

# Notes sur l'expérience privée et les « sense data »

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## 3/26/30/38      PRIMAUTE DE L'EXPERIENCE SUR LE LANGAGE

[l'expérience que je fais semble remplacer, en un certain sens, la description de cette expérience. "Elle est sa propre description".](#)

[...]

Isn't what you reproach me of as though you said: "In your language, you're only *speaking!*"

[...]

If "having the same pain" *means* the same as "saying that one has the same pain", the "I have the same pain" means the same as "I say that I have the same pain" and the exclamation "Oh!" means "I say 'Oh!'".

[...]

[What we call a description of my sense datum, of what's seen, independent of what is the case in the physical world, is still a description for the other person.](#)

[...]

We labor under the queer temptation to describe our language and its use, introducing into our descriptions an element of which we ourselves say that it is not part of the language. It is a peculiar phenomenon of iridescence which seems to fool us.

[...]

We are, as I have said, tempted to describe our language by saying that we use certain elements, images, which however in the last moment we again withdraw.

## 12/20-21/45      EXPERIENCE PRIVEE D'AUTRUI

We may say a blind man doesn't see anything. But not only do we say so but he too says that he does not see. I don't mean "he agrees with us that he does not see – he doesn't dispute it," but rather: he too describes the facts in this way, having learned the same language as we have. Now whom shall we call blind? What is our criterion for blindness? A certain kind of behavior. And if the person behaves in that particular way, we not only call him blind but teach him to call himself blind. And in *this* sense his behavior also determines the meaning of blindness for *him*. But now you will say: "Surely blindness isn't a behavior; it is clear that a man can behave like a blind and not be blind. Therefore 'blindness' means something different; his behavior only helps him to understand what we mean by 'blindness'. The outward circumstances are what both he and we know. Whenever he behaves in a certain way, we say that he sees nothing; but he notices that a certain private experience of his coincides with all these cases and so concludes that we mean this experience of his by saying that he sees nothing."

The idea is that [we teach a person the meaning of expressions relating to personal experiences indirectly](#). [...]

Mustn't we say [...] that we can't say anything whatever about private experience and are in fact not entitled to use the word 'experience' at all? [What makes us believe that we are is that we really think of the cases in which we can describe his private experiences](#), describing different ways of playing chess in one's imagination.

[...]

"Only you can know what color you see." But is it true that only you can know, you can't even impart this knowledge nor can you express it.

## 21-22      EXPRESSIONS DE SENSATIONS

[showing toothache can never be lying.](#)

[...]

The language games with expressions of feelings are based on games with expressions of which we don't say they may lie.

“But was I when a baby taught that ‘toothache’ meant my expression of toothache?” – I was taught that a certain behavior was called expression of toothache.

#### 41-42 PARLER D'UN OBJET ? D'UNE EXPERIENCE ?

Isn't it queer that if I look in front of me and point in front of me and say “this!,” I should know what it is I mean. “I mean just these shades of color and shapes, the *appearance*.”

[...]

It seems that the visual image which I'm having is something which I can point to and talk about; that I can say of it, it is unique. That I am pointing to the physical objects in my field of vision, but not meaning them by the *appearance*. This object I am talking about, is not to others then to myself. (It is almost like something painted on a screen which surrounds me.)

This object is inadequately described as “that which I see”, “my visual image”, since it has nothing to do with any particular human being. Rather I should like to call it “what's seen”. And so far, it's all right, only now I've got to say what can be said about this object, in what sort of language game “what's seen” is to be used. For at first sight I should feel inclined to use this expression as one uses a word designating a physical object, and only on second thought I see that I can't do that. – When I said that here there seems to be an object I can point to and talk about, it was just that I was comparing it to a physical object. For only on second thought it appears that the idea of “talking about” isn't applicable here. (I could have compared the ‘object’ to a theater decoration.)