkable water and avoid certain animals like bears or other vicious unfriendly animals; he will also recognize commonplace objects like rocks, trees, fruits, etc. Consequently upon recognizing certain objects on the island, Crusoe’s behavior will reflect this. It is not inconceivable or self-contradictory, Ayer postulates, that Crusoe would name the objects of the island. We can imagine, as Ayer posits,

Some human being must have been the first to use a symbol. And even if he did so as a member of a group, in order to communicate with the other members, even if his choice of symbols was socially conditioned, it is at least conceivable that it should originally have been a purely private enterprise.90

Therefore, in the early first languages, there must have been some individual that was the first to use particular symbols to stand for particular objects in the world. This enterprise, as Ayer points out, would have been initially private. Thus, we can allow our Crusoe to provide names, albeit very primitive names, to the objects on the island.

If we allow Crusoe to name the external objects on the island, can we also allow him to name his sensations? If we do allow Crusoe to name his sensations, there will be no independent justification from an independent animal or other being (which would also hold for external objects). Ayer claims the independent justification, while useful, is not indispensable. Crusoe’s justification is “that he perceives it [the environment] to have just those features that his words are intended to describe. In a weak sense, the independent justification becomes the environment. If I intend to describe drinking water as ‘water’ and undrinkable water, say the ocean water, as ‘qwater’ in order to justify the use of these words, all I need to do is appeal to the environment; all instances of drinkable water are christened as ‘water’ and all instances of non-drinkable water as ‘qwater’. By conditioning myself in my

90 Ibid., 70.
environment, I can justify my use of the terms via my perceptions of the environment. What would bar me, or Crusoe for that matter, from accurately or correctly recognizing the external objects in our environment or sensations? Of course Crusoe is likely to make mistakes in his identification of certain flora or fauna in the environment. He might mistake one species of fish or bird for another where the differences would warrant Crusoe to initially christen the two with different names. With regard to sensations, Ayer goes on to explain, the mistake regarding mistaking one sensation for another would have to be identified correctly by memory. Interestingly, Ayer points out that Crusoe’s appealing to memory to correctly identify his sensations is like Wittgenstein’s man who buys more than one copy of the morning paper to ensure the truth of the day’s events. Ayer explains, with respect to the man’s buying several copies of the morning paper to ensure its truth, “the reason why this seems to us so absurd is that we take it for granted that one copy of a morning paper will duplicate another; there is no absurdity in buying a second newspaper, of a different type, and using it to check the first.”

No practice of buying multiple copies of different morning papers will do anyone any good unless they are verifiable. Though the reported events could be verified both in theory and in practice, if one cannot recognize something pertinent to the inquiry without having to appeal to a further test, nothing can ever be verified. While Crusoe does not have any further means of appealing to some test to identify his sensation, it does not follow, Ayer believes, that Crusoe cannot identify his sensation as right or wrong or as this or that sensation for that matter.

The distinction Crusoe will make with his time on the island is that sensations will appear and disappear whereas the external objects like rocks, plant life, cliff faces, etc. will remain relatively present. This distinction can be granted on the grounds of empirical principles. Crusoe will find that his hunger appears at certain times in the day but the tree that bears the fruit he eats to satiate his hunger will remain present, assuming there are no

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91 Ibid., 71.
catastrophic events that would affect the tree such that it would warrant its absence from the island.

Suppose this distinction we have attributed to Crusoe’s thought process is actual. When Man Friday arrives on the island, Ayer explains, Crusoe will be able to teach Man Friday the words that stand for objects in the environment via ostensive definitions, however, for Crusoe’s sensations, this method will not be sufficient to explain the words which stand for them. Some sensations are entirely private. My desire for pizza is an example of this kind of sensation. There is no natural expression associated with this sensation. Sensations like these too, if they are to be referred to, will need to be defined by words. Crusoe, however, will have no method for teaching Man Friday the meaning of the words he uses to describe these entirely private sensations. This failure of being able to teach these words to Man Friday does not imply that Crusoe does not have a use for these words. The possibility of Man Friday to learn the meanings of the words that describe Crusoe’s private sensations is not ruled out. Our dependency on ostensive definitions is a contingent fact, Ayer points out. A toddler learns how to identify objects in a room and her sensations in different ways. In the one case ostensive definitions are used, and in the other her natural expressions betray her sensations. When the toddler is in pain, she may cry, or we might see what it is that caused the toddler pain, and consequently we can teach the word ‘pain’ to her via this method. Suppose Crusoe wishes to teach Man Friday his word for ‘pain’. Let us suppose that Crusoe’s word for pain was ‘Quixle’ and every time Crusoe had any sort of unpleasant sensation that would result in his yelping, exclaiming, rubbing the afflicted area, crying, etc., he would say ‘Quixle’. Thus Crusoe has given the word ‘Quixle’ meaning by associating it with certain physically unpleasant sensations.\(^\text{92}\) Man Friday has a working understanding of

\(^{92}\) For the sake of this example, I will appeal to the set of physical pains. Certainly one cannot deny there are different types of pain. The pain of a stomachache differs from that of the pain of being impaled by a sharp object. Since there are many different pains, I will reserve Crusoe’s term ‘Quixle’ to mean any one of these pains. It could be the case as Crusoe’s language develops and becomes more complicated, he might reserve ‘Quixle’ to mean certain dull pains or he might use the term to describe stomach or toothaches. Whichever pain he chooses will be an arbitrary choice, but so long as he is consistent with his use it will be justified.
the English language. Friday is so proficient in the use of the language that he could teach it abroad or pursue some higher academic studies successfully. Given Friday’s working proficiency, he would use the word, ‘pain’ to describe the set of all unpleasant sensations in his body. Thus when Friday sees Crusoe and Crusoe scraps his leg on a rock and simultaneously exclaims, “Quixle!” while grabbing his leg, Friday would be able to deduce that this particular sound must mean ‘pain’, which refers to the sensation. Even though Friday cannot see Crusoe’s pain directly (he can only see the indirect results of the pain; e.g., Crusoe’s behaviors, which include exclaiming, cradling the afflicted area, whimpering, etc.), Friday could still learn the meaning of Crusoe’s word for ‘pain’. Ayer concludes that for two individuals to understand the use of their words, it follows that not all the objects these words describe must be public. I.e. it is not necessary that every object a word describes must be public, there still can be understanding of words describing private objects. This conclusion counters Ayer’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s conclusion where one must be able to directly see the object to which one refers.

Ayer attacks the second assumption claiming, “it is not even necessary to make the assumption that Man Friday comes to know what Crusoe’s sensation are, and so to understand the words which signify them, through having similar sensations of his own.” This assumption is the more difficult of the two to attack, for it implies that one must be able to see to what a word refers in order to understand the meaning of the word. E.g., if I say, “I feel a pain in my hand,” a listener can understand my sentence because she sees my present expression of pain. It is possible that I have the sensation of pain in my hand but I do not show the natural expression associated with it, but a listener would still be able to understand my utterance. Ayer briefly entertains a state of affairs where Man Friday could see into the soul of Crusoe thereby seeing the sensations Crusoe has. This is causally problematic because this kind of relation doesn’t exist between two speakers, nor would we expect this relation to exist given the current state of affairs between two individuals; I do not see the

93 Ayer and Rhees, “Private Language?” 74.
sensations of others directly, only the expressions that express them. Ayer dismisses this possibility on causal grounds but underplays the scenario as merely causally problematic.

