

Dispersing the Inner - Recoiling the Outer: A Later Wittgensteinian Narrative for Art and Literature

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0 INTRODUCTION

What we know as the dichotomy between the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ is virtually an opposition between time and space – the non-spatial mind or soul on the one hand, and the extended bodies and objects on the other. All the so-called mental states like sensation, perception, intention, emotions, though themselves devoid of any extension, motion, position, direction or dimension, yet have the power to generate the richly variegated movements of nerves, muscles, sense-and motor organs - in all possible details of their qualitative or quantitative expanse. For the best comprehension of Wittgenstein’s critique of this inner/outer opposition we should start with the way he compellingly builds a conceptually repeatable character into the mental predicates, and demonstrates this character of repeatability as a matter of spatial distribution or spatial dynamics of the mental. Thus, Wittgenstein collapses the myth of the non-spatial character of the inner with the myth of the non-conceptual or pre-linguistic character of the same. Showing the spatial dimensions of the inner involves Wittgenstein in a philosophical labour in two directions – the first is to activate the inner as a special paradigm of describing the outer, the second is to dissipate the seemingly non-spatial bits of the inner into an ever-indeterminate and ever-incomplete expanse of the outer.

I shall also try to insist that both these exercises of condensing the outer and dispersing the inner, need a thickly detailed real time¹ narrative of a literary text - which the philosophical works, even those of later Wittgenstein’s non-standard style of writing - are unable to achieve. This in its turn imposes some new demands and responsibilities on the literary narratives themselves – viz. that the mental predicates, instead of being spattered as idle expressions, should be unpacked through a strenuously detailed account of a broad spectrum of behaviors of subtle shades and dimensions – ranging from the most uninhibited exercise of the sense- and motor-organs to the extreme point of a passivated withdrawal of behaviour itself.

1 WITTGENSTEIN’S CRITIQUE OF THE INNER

The crux of Wittgenstein’s treatment of the ‘inner’ consists in his contention that if a representation – say a red sensation - is claimed to be inner, i.e., non-spatial, it cannot be available to memory, or to conceptual recognition. If the red sensation is shorn of spatial linkages, then the subject having this sensation can only move through a one-dimensional axis of time; he himself will turn out to have no spatial dimension with which he can turn back and connect the present sensation with its past counterpart, or anticipate a possible recurrence in the future. Hence the sensation itself being devoid of all content cannot claim to be a sensation at all.

The inner-theorist will insist that the inner objects are ‘given’ – patently and primordially – so much so that their bare presence moves from context to context – causally or brutally – all

¹ By ‘real time’ I do not mean a live commentary or a simultaneous recount, but only that the duration of the narrative should have the same duration as the possible occurrence which the fictional work claims to depict.

by itself, without being recognized by the subject as all the occurrences of a sensation falling (or not falling) under the same type. But here McDowell² would put Wittgenstein's argument in a more pointed fashion – the bare presence of the inner, totally constrained by its non-repeatable specificity cannot be said to attain the freedom or spontaneity required for conceptual recursion. Such an attempt to transit from the non-conceptual to the conceptual would be fraudulent. Put in the other way round McDowell would argue that a so-called inner representation is always secured by an abstraction from a manifold – i.e., from a complex structure of shape, size, color, position and movement - and what is abstracted from a manifold cannot be withheld from conceptual recursion – it inevitably breaks forth from its putative non-spatiality – and becomes spatially distributable, recognizable across possible occasions of recurrence.

We need to put the crucial force of this point through specific illustrations. The subject must understand his pain or his color impression as secured from an unusual angle, only in so far as it is subsumable under a general type of a state of affairs. To conceive the peculiarity of one's own experience of pain or color is also to appreciate what it is for someone else to have the same kind of pain or color impression if he is placed in the same angle. The subject understands the specific structure of inner sense precisely because he does not only conceive it in terms of an exclusively first-person angle, but conceives the very same circumstance as thinkable by others, or at least by herself at different times. This is what is done when one says something like 'My visual experience represents something as being of that shade', or 'I know how tall I am' by putting her hand on the top of her head to prove it (PI 279)³. What we have here is a genuinely recognizable feature, a genuine operation of our conceptual capacity—the very same capacity to embrace a color in mind can in principle persist beyond the specific duration and location of the experience itself.