While Man Friday cannot see into Crusoe’s soul, or more scientifically Friday cannot directly observe Crusoe’s sensations, he can still understand Crusoe’s utterances. Ayer claims, “the ways in which languages are actually learned do not logically circumscribe the possibilities of their being understood.”94 This claim rests on Ayer’s initial argument against the first of Wittgenstein’s assumptions, which was discussed above. Ayer concluded Friday could come to understand Crusoe’s use of words but that it is not necessary that any one must understand him. Consider how a language is learned. Very obviously for external objects like tables, cups, rocks, etc., an ostensive definition would suffice. I point to a table and say, ‘table’ to the person I wish to teach the language. For sensations, I cannot rely on ostensive definitions. I would have to use a mimic method; i.e., I might touch a warm plate and say, “warm” and take the hand of the other person and have him touch the plate and recite the word, “warm,” or for the word ‘pain’, I might prick my finger and recite the word, “pain” and then prick the finger of my pupil and say, “pain.”95 I would continue this method to teach my pupil the words for objects and the appropriate sensations respectively. Through repetition and habituation, I can assume my pupil would use the correct words to identify the correct objects and sensations. In the case where I teach my pupil words for sensations, I am not observing her sensations directly. I merely assume based on the fact that since we are physiologically similar that she will feel the same, if not a similar, sensation as I feel. This assumption, while helpful in this case is still only an assumption and falls prey to the inverted qualia case.

Shifting focus slightly, Ayer accuses Carnap of assigning being public and being private as properties that are attached to objects outside of our linguistic use. Objects that are

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94 Ibid.

95 This method is problematic in the instance of the plate. My pupil might mistake my intention of teaching her the meaning of ‘warm’ for teaching her the word for ‘plate’. In other words, she might mistake the word, ‘warm’ to refer to the material plate rather than referring to the sensation she has when she touches the plate.
accessible by more than one person are deemed public while objects that are accessible by only one person are considered private. A group of individuals may experience the same table but not the same table sensation. Ayer explains we could assimilate public objects to private objects by introducing a way of speaking such as “a group of individuals sense their own experience of the table.” This way of speaking would make tables private in a sense. We could do the opposite with headaches and suppose that people are physically constituted such that they experience the same headache sensation, likewise with other sensations. It is possible that every living thing were so intimately connected to feel pleasure and pain collectively. In this case, sensations would not be considered private. This imagined state does not exist, but it is only a contingent fact it does not. I believe Ayer makes this reference to Carnap because Wittgenstein adopts a similar view of public and private objects.

Given the way we are physically constituted, we do not directly feel or observe the sensations of others, thus there is no use for utterances such as “I feel her thirst,” or “I felt his pain.” On the other hand, we do have a use for and can understand utterances such as, “I saw her yelp in pain,” or “He is furiously drinking water.” For both parties, the observer is afforded indirect access to the sensation, and the individual participating in the event has direct access to the sensation. Ayer proposes, “the fact that S2 cannot feel, or inspect, S1’s feelings in no way entails that he cannot understand what S1 says about them.” Simply because I cannot directly observe the physical state of a speaker’s body does not entail that I cannot understand any propositions uttered from the speaker about the state of his body. Ayer drives this point home by claiming the criteria for determining whether two speakers can understand each other is logically independent from the fact that there is or is not a use for the proposition, “S1 observes the same phenomenon as S2.” Thus, Ayer concludes the restrictions placed on understanding a language by Wittgenstein and Carnap are too strict. It is not necessary for a second or third party to understand the utterances of a speaker, and

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96 Ibid., 76.
97 Here I am referring to, and I believe Ayer is as well, the state of a speaker’s body. I am not making any claims about whether mentality is of a physicalist or immaterial kind.
because these secondary and tertiary parties do not understand a speaker does not mean the utterances of that speaker are meaningless. Second, for two speakers to understand one another it is not necessary that each must observe what is going on in the other’s body in terms of a bodily state.

I find Ayer’s final point regarding this matter agreeable for he notes:

if we insist on making it a necessary condition for our understanding a descriptive statement that we are able to observe what it describes, we shall find ourselves disclaiming the possibility of understanding not merely statements about other people’s private sensations, but also statements about the past.\(^98\)

Suppose this condition Ayer rejects was practiced; i.e., in order to understand a speaker, you must be able to observe what he is describing. If I announce, at present, I was hungry last week, then to understand my proposal, one must either observe me last week, or my hunger sensation last week. Unless one has access to some reliable time travel device, it is quite impossible to achieve an observation of my body (me) or my sensation of hunger as it was last week.\(^99\) Thus my utterance, “I was hungry last week” becomes meaningless, under this condition, because the conditions for understanding that statement cannot be fulfilled; i.e., you cannot understand the statement according to both Wittgenstein and Carnap. On the other hand, you do understand my statement because you follow my utterance and you respond with the appropriate questions; e.g., you might ask me what I had to eat, you might inquire where I went to eat, or you might question when was the last time I ate, or even what I was craving during my period of hunger. I am working under the assumption the respondent is not a skeptic but is using language in an ordinary way appropriate for her use. Merely because the respondent behaves in a way I find appropriate in no way entails she really or actually understands. This objection is not fatal to Ayer or my argument; it is simply a question of how far the skeptic wants to take doubt. There are other methods to test whether

\(^{98}\) Ayer and Rhees, “Private Language?” 76.

\(^{99}\) Directly observing my hunger would be impossible in any case, at present, for we do not directly observe others’ sensations. The only thing we observe is the natural expression at best. The natural association of a sensation is sometimes not expressed.
the respondent understands my utterance about the past. Of course, Ayer takes special care to address this; the utterance must be verifiable, though it is not necessary that it is a direct verification.

Ayer addressed the second problem of the private language argument; the criteria for understanding a language are too restrictive. The independent verification criteria for understanding a language required, by Wittgenstein, are too strong.
CHAPTER 5
Kripke’s Wittgenstein

The third and the most complex concern I will discuss regarding Wittgenstein’s private language argument, and any private language argument, is the paradox proposed by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* and further developed by Saul Kripke in his book, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. In his treatment of this problem, Kripke refers to this paradox as the skeptical paradox. The element I find the most interesting with this problem is that Wittgenstein’s paradox in section 201 of PI concerns not only private languages but is also applicable to non-private languages. This is a claim I will revisit later in this chapter. Wittgenstein proposes the paradox in the following way, “this was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule.”100 What Wittgenstein intends to achieve with this paradox is to deny the possibility of a private language based on following rules in a language. The paradox goes beyond Wittgenstein’s intent and raises important questions about meaning, which I shall address later in this chapter. The paradox, as Wittgenstein presents it, challenges the possibility of whether one can privately follow rules. Recall our Crusoe from the previous chapter. According to Wittgenstein, Crusoe would be victim of this paradox. Crusoe, according to Wittgenstein, would never know if his use of words were correct; there would be no sufficient verification Crusoe could check to see if he used his words correctly. Crusoe could either change the use of the word to agree with his definition or change the definition to agree with the use of the word. In either case, Crusoe could use his words

correctly, however, in order to achieve this, he would find himself constantly changing either the definitions of his words or the use to agree with either one or the other. The result is the paradox stands as a challenge for the possibility of a private language. Until a sufficient answer can be given for the paradox, the possibility of establishing a private language will be out of reach.\(^{101}\)