Now the mode of 'inner' recursion may be significantly different from that of the outer, for the associated capacity to repeat may be very short-lived; that is, the past and future through which the thought travels may be the very recent past and the immediate future.⁴ But even if the purportedly inner sample (a red sensation) does not recur in the future, the capacity or the logical possibility of the recognition persists in thought based on memory. Even to say 'This experience is uniquely particular,' 'This red that I see now is exhausted in this moment', is virtually to betray the general features exploitable in a conceptual capacity.

What cannot be done is to start with the pre-spatial and pre-conceptual bits of the inner and go on building chains of conceptual negotiations on its basis. The main point of Wittgenstein's critique of the inner /outer dichotomy is to challenge the self-interpretively of what are customarily called the objects of inner sense—i.e., to challenge their specially 'given' status that exhausts the concept, leaving no gap between itself and the conceptual operations. Wittgenstein challenges this claim by playing up the opaque or non-given character of the objects of inner sense, dispersing the givenness into non-givenness; or rather, rupturing the insular temporality of the inner into an open expanse of uses. In fine as the non-conceptual reduces to the conceptual, and the inner sense boils down to the outer sense.⁵

² McDowell, J. *Mind and World*, 1996, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, p 20.

³ Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*, eds G. E. M. Anscombe. Rhees and G. H. Von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984. This work has been abbreviated as 'PI' all through the paper.

⁴ McDowell, *Mind and World*, Lecture III, section 5.

⁵ Ibid. p 21–22.

2 INNER AS A PARADIGM OF DESCRIBING THE OUTER

‘Sensations are private’ is to be appreciated as a grammatical proposition—a standard for according meaning to certain moves in contrast to others (PI 247). This paradigm is forged by passivating the object to the sole perspective of the subject, blocking all its expansions and orientations from other points of view. As Wittgenstein illustrates, the difference between the public and the private - the outer and the inner - depends on two kinds of attention. One can speak of a red object, as to how it strikes with its glowing effulgence from all perspectives; or one can highlight a particular color scheme or a particular tone or hue (PI 277), or use an allegorical picture of a red membrane coming out of the object and one’s body immersed in it (PI 276, 277). It is the last two modes of employment that constitute the necessity of the proposition ‘This red sensation of mine is inner or private.’ Similarly, one can activate a pinprick or a burning sensation by subjecting different percipients exactly to the same stimulus on the same part of their body. We can illustrate the popular antics of Phantom—the comic strip hero created by Lee Falk—like bashing the heads of two ‘baddies’ together. The point of activating sensations is to loosen them out of their seeming enclosure in the body of a particular perceiver and distribute them as shareable items among more than one perceiver. However, we tend to fall in with the more attractive alternative of ‘passivating’ or ‘privatizing’ our sensations, where all we actually do is to highlight a particular quality of the object or our sense organ or the intermediating atmosphere, or play up an unusual perspective. These alternative modes of exercising one’s attention—of enclosing an object within a particular boundary and thus privatizing it, or distributing it in possible recursions across different viewpoints—both are ways of acting. They are not passive representations with a special neurological or psychological identity that push actions outside their exclusive ontology, reducing actions to merely external and contingent accompaniments.

The purported necessity of the proposition ‘Sensations are private’ stands on par with the necessity of so-called analytic propositions like ‘Every rod has length,’ ‘Everybody has extension,’ and ‘Everything is identical with itself’. (PI 216) While the triviality of the proposition ‘ $p = p$ because nothing apart from p can penetrate it’ lies naked, that of our privacy games with sensations is camouflaged, or better, renovated, by a play of imagination. What do we do when we say: ‘This red sensation is exclusively mine,’ ‘Nobody else can share this pain caused by this pin insertion in my finger?’ In the first case we are held under the sway of the red membrane coming out of the object, submerging my body and settling back into it. The pin delinked from all its operations and interactions from other bodies in other directions is attenuated to a single, uni-dimensional penetration in my finger, thus effecting a cyclic interlocking between the two. The game of privacy lies primarily in formulating grammatical propositions in this way—propositions that set paradigms for describing sensations and feelings as ‘private’ and trees, chairs, sticks and stones as ‘public’.

3 THE NEED FOR A WITTGENSTEINIAN NARRATIVE IN LITERATURE

Projecting the inner as a paradigm for describing the outer is not a real condensation of space into spacelessness, or a real transformation of extension into extensionlessness. It is an exercise of thwarting or recoiling spatial expansion – toning down the bodily movements to the minimum, constraining the objects to a static position for a prolonged duration. And the more we try to shrink up the exuberance of behaviors, or scale down its outstretching dimensions – the more space we activate to make it available to this retrenching exercise - the more we seek to roll up into the inner, the more we disperse into the outer. While the inner is

a paradigm of the outer - the outer also becomes the criterion of the inner – from the other way round. ‘An inner process stands in the need of an outward criterion.’ (PI 580)

It is at this juncture that a literary narrative makes its intervention. Condensing the outer in the shape of an ‘inner’ paradigm and fleshing out this paradigm in the backdrop of the ‘outer’ - both these exercises need a densely detailed, thickly variegated, real time narrative. A philosophical discourse by its very nature forecloses the actual flow of life into frozen capsule of a theory; and perhaps even Wittgenstein’s later works – despite their concrete illustrations, meticulous specificities, and ongoing portrayals - cannot dissolve the second-level talk about uses and practices into the ever-incomplete flow of uses themselves.

Unfortunately, many literary pieces themselves go on spattering mental predicates like ‘he thought’, ‘he willed to do so and so’, ‘he became angry’, ‘he felt pain’ and project these as tokens of innocuous laziness. They even tend to present this laziness as a philosophical stance of condensing the inflating empirical garbage of behaviors into the compact non-spatial mind. Let us see what a literary narrative of a sensation - with respect to a table - from a single person’s perspective can achieve. It is a challenge thrown to the writer to activate an apparently lazy yarn with a different dynamism – the slow change in the hue and shades of the table, the gradual accumulation of dust-particles, my eye-balls controlling all digressive movements, the gradual strain building up in my optical nerves, counting the slow beats of my heart. This is not an account of how the empirical space of behaviors is nullified in terms of a non-space, rather my first-person narration of a sensation explodes this non-space into multiple routes of potential distribution through inevitable routes of my proprioception. I may put water in my eyes to get a blurry image of the table; I may put a screen between myself and the table, cut horizontal slits on the screen to turn the table into disconnected slivers of brown. The more I engage in these ‘private’ adventures or ‘inner’ enterprises – the more I publicize the object and open it out for general consumption. Philosophical texts can at best talk about this privatist style and /or recommend it, they cannot embody this style in its exposition.

How can the literary narratives bring in these ‘fine shades of behaviour’ (PI p 203) that would capture the ‘inner’ dimensions of the ‘outer’? Can they capture the difference between a genuine pain and a pretence - in their protracted and ongoing narrative - without using the word ‘pain’ at all? Here indeed Wittgenstein has provided valuable suggestions that can be adopted by an adventurous narrator. The descriptions of pain-behaviour should not simply be recording changes in the direction of limb-movements or give quantitative details of muscle configurations or contortions. Any honest attempt to merge the inner with the outer should outgrow both the dualist inertness as well as the behaviourist obsession with stereo-typical body-movements embedded in formal and geometrical parameters. Any quantitative scheme of narration should be recast in a historical mould incorporating the qualitative changes – the emergent gleam in the eyes, the suppressed whistle, tears welling up in the eyes, strained gulping down the Adam’s apple, slow whitening of knuckles, gradual inflation of muscles, vibration of nerves, accumulating beads of perspiration, flushing of the skin, gritting the teeth – i.e., all that demarcate genuine pain from shamming. The authenticity in representing pain or any mental predicate consists in exploring and publicising the subtle and subdued dimensions of the body, and thereby making it available for universal participation. Further, the creative genius of the writer would motivate him to roll out the concept of pain in an unconventional pattern of subversion – including expressions of joy, non-involvement or carelessness. It is within a holistic and historically protracted exploration that the non-

standard and unconventional modalities of the inner - or what Wittgenstein dubs as the 'imponderable evidences' (PI p 228) - will be appreciated.