Given Wittgenstein’s PLA and views regarding the purpose of language, he would not deny that language users operate within their language by agreeing to certain rules; what these rules are is not what is at issue here. If it is the case that language users operate within a framework of rules, then these languages would be susceptible to the aforementioned paradox. I will address this point later in the chapter. One of the conclusions I aim to achieve with an analysis of this paradox is that it is no longer a vicious obstacle for the existence of a private language.\(^{102}\) Wittgenstein might deny this because he would claim that a language user could appeal to an independent test to see if she was agreeing with the rules of the language. There is, however, a problem with this course of action. As Ayer pointed out, justification must end somewhere; there would be an endless stream of checks and tests to verify if the language user was agreeing with the rule.

On the other side of the private language argument conversation, and more along the lines of what Wittgenstein had in mind with the paradox, is the issue of following the rules of the language. If one were to have a private language, like Crusoe, he would not know if he was correctly following the rules he set forth for himself. If Crusoe were unsure whether he was following the rules he set for himself, this would imply there is nothing in the language that makes it the case that he is using the words correctly. It could then be concluded Crusoe was not using a language.

\(^{101}\) Here I am excluding language describing sensations and referring to that language which does not describe sensations. The main drive of the paradox, I believe, is aimed at language not describing sensations. For the sake of the discussion I ask readers to adopt this position too.

\(^{102}\) Readers should take care to note that while I claim the paradox is applicable to public languages too the paradox is still a relevant problem for a private language. Any proponent of a private language, and others too since the problem is not restricted to proponents of a private language, will still have to deal with the paradox.
Kripke’s treatment of Wittgenstein’s paradox does not formally announce if it applies to Wittgenstein’s conception of language as a tool. On the other hand, the treatment of the paradox could be applied to public languages. For the sake of the following discussion, I will give a loose interpretation of the paradox and go forward with this discussion as if Kripke’s skeptical paradox is directed at both public and private languages. I will revisit the idea of the paradox’s being applied to public languages later in this chapter. Regardless of the scope of the paradox, however, it remains a special problem for an advocate of a private language. In the case of a private language, a speaker’s behaviors, more specifically the use of his words, would be consistent with many different rules. As such, it would be unclear which rule, if any, the speaker was following. In the case of a public language, a speaker can consult independent media to see if she is using the words or phrases of the language correctly; i.e., if she is following the rules. She might even be able to cite which rule she was following to justify the use of her words. This course of action for a public language makes it easier for the users of that language to see if they are using their words correctly. On the other hand, in the case of a private language, it is more difficult for a speaker to check to see if he is using his words correctly because there may not be a reliable measure that would make the use of his words correct.

According to Wittgenstein’s paradox, a speaker could change the use of the word to agree with the definition or change the definition to agree with the use of the word. This would imply the standard set in place by the speaker, to ensure the correct use of her words, would not be present. This would make the paradox stand out as a particular obstacle for the possibility of a private language. If, however, the comments in the previous chapter are accepted, checking to see if a word was used correctly would be no trouble. The conclusion of the previous chapter called for loosening the requirements for checking for the correct use of his words correct.

103 I use the term ‘public’ to denote non-private languages. This is not to presuppose or imply there are definitive private languages and that to differentiate between the two I must use the terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ respectively. It could be the case there are private languages that exist outside of this discussion, however, I am not committing to this claim.
of a word. The conclusion I aim to reach is to propose that while the paradox is applicable to public languages, it remains as a special problem for an advocate of a private language. I will support this conclusion by providing a few responses to the paradox and objections to those responses.

For a moment I will suspend remarks about the paradox’s being applicable to both public and private languages and focus specifically about the worries of the paradox as it applies to a private language. The paradox is a response to a worry about privately following rules in a language. In a public language, a speaker can check an independent source to make sure she is using the word or phrase correctly. If I am in doubt as to whether I used a word correctly, I can check a dictionary, one not written by me, consult another speaker, etc., to see if my use was correct or not. In the case of a private language I cannot check to see if my use of a word was correct in the same way as in a public language. I might be able to check a table or a dictionary, both written by me, to see if my uses of the words are correct. If I found that my use of the word I am using does not agree with what is on the table, I can change the table to accord with what I meant. This course of action can be reversed; I can change my use of the word to accord with what is on the table. In the case of privately following a rule and a private language, the paradox is of special relevance and particularly worrisome for a proponent of a private language. As I claimed earlier, and I will revisit this claim later in this chapter, the paradox can be applied to public languages, but it is still relevant for a private language. Despite this claim, I shall continue my presentation of the paradox, showing how it can be disarmed.

A common response to the paradox Kripke vehemently attacks and virtually snuffs out is a dispositional account of meaning. Kripke criticizes this position because he proposes that other commentators and Wittgenstein himself would turn to a dispositional account of meaning as the solution for the paradox. When I say, ‘Y’, I mean ‘Y’ because I am disposed to use the word or phrase in a particular way based on past uses and other conditions. I was taught how to use ‘Y’ in terms of what it meant, or some other facts. When the meaning of a term is examined, the natural inclination is to resort to claiming that the meaning of a term is how one was disposed to use the word. If I am disposed to use a symbol or word to refer to the sum total of two quantities by a certain symbol, in this case the word ‘plus’, or a systematic process, I would further resort to my dispositions to use that word in certain ways.
When a language or a word is learned and a speaker learns the meaning of a term, ‘plus’, what the speaker means when using this term will be a result of her dispositions. She will likely be disposed to use the plus symbol to refer to the addition of two separate integers into a single sum in virtue of being disposed to use the word in certain ways; e.g., the sum of three plus four is seven. The meaning of ‘plus’ is based on past occurrences of learning the use of the term, using it, and other conditions like my mental state, the context of the conversation, etc.

Since the dispositionalist account is the framework under investigation, it is the primary theory I will discuss as a possible response to the Wittgensteinean-Kripkean paradox.105 Before I continue commenting on dispositionalism, I concede this response, as I present it, will have to be rejected. On the other hand, if this theory is reworked, it could overcome the objections brought against it. My aim is to show that dispositionalism, potentially, yields promising results to overcome the paradox. Therefore, this chapter will be divided into two parts; first, I set the stage by explaining a third problem for a private language argument, more specifically, the Wittgenstein/Kripke paradox. As I have already intimated above, I regard the paradox as applicable to private as well as public languages. I then present Kripke’s comments on a common response to the paradox, namely the dispositional schema. My conclusions and remarks are left open-ended for reasons I will explain later. It is my intention that this chapter acts as a transition to a more extensive analysis in a separate project. I aim to introduce the paradox, present a soft conclusion

104 Kripke uses an addition equation to develop the paradox. I will follow his lead along similar lines.

105 I encourage readers to consult Alan Gibbard’s Meaning and Normativity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). It is here where he spends a great deal of time addressing Kripke’s paradox and a possible response along dispositionalist lines. Gibbard attempts to provide a response to Kripke’s comments against dispositionalism and ultimately concludes the dispositionalist account could be a response to the paradox and to Kripke. I excluded Gibbard’s discussion here for a few reasons. First, my intention for this chapter was to set up the parameters of the paradox and to give the readers a rough understanding of what the paradox entails. Another reason I excluded Gibbard’s remarks was to keep the discussion of this chapter fairly concise. The Kripkean/Wittgensteinian paradox conversation is a fairly complex discussion, and it is not my intention to make this discussion the main attraction of this project. In order to provide Wittgenstein, Kripke, Gibbard, and other commentators justice on this matter, I prefer to follow up this chapter in a separate discussion and consider more commentators.
regarding the possibility of a private language, and set the stage for a more in depth analysis of this problem with some of the key players mentioned in this chapter.