Thought in the dualist scheme claims a vital status in the realm of the inner, and all activities like sub-vocal speech, humming, reading silently, calculating in one's head, are at best the veil or medium behind which the ultimate thought recedes forever. Following Wittgenstein's suggestions (PI p 220-1) we can place the demand for a thickly detailed description of the innervated movements of the larynx - as to how it moves from each letter, syllable or note to the next. Such a narrative can show that it is only the normally expansive exercise of the larynx in producing loud speech, loud singing or visible moves of calculation, that subsequently get retrenched into small movements inside the throat. Within this extensive and finely tuned story the larynx- movements will grow into full-bodied thoughts and cease to be their skeleton – the status that was accorded by the dualists.

The dualist scheme would smoothly accommodate the possibility of grafting words on the mouth of animals – with a neat subtraction of that speech being caused by thought. If animals uttered words as we do – the dualist would attempt an analogical inference to the thought supposedly causing the speech - and declare that this inference yields a false conclusion. But the possibility of this epistemological failure (involved in the invalid analogical argument) presupposes the notional comprehension of the effect (animal speech) without the cause (animal thought). But Wittgenstein would point out that we cannot even understand the words grafted on animal's mouth as speech - 'If a lion could talk, we could not understand him'. (PI p 225) When words are grafted on to the mouths of normal animals in movies these words hang in the air like ghostly projections. Wittgenstein explains that animals do not talk, not because they cannot think, or lack the mental capacity. 'But-they simply do not talk'. (PI 25) They simply do not play the games of commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, etc. etc., as they play the games of walking, eating, drinking, playing, mating. (PI 25) An honest account of the animal life with all the positive details of their behaviors and activities will not have to fall back on the purported absence of their inner thought as the purported cause of absence of their speech; what they do not do – will be exhaustively narrated in this non-causal account of what they actually do.

But the Disney animation techniques and subsequent computer graphics have evolved a new technique of fictional narrative to make animals genuinely look as if they are speaking. For this they had to enliven the animals with a new body-frame and a new structure of behaviors - where their speech is effectively recast as a spontaneous extension of their non-verbal activities. One can specifically refer to some of the Disney animations where they start from accurate body-frames of specific kinds of animals - lions, tigers, wolves and pythons – and extend them elastically, unobtrusively, to a frame of human semblance. Remember how in 'Lion King' Mufasa raised his legs while walking with a royal grace, how the movements of the lions' eye-balls took on a human mobility; remember how the beautiful feline in 'Aristocats' coiled up her tail with an unmistakable suggestion of a graceful lady manoeuvring her legs. The most remarkable technique could be noted where the body of a python (Kaa in 'Jungle Book') was re-configured in a mammalian style enabling us to extract the standard movements of human hands, legs, shoulders and waist - all from that homogeneously elongated flesh. Overall, the cartoon and non-cartoon animations of animals in the most recent technologies provide delightful occasions to realise the crucial insight of Wittgenstein – speech or language is not a passive replication of reality – but a sophisticated extension of non-verbal behaviour.