**Kripke’s Version of the Paradox**

Kripke develops Wittgenstein’s paradox using a simple addition problem. To restate the paradox à la Wittgenstein, “this was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule.”

Any action can’t be justified by a rule because I can always create a rule, which agrees with the action; even if the rule I create violates some other rule, I can always create a rule that will allow the violation to occur, thereby no longer making it a violation. To develop the paradox further Kripke utilizes a mathematical example; he explains, “I will develop the problem initially with respect to a mathematical example, though the relevant skeptical problem applies to all meaningful uses of language.”

Kripke begins by presenting the definition of a well-known function in elementary mathematics, the addition function, which is also designated by this symbol, ‘+’, otherwise known as the word ‘plus’ or ‘add’ (addition). This function, defined in mathematics, determines all the answers as a sum for any pair of positive or negative numbers. Kripke admits while he has conducted finitely many computations of numbers using addition, there are infinitely many functions he has not computed, one of which is the addition problem, ‘68+57’. This is the equation that will serve as the example for the paradox.

Kripke goes on to explain that he performs the function according to the rules of mathematics and obtains the answer ‘125’; of course any competent, coherent individual with a working understanding of mathematics and the addition symbol would obtain the answer ‘125’ to the addition problem ‘68+57’. Kripke, while working under the coherent, competent,  

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and mathematical understanding, also relies on his past use of the ‘+’ symbol to obtain the answer, and the answer agrees with his intentions for the use of ‘+’; any outside observer with a similar, if not more advanced understanding of mathematics than Kripke would agree the answer is ‘125’. Suppose, then, as Kripke proposes, a radical skeptic claims Kripke’s answer is wrong. The skeptic challenges Kripke’s use of ‘plus’ in a metalinguistic sense proposing that his present use of the term ‘plus’ does not accord with his past use of it and that as a result Kripke ought to have answered ‘5’ to the mathematical problem ‘68+57’. The skeptic continues, narrated by Kripke, that Kripke’s answer to the addition problem ‘68+57’ couldn’t be ‘125’ because Kripke gave himself explicit instructions that the result of adding the two sums in this instance was ‘125’, which would imply some previous working understanding and meaning of ‘+’ and the plus function and any associated substitutive symbols; e.g., ‘plus’, ‘add’, ‘addition’, etc. Kripke denies the skeptic’s claim; he continues to explain that in the particular instance of computing the sum of ‘68+57’, he is using a function he has used numerous times in the past, all with numbers fewer than ‘57’. Kripke poses the following question to the reader, how can he, Kripke, know if he meant ‘plus’ in the present case as he has used it in the past? How can he know if the rule is the same in both uses? Kripke hypothesizes that perhaps by the symbol ‘+’ and the term ‘plus’, he meant a special function he christens by the term, ‘quus’ and symbolizes by \( \oplus \). The quus function, as Kripke defines it, is \( x \oplus y = x + y \) if \( x \) and \( y < 57 \) and in every other case the answer will be 5. For any two positive numbers above 57, the sum total will equal 5. According to quus and for any two positive numbers less than 57, the total will be whatever the sum of the two numbers is. E.g., ‘4+6 = 10’, whereas ‘68+57 = 5’. Kripke queries, “who is to say that this is not the function [quus] I previously meant by ‘+’?” The skeptic’s proposal, though wild, is not logically impossible.

To summarize Kripke’s point, the computation of ‘68+57’ and the subsequent answer is not an “unjustified leap in the dark.” In order to compute the function adequately, Kripke

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follows explicit directions he previously gave himself, which in this new instance, yield the answer ‘125’. These directions explicitly dictate Kripke to give the answer ‘125’. But these directions are consistent with other functions. What rule was Kripke following? On the other hand, Kripke cannot appeal to what he has always done with this particular function for this can be interpreted as ‘compute’ or ‘add’. This use of ‘add’ or ‘compute’ could have been the rule for what Kripke calls quaddition. The use of the quus function is quaddition much like the use of the add function is addition.

The challenge the skeptic has advanced takes two different forms, which are both related, according to Kripke. First, the skeptic challenges, whether there is any fact about Kripke that he meant plus and not quus. Second, the skeptic challenges Kripke’s confidence in answering ‘125’ rather than ‘5’. Any answer to the skeptic’s challenge must satisfy two conditions. First, Kripke explains, the answer must state what fact about Kripke, more specifically what fact about Kripke’s mental state would constitute Kripke’s meaning ‘plus’ and not ‘quus’. A further condition is the answer to the skeptic must justify Kripke’s answer of ‘125’ and not ‘5’ to the function.

Before the paradox is further developed, Kripke sets the parameters for the conversation with the skeptic. Kripke proposes in order for he and the skeptic to engage in the debate, they must share a common language. Both Kripke and the skeptic agree on the present use of ‘plus’; the skeptic would agree to the current proposal, ‘68 + 57 = 125’. Any present use of ‘plus’ would denote the addition function. The skeptic takes issue with whether Kripke’s present use of ‘plus’ accords with his past use. There are no questions of knowing whether one knows the answer to the computation is ‘125’ but whether Kripke’s present use of ‘plus’ agrees with his past use.

To return to the paradox as Kripke presents it,

1. When challenged at present to compute the mathematical function ‘57 + 68’ (a mathematical function never before performed by me), I confidently produce the answer ‘125’.

2. I could have meant ‘quus’ and not ‘plus’ for all past instances of ‘+’.

3. The function, quus is, $x \oplus y = x + y$, if $x, y < 57$, otherwise 5.

4. My past mental history of using the ‘+’ function is compatible with the hypothesis that I should have answered ‘5’ rather than ‘125’ to the present computation in (1).
5. Therefore, in the past I could have always meant ‘qus’ by ‘plus’.
6. Therefore, my initial answer, ‘125’, was unjustified; I could just as easily have answered ‘5’.
7. Therefore, there is no fact about my past usage of ‘+’ that would warrant answering ‘125’ rather than ‘5’.
8. If there is no fact about my past usage of ‘+’ that would warrant answering ‘125’ rather than ‘5’, then there is no fact about me at any time that would warrant my answering ‘125’ rather than ‘5’.
9. Therefore, there is no fact about me at any time that would warrant my answering ‘125’ rather than ‘5’.

Kripke’s conclusion, (9), is the knockout punch by the skeptic. If there is no fact about me in the past or in the present that would warrant one definite answer over another, I cannot mean any one particular function rather than another for the term ‘plus’.

While Kripke’s paradox adopts a mathematical character to develop Wittgenstein’s paradox, it would be a mistake to regard the conclusions Kripke reaches as only affecting the meanings of mathematical symbols or words. The same conclusions reached here apply to other languages such as mathematical, logical, grammatical, etc. Kripke confidently remarks, “these problems apply throughout language and are not confined to mathematical examples, though it is with mathematical examples that they are can be most smoothly brought out.”

In order to show this, he begins the paradox the same by claiming that he has learned the word ‘table’ such that he can confidently apply the word to new instances. Kripke has us imagine he travels to Paris for vacation and visits the Eiffel Tower for the first time. Upon entering the base of the Eiffel Tower Kripke applies the term, ‘table’ to a table at the base of the tower. The skeptic would challenge the use of ‘table’ in this instance, claiming that by ‘table’ in the past he meant ‘tabair’, where a tabair is anything that is a table not found at the base of the Eiffel Tower.

This version of the paradox is not developed any further, but the idea is the paradox is applicable to any and all languages. No matter what form the paradox takes, the conclusion is

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the same and is a devastating blow to the meaning of terms. If the paradox is, in principle, applicable to any language, the paradox could be applied to public languages. If public languages are practiced outside worries of the paradox, even though they are possible candidates for the paradox, a private language could operate the same way. Once again, I am not committing myself to the existence of a private language, but I aim to show, among other points, that the scope of the paradox is not exclusive to a private language. This claim about the scope of the paradox does not lessen the worries of the paradox as it applies to a private language. Given Kripke’s comments, the paradox remains a problem for advocates of a private language, but also the paradox affects public language users too. There are three possible avenues to deal with the paradox. The first approach is to take a pragmatic approach to the paradox. Treat instances of rule following in a private language the same as rule following in public languages. This avenue is the most simple and renders the paradox as a superficial problem for a private language. The second approach is to find a fact or aspect about a public language that rescues it from the paradox. I do not believe this second avenue can be achieved given Kripke’s comments. The third approach is to provide a solution to the paradox to get out from under the criticisms. Given Kripke’s comments on the paradox it remains a problem for proponents of a private language, but not one that is unique to the private language.

Before I move to the second half of the presentation of Kripke’s paradox where he presents and subsequently rejects the dispositionalist response to the paradox, I respond to the skeptic’s challenge.

Kripke’s skeptic challenges whether I meant ‘plus’ with my present utterance rather than ‘quus’ to a simple mathematical function. In order to satisfy Kripke’s skeptic, two related conditions must be satisfied. The first is whether there is any fact about my past mental history that would constitute my giving the particular answer, in this case ‘125’, rather than any other. The second condition is what would justify my giving the answer ‘125’. Kripke concludes there is no fact about my present or past mental history that would
warrant my meaning ‘plus’ rather than ‘quus’, which would dictate whether I should have given ‘125’ or ‘5’ as the appropriate answer. I want to reject Kripke’s claim, there is no fact about me past or present that can justify my giving the answer I do.\textsuperscript{110} I want to reject this claim on the grounds that it is too strong, however, the way Kripke has formulated the paradox makes it difficult to provide a sufficient reason to reject Kripke’s claim. I present some possible responses that will ultimately have to be rejected. I attempt to support these solutions by appealing to being or having been in a certain mental state, however, this response fails because being in a certain mental state can be traced to a behavior. For instance, if I am given a task to pull a lever whenever I hear a certain command, my thinking about pulling the lever, intently listening for the command, or some other mental state is connected to my behavior of being focused or pulling the lever.

A common response, one that Putnam and Gibbard might endorse, is that if the pupil’s answer agrees with what other members in her community, in the past, would have been disposed to answer, then the meaning of the term is retained and the answer is correct.\textsuperscript{111} For instance, if solving a certain set of computations is required to graduate grade school and all the pupils before me have passed this exam and I give identical answers to the set of equations I am presented, then since the present answers accord with the past answers, we can conclude the meaning of the functions used is consistent with the past and present use.\textsuperscript{112} This position is susceptible to the aforementioned criticisms given by the skeptic. The

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\textsuperscript{110}In the last footnote of this chapter, I allude to two of Kripke’s solutions: the straight solution and the skeptical solution. The solution Kripke adopts is what he calls the skeptical solution. Readers should refer to this footnote and Kripke’s work for more information on what that solution entails.

\textsuperscript{111}This is Gibbard’s position, and Kripke rejects this avenue as a possible solution to the paradox. If the reader, upon further investigation, finds Gibbard’s dispositionalism is insufficient to overcome this concern, then I will appeal to Putnam’s externalism as it applies to meaning. If the meaning is causally connected in the right way to the surrounding linguistic community, then the present meaning will accord with the past. This could be checked by appealing to others in the community or perhaps to a personal journal noting what meaning was used. This solution might be adopted on practical grounds, which could overcome some of the objections brought against it.

\textsuperscript{112}I will revisit the idea of two answers being consistent later in this chapter and show how this is problematic.
skeptic could claim all predecessors were mistaken in their answers; they should have answered ‘5’\(^{113}\) rather than the answers they give now, thus implying the instructions past pupils received were incorrect or the instructors were mistaken and passed on faulty information; both objections are related. A second objection, which I will address shortly, relates to the consistency of the answers an individual gives to the mathematical computations. My behavior computing the plus function and then the quus function are consistent. Simply because the two behaviors are consistent does not imply which function I meant to compute. This objection is also applied below. These objections undermine Gibbard’s proposal, which is why the position Gibbard proposes will have to be reworked to overcome these objections.

A possible answer to the skeptic is to loosen the criteria for determining whether the meaning of a term has been used consistently. Instead of asking for a single fact about a speaker, which could mean that there is one particular state, whether it is mental or a brain state, of the speaker, a set of facts could be a requirement. Speaking, however, of a fact about the speaker need not entail one particular property about the speaker, but it could appeal to a set of facts \(f_1, f_2, f_3, \ldots\) about the speaker, which taken as a larger set \(F_1\) would satisfy both conditions requested by the skeptic. Whatever these facts are, so long as they are appropriately causally connected, the answer the pupil gives will be sufficient. Some \(f_n\) facts about the speaker could be something like, ‘the speaker \(S\) has repeatedly and consistently given answers \(a_1, a_1, a_1, \ldots\) to the mathematical computation \(C\), which are consistent with every answer \(S\) has given to \(C\) in the past’. Another \(f_n\) fact would be something about the mental state of the speaker at particular times \(t_n\) when computing the function. This would look like, ‘\(S\)’s mental state was thus-and-such at \(t_1, t_2, t_3, \ldots\) etc. when computing this particular function’. If we find the mental or brain states at those particular times are consistent, the speaker would be further justified to give the answer she does. There could be other facts presented about the speaker, which would further justify her answer. These facts might describe her

\(^{113}\) I assume the functions included in the test include integers greater than 57, thus according to the paradox and quus function, some answers would be ‘5’.
education, IQ level, competency, proficiency in other areas of study, etc. This answer to the skeptic will have to be rejected. Just because an answer is consistent with a certain function does not imply I meant that particular function. The behavior of the speaker could be consistent with other functions as well. This is shown via my behaviors in computing certain functions ‘plus’ or ‘quus’. My behavior in computing the plus and quus functions are consistent so there is no way to know which function I meant.

I now present a few of Kripke’s comments on dispositionalism. The dispositionalist account is fairly straightforward. Kripke explains:

> to mean addition by ‘+’ is to be disposed, when asked for any sum ‘\(x+y\)’ to give the sum of \(x\) and \(y\) as the answer (in particular to say ‘125’ when queried about ‘68+57’); to mean quus is to be disposed when queried about any arguments, to respond with their quum (in particular to answer ‘5’).^{114}

The point is, according to Kripke, his actual thoughts do not differ as to whether he meant ‘plus’ or ‘quus’. There are two problems Kripke addresses with the dispositionalist account, which I now present. The first addresses a problem of finite dispositions, and the second addresses a problem regarding the dispositionalist’s probability of making a mistake.

Earlier I described Kripke’s concern about the finitude of computing mathematical functions and the infinite computations that exist. According to Kripke, the dispositional account attempts to overcome this concern by appealing to a disposition to give the correct answer. The problem persists in that the dispositionalist, according to Kripke, ignores the fact that all dispositions are finite. Supposing there is a super human with a capacity to compute numbers even too large for me is also refuted with this point, for the skeptic can simply redefine the quus function such that ‘quus’ now means for all numerical functions small enough for me to compute, I will respond with the correct answer, the sum, and for all other sets of numbers too large for me to answer, I will respond with their quum. It does not help, as Kripke goes on, to appeal to some redefined notion of a *ceteris paribus* clause. The conditions laid out by Kripke entail a fantastical notion of being “stuffed with extra brain

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cells” to accommodate the large numbers, but even under this supposition, the outcome is unknown and Kripke refuses to comment any further on the matter. The result is the dispositionalist cannot overcome the finitude objection, according to Kripke.

To overcome this problem, the dispositionalist might propose it is the totality of dispositions that determine whether one meant ‘plus’ or ‘quus’ for numbers small enough for us to compute. The past and present dispositions will be able to determine whether one meant ‘plus’ or ‘quus’ for functions small enough for us to compute. The criticism that all dispositions are finite can be overcome by taking the totality of dispositions as the fact that justifies the answer to the function. I.e., for all cases in the past and present the speaker was disposed to answer ‘125’, and in fact did answer ‘125’ to the function ‘68+57’. Thus, in order to accord with her past dispositions, she would answer ‘125’ when challenged to answer ‘68+57’. This solution would also apply for other functions with numbers small enough for us to compute. This proposal, however, falls victim to the consistency objection. Each individual disposition would yield a particular answer. Each of those answers would be consistent with one another. Once again, because two answers are consistent with one another does not entail which function I meant. This solution also falls victim to the objection about functions regarding numbers too large for us to compute. If the function diverges at these numbers, how can I know which function I meant? This remains a problem for those attempting to provide a solution to the paradox.

The second difficulty Kripke mounts against the dispositionalist is that the account does not allow for any mistakes to be made. Kripke goes on to claim that in computing functions more often than not, we are disposed to make a mistake. E.g., someone computing an equation might forget to ‘carry’ or sometimes certain steps are done out of order for longer functions, etc. Therefore, for these individuals that make mistakes, they are disposed to give an answer that differs from someone who gives the correct answer even though they might be operating with the same functions we do. According to the dispositionalist, Kripke goes on, the function one means is determined by her dispositions. Under the conditions laid out where one is disposed to make a mistake, suppose there is another function that would accord with the mistaken disposition; Kripke calls this unique function ‘skaddition’. Skaddition in this respect would be consistent with the speaker’s intentions of giving the answers he does, even the mistaken answers. What this amounts to is two individuals
computing the same problem where both mean the same function but one makes a mistake and the other does not. The dispositionalist is committed to the claim that the mistaken individual did not make a mistake but merely means a non-standard function by the ‘+’ symbol. What ultimately results is two individuals might agree on the same process for solving the same equation but are working with different functions.

Here I have presented Wittgenstein’s paradox as it struck Kripke. What is important to take away from this section is that the paradox remains an obstacle for a private language. There are a number of different ways to deal with the paradox, and I have intimated a few. While the paradox still stands as a challenge for proponents of a private language, it is up to advocates of a private language to decide how vicious the paradox is. For the reason that a use of a word is guided by a standard in a public language, but that standard, or at least a reliable standard, does not exist in a private language, advocates of a private language will find the paradox to be quite problematic. On the other hand, if proponents of a private language adopt the conclusions in Chapter 4, the paradox may not appear to be as problematic, however, more work will have to be done to solidify this claim. Given the challenge the paradox presents, whatever solution users of a public language can propose might be applicable to a private language. With the paradox applicable to both private and public languages, this issue opens the door for a fresh and wider view on the paradox.

There are, I propose, three possible avenues to deal with the paradox. The first is to find a way to rescue the dispositionalist account from Kripke’s devastating criticisms. I encourage readers to consult Gibbard on this point. His analysis of meaning and normativity might be the key to at least open the possibilities for the dispositionalist. The second avenue is to find some other theory of meaning that will be able to overcome the skeptic’s challenge of both stating some fact about Kripke and justification for why Kripke answered

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115 At the risk of complicating this discussion further I have elected to defer discussion of the three ways to deal with the paradox for a separate work. I intimated above this chapter deserves a great deal of analysis. This analysis is best presented in a separate work, however, what I have presented in terms of the paradox and my solutions act as a springboard for that discussion.

116 See footnote 105.
125 rather than 5. In his essay, “Logic and Conversation,” H.P. Grice advances a pragmatic theory of meaning, which might overcome the skeptic’s challenge. Finally the third avenue would be to “bite the bullet” and accept the pitfalls of the paradox. The paradox presents challenges to both private languages and other public language spheres. In this way the paradox ceases to become a special problem for advocates of a private language. There are other problems for establishing a private language, and this paradox might be one of the more challenging ones that will have to be set aside until a satisfactory non-skeptical solution can be given.


118 Kripke provides what he finds to be the solution to the paradox. Kripke claims there are two possible solutions, a straight solution, and a skeptical solution. The straight solution entails finding some reason to show the skepticism is unwarranted. The skeptical solution entails shifting from finding a fact to justify my answer (truth-conditions) to finding the conditions which would warrant my answer; the solution Kripke presents entails shifting from truth-conditions to assertability-conditions. This part of his argument is not given in this work. The reason for excluding this section of Kripke’s argument are threefold. First I examined one of the solutions Kripke rejects, namely dispositionalism. Second, my present aim in this chapter was to present the paradox and its accompanying obstacles. Third, and finally, to avoid making this chapter the centerpiece of this project: I could spend a great deal of time and space further developing the paradox and presenting various solutions from various commentators like Gibbard, Grice, Kripke, Wittgenstein, etc., but this would go beyond my intentions for this chapter. If readers wish to follow up with solutions to this discussion, I refer them to those commentators.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

What has been presented and discussed in this work is a small picture of some of the points of discussion in the Private Language debate. None of the arguments given definitively settles the question of the possibility of a private language. Wittgenstein’s PLA was discussed at length in this project, but there are considerably more PLAs across different backgrounds and thinkers that could be discussed. Dejnožka names Quine, Marx, and Frege as some of the thinkers who have participated in the debate. These thinkers, among others, have advanced some version of a PLA or make comments with regard to the debate. I am not claiming that the conclusions reached here, especially those in Chapters 4 and 5, would be appropriate if applied to any other PLA aside from Wittgenstein’s. The topics I addressed in this work are the ones that struck me as problematic when I examined Wittgenstein’s PLA. The three areas I addressed in this work are the ones that must be addressed before a complete discussion can take place regarding the possibility of a private language. There are more topics to be teased out and the arguments made here could be expanded upon in greater detail. I concede there is much more work to be done to help round out this discussion. With respect to what has been presented here, however, the three problems of Wittgenstein’s PLA, the meaning of language describing sensations, the requirements for correctly using words and phrases, and the Wittgenstein-Kripkean paradox, some headway has been made; though as I intimated in the previous chapter, the Wittgenstein-Kripkean paradox could be treated at greater length with more analysis.

A major facet of this debate that needs a considerable amount of attention is the discussion of meaning and language. This was not my primary concern with this project, for I was more concerned with laying down the parameters for further discussion of the private language debate in terms of Wittgenstein’s PLA. I achieved this by presenting and commenting on Carnap’s PLA, Neurath’s PLA and Wittgenstein’s PLA, and the problems
for each.\textsuperscript{119} To bring the conversation full circle, I make a few closing remarks regarding some of the theories of meaning.

In Chapter 1, I presented a few theories of meaning and intimated a few others in Chapter 5. Readers should note I am not claiming any of these schemas as true or that they sufficiently remedy the problems presented here. A prime example of this is to consider how dispositionalism failed to overcome the paradox in the previous chapter, but this is not to claim that dispositionalism is false. If dispositionalism were reworked or coupled with another theory of meaning, like Putnam’s externalism, it might be a sufficient answer to the paradox.\textsuperscript{120}

The theory of meaning Putnam endorsed entailed two parts, a causal connection between the speaker and the object and the division of linguistic labor amongst the community. There is no inconsistency or logical impossibility by proposing, in the instance of a Crusoe, that the causal connection between the speaker and object would exist; furthermore, the linguistic community would be comprised of one member. We could be generous in the spirit of Ayer and propose that with the arrival of another speaker, or a very small group of speakers, Putnam’s externalism would still apply. The linguistic community may be comprised of five or six members, and the causal connections between the individual and the object would still obtain. Through trial and error, in the case of a single individual, the right causal connections between the speaker and the object would be established. Crusoe would have to take great care to ensure his words and meanings are used consistently, but this course could be achieved. By taking Putnam’s externalist account of meaning and

\textsuperscript{119} There is no correlation between three problems I have presented and the three private language, i.e., the problem of the meaning of statements that describe sensations or words that describe sensations does not strictly apply to Carnap and Neurath; this should have been evident in Chapter 3 when I discussed this same issue in terms of Wittgenstein’s PLA. The other two problems, the justification requirements for correct use of a statement and the Kripkean-Wittgensteinian paradox apply to Carnap and Neurath’s argument as well as Wittgenstein’s. Since Wittgenstein’s PLA was my primary concern in this project, all three of the problems I have addressed apply to his argument as well.

\textsuperscript{120} It would be appropriate, in the interest of complexity and length, to apply these theories of meaning to these problems in a separate discussion not presented here.
coupling it with Ayer’s arguments for loosening the requirements for the correct use of a word or phrase, my remarks become more solidified.

Readers should take care and not misunderstand my arguments, intentions, or comments, and think I aim to argue for the practicality of a private language. To make this claim or suppose this was my intent with this project is either already to posit the possibility of a private language or to posit a private language exists; the latter implies the former. Ayer makes this proposal, but I am unwilling to commit to this claim until more work has been done to show a private language is possible. My intention with this project is to address some of the problems for proponents of a PLA, which I hope will open the door for an argument or a discussion defending the possibility of a private language. This thesis, among other goals, aims at answering an exploring the nature of meaning. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 all concern to some degree some aspect of meaning. If some preliminary groundwork can be set in terms of the establishing the privacy of meaning, then advancing an argument for a private language will be an easier task.

There is a concern that arises in the discussions above that readers might forget or conflate an important distinction. This distinction concerns two different areas of language, words describing/referring to sensations and words referring to common objects. The discussion in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 solely concerns language describing sensations, whereas Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 concern language describing both sensations and language referring to objects. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 approach the second part of this distinction in different ways.

With respect to language describing sensations, this problem was discussed at great length as it affected Carnap, Neurath, and Wittgenstein. The words that describe/refer to sensations would have to be categorized, at least right now, as private because the meanings of these words involve some qualitative state that is not directly available to other subjects. Sensations are available to other speakers but only indirectly through behavior. This does not entail, however, that the meanings of words describing these sensations are wholly public; I made this claim evident in Chapter 3. A possible avenue of knowing whether the meanings of words agree with two different individuals is to consult the behavior of another other subject in terms of his affirming or denying judgment or by consulting his behavior and finding it appropriate for the sensation.
An identity theory fares no better in overcoming the issue of knowing what others mean by their sensation words. I could ascertain that certain sensations were identical to certain brain states, but this is all the information I would be afforded. My seeing that a particular brain state, B, is identical to a particular sensation, like pain, does not tell me what the meaning of ‘pain’ is; it also does not tell me what it is like to feel pain. I would only know what brain state the speaker is in when she is in pain. Being in a particular brain state is analogous to behavior in the sense that each behavior is associated with some brain state. If I were to recite Shakespearean quotations, propose vocally my current hunger, or some other behavior, then I would have some particular brain state associated with those behaviors. For sensations, however, a brain state does not reveal what it is like to have that sensation. Thus, an identity theory fares no better in making the meaning of the word ‘pain’, or any other word referring to a sensation, available to another speaker. It could be the case that one day the sensations of one subject, S₁, would be made available externally in the respect of being felt by another, S₂, but this is not the case given the current limitations of science. In the case of language describing sensations, which was discussed at great length as it applied to Carnap, Neurath, and Wittgenstein, this type of language is private and will remain so until a sufficient way of overcoming Nagel’s subjective character of experience. The subject character of experience refers to the idea that for certain organisms there is something that is like to be that organism. For instance, for each conscious organism, there is a subjective character for that organism. Once Nagel’s SCE is overcome, we will be in a better position to ascertain the objective meaning of words referring to sensations to be made available to speakers.

For language referring to objects, Chapters 4 and 5 broach this subject in different ways. Chapter 4 examines the conditions for determining whether a word or phrase is being used correctly while Chapter 5 addresses a behemoth of a problem, Wittgenstein’s paradox. Language that refers to objects is not private in the sense of meaning being not shareable, but these chapters address problems of the correct use of words and the meaning of words respectively and how one might be able to secure a private use. For this type of language, Wittgenstein claims that a wholly private language is not possible; I agree with this claim because in cases of non-standard languages, that language could be translated into a standard language and subsequently shared, which would yield some understanding. In the case of a
language only known by a few speakers, where there could be potential understanding for any new member of the linguistic community ignorant of the language, Wittgenstein is willing to allow this language to exist, *insofar as there is some independent method of verification and agreement for the correct use of the terms in the language*. If neither of these factors exists, there cannot be a language. What Wittgenstein has in mind with regard to independent verifiability and agreement is that without a way of knowing if there is agreement among speakers, one would not know if she used the word or phrase correctly. Ayer and I both address this point in the Crusoe thought experiment and conclude that Wittgenstein’s criteria for verification and agreement are too strong. If these requirements are loosened, there can be a language with a potential for verifying whether users are agreeing in their use of words. This might be more along the lines of what Ayer had in mind when he described private languages. However, if the language is shareable, it would be categorized as public. With the arrival of Man Friday, Crusoe could teach the meanings of his words to Friday and their uses. Wittgenstein might still take issue with this language for two reasons: the linguistic community is not large enough for verifying the correct use of a phrase or agreement among individuals, and two, there is nothing that makes it the case the use of the words or phrases are correct. In the case of a two-member linguistic community, there are not enough modes of verification to ensure the use of words are correct. Simply because two individuals agree with one another does not entail the use of the words are correct. To Ayer’s point, justification must end somewhere. Thus, if we adopt Putnam’s externalism, there can be a small linguistic community, one like Ayer had in mind.

In Chapter 5, I addressed one of the most challenging problems for an advocate of a private language. Wittgenstein’s paradox challenges the possibility of following a rule privately. The idea behind the paradox is that my behavior is consistent with many different rules. The worry is that there is no fact of the matter which rule I am following. If I am in doubt as to whether my use of a word is correct, I cannot check the rule because the rule is consistent with many different uses; on the other hand, a single rule is consistent with many different uses. In both cases I cannot check to see if my use of the word accords with the rule. I cannot consult another speaker because her behavior is also consistent with the rule. What further complicates the picture is if I find there is conflict between the rule and the use or the use and the rule, I can always create another rule, which would allow the conflict to exist.
Kripke presents the paradox with respect to a mathematical computation and claims there is no fact about him in the past that would imply whether he meant one function or the other. In order to tease out the paradox, as it would apply to a private language, Kripke conducts his discussion in the public language sphere, however, the intent was to show how the paradox is a special problem for a proponent of a private language. As I intimated in the previous chapter, the paradox is a special obstacle for an advocate of a private language.

There are, in addition to those mentioned in Chapter 5, two other possible approaches to the paradox. These approaches are not represented as solutions; however, they may be springboards for dealing with the paradox. The first approach is to regard the paradox as not a unique problem for a private language. Kripke announces the paradox is applicable to public languages in addition to a private language; this does not lessen the worries of the paradox. This approach would require users of a public language to answer the paradox, which could be of some help to an advocate of a private language. Whatever answer the users of the public language sphere give to the paradox a similar or modified version could be used for an advocate of a private language to answer the paradox.

The second approach is to claim the paradox as especially relevant to a private language because of the nature of a private language. In the case of a private language, the worry is there is no measure or standard to ensure the use of a speaker’s words are used correctly. The consequence of this is that rules may not dictate the use of words because the use of words can be redefined so as to accord with the rule. This second approach puts the advocate for a private language in a difficult position; unlike a private language, rules and uses of words in a public language can be checked for correct use. The plus-quus problem would remain for public language users; however, this problem is more easily remedied in the public language sphere rather than a private one. I presented some potential solutions to the paradox, but they could not overcome the objections discussed in this work.

The third way to deal with the paradox, which I discussed in Chapter 5, in terms of its being applied to a public language, is to adopt a pragmatic approach and bite the bullet. Kripke concedes the paradox applies to public languages as well. I found this concession helpful in my treatment of the paradox because if the comments Ayer made in Chapter 4 are accepted, the paradox, I believe, can be sufficiently dealt with. If public language users can successfully operate within a linguistic schema with the paradox, even if there is no fact of
the matter which rule (out of all the possible rules consistent with the actual and potential behavior) is the rule they are actually following, a private language user could do the same.121 Once again, the issue with the paradox was privately following a rule and there not being a standard to ensure the words were being used correctly. This makes the paradox especially worrisome for a proponent of a private language. I could create a standard or a set of rules for the use of my words, but this would be insufficient as a course of action because my actions would be consistent with the rule I set for myself and many other rules. I wouldn’t know what rule I was following. Kripke might propose that in the case of a public language, it would be easier to know if a word was being used correctly, for speakers have a plethora of media to consult. If I am in doubt as to whether I am using word correctly, I can consult a dictionary, another speaker, or some other standard. In the case of mathematics, there would still be the plus-quus issue for numbers too large for me to calculate. I proposed to overcome this issue by proposing for numbers small enough for me to calculate this issue would not apply. In the case of a private language, I cannot be sure if my use aligns with my rule; there is nothing that makes it the case that my use does align with my rule. All in all, in the case of a private language, one might propose the paradox as still a challenge. This, however, is up to the reader to make this judgment given Ayer’s argument.

The paradox remains as a difficult obstacle for a proponent of a private language and a problem for those who reject a private language. This problem is probably the most difficult to deal with and sits at the root problem of the private language debate. Rule following is a staple feature of a language, and this feature is connected with correct use of words, phrases, and meaning. Thus, Chapter 4, and 5 are intimately connected in this way.

121 The assumption in the consequent of this conditional is that Ayer’s comments in Chapter 4 are accepted. Kripke’s skeptical solution is, what a speaker means is not constituted by a fact about the speaker, but what conditions are present for the speaker to make the assertions they do; Kripke’s aim is to make a shift from truth-conditions, or fact conditions about a speaker, to assertability-conditions. I would claim assertability conditions are facts in disguise, thus Kripke’s contention about facts being irrelevant fails. A more appropriate place for me to follow-up with my contention would be in a separate work where I could give more attention to Kripke’s solutions.
The private language conversation can only be rightfully described as a behemoth of a philosophical problem. The numerous motivations and backgrounds of the private language conversation are fairly complex, and the arguments presented here pale in comparison to the conversation at large. There are many moving parts that are involved in this project, such as theories of meaning, language describing sensations, the requirements for determining the correct use of a phrase and the Wittgenstein/Kripke paradox. Any one of the chapters presented here could be greatly expanded. The discussions of the problems regarding private language presented here are meant to show, among other conclusions, that there are some interesting facets of the conversation especially looking at Wittgenstein’s PLA. Wittgenstein is famous, among other thinkers, for proposing a PLA. However, as I have shown, there are some concerns for a proponent of his argument. Advocates of Wittgenstein’s PLA will have to overcome accounting for the private meaning of language describing sensations, overcome Ayer’s argument for loosening the justification requirements for correctly using words, and finally decide how vicious the paradox is for a private language. The discussion presented here is a rough presentation of just some of the problems in the private language discussion. While my project does not definitively settle questions about language describing sensations, requirements for verifying the correct use of an expression, or the Wittgenstein/Kripke paradox, it sets the rough parameters for further discussion of these topics.
REFERENCES