Wittgenstein's treatment of the inner can be used in literature and feature-films to break through the false schism between erotic love and platonic love. We have seen that a deliberate stoppage of outer movements or withdrawals are nothing other than behaviors and they get their significance through a rich backdrop of cultivation – like gritting one's teeth, contraction of muscles, holding one's breath, recoiling one's limbs, stiffening the knuckles. Similarly, the difference between erotic love and platonic love lies in two lay-outs of bodily behaviours. In this connexion we need to address Putnam's interventions⁶ – he said that unless we entertain a firm conviction about the need for communication and empathy, our mind does not get expressed in external manifestations. Putnam gives the example of a Spartan community whose members do not harbour this conviction and hence their pain (and other mental states) is held back from any behavioural manifestation. And Putnam insists that this intermediary belief itself is irreducibly mental - it cannot be cashed out in actual or possible behaviours. No doubt Putnam will hold the same opinion about romantic love and its external manifestations. Here again we need to rely heavily on literature - to dissipate that putative clot of an intermediary - in terms of an array of foundationless usage, where the dogged question about the primal cause of the love-behaviors (manifest or controlled) would not arise. This intermediary belief does not precede behaviors as an ethereal origin; rather it is a language-game of putting up a paradigm - whereby the unsophisticated mass of love- or pain-behaviors is judged against a set of subdued expressions. The so-called platonic love between a man and a woman stretches out over a broad spectrum with finely distinguished shades – each differing from the other in subtle nuances. It ranges from ordinary acquaintance, friendship, thick camaraderie to a gradually ascending level mutual dependence and indispensability. All these mentalistic terms are to be fleshed out through fine distinguished shades of behaviour – where all the apparently primary colors of this love-spectrum turn out to be seamless blend of ongoing similarities.⁷ Sometimes there is a passive indifference about the lover's body, sometimes a pronounced neglect, sometimes an easeful withdrawal, sometimes a poetic aestheticisation, sometimes the evocative undulations of the body which were in the forefront recede to the background. All these would figure as possible bodily orientations of the so-called platonic love, romance or friendship.

A dualist account of sexual experience is often fraught with false causal splits between the inner and the outer. These splits occur between the non-spatial images of all erotic spaces (erotic touches, smells and visions) on the one hand - and the purely physical movements on the other - where the latter supposedly generated by the former. Once the mental cause of intercourse is relegated to the non-spatial realm, the residual effect will be claimed to be described in purely spatial and non-erotic terms – 'rhythmic muscular contractions in the pelvic region', 'lubrication', 'convulsion', 'swelling and brightening', 'withdrawal', 'ejection', 'reduction of size', 'final relaxation of muscles', 'dropping of blood-pressure; etc. Here again the onus falls on the literary narratives to dissolve the causal split between the non-spatial realm of inner sex and its outer manifestation in a single continuum.

Feminist literature can motivate itself to narrate women's orgasm in a Wittgensteinian style. The prevalent theory on women's orgasm seeks to discover a spatial connexion between the vagina and the clitoris – as to how the highly innervated tissues of the clitoris are pulled closely towards the anterior walls of the vagina during the phases of arousal and intercourse.⁸

⁶ Putnam, H. 'Brains and Behaviours' in ed. J. Heal, *Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁷ See *PI* 66, 67 for Wittgenstein's treatment of the notion of similarity.

⁸ I have drawn the relevant details about the notions of orgasm and sexual response cycle from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orgasm> (accessed 30 November 2017).

Now this phenomenon of women's orgasm has to be recounted again through labored details as to how a woman carves out the space of her sexual intercourse, how she voluntarily makes the smaller regions of the clitoris burst forth in the larger regions of the vagina. Overall, it is again an exercise to dissolve the schism between the inner and outer in the realm of women's sexuality.

4 CAN THERE BE NEURO-FICTIONS OR NEURO-MOVIES IN THE WITTGENSTEINIAN STYLE?

We know that neurological theories have overpowered the scenario where all the enigmas of mental predicates – conception, cognition, emotion and volition - are sought to be explained exhaustively by brain-states and neural firings. I shall address only one of such theories – that of A Raftopoulos⁹ who lays out his theory of visual perception in microscopic details of milliseconds (ms). 150 ms after the stimulus onset when most of the visual regions of the brain have been activated, and neuronal firings occur in response to the specific location, the brain is said to fuse the features of the stimuli and form single units with initial boundaries. These are said to be 2.5 dimensional objects or proto-objects - which are flat fragmentary and disjointed, with incomplete and indeterminate surfaces. They are still confined to the double images of the retina, and they are yet to be positioned in the common space-time coordinates. Now for Raftopoulos the processing of stimuli into 2.5 d objects and the route through which they are turned into full-fledged three-dimensional objects is radically non-conceptual. Two discrete stimuli cannot recognise their mutual similarity in qualities, to get fused into one; and our mere phenomenal consciousness about the 2.5 d objects rules out the possibility of their being conceptually integrated in terms of any general or repeatable features. It is only some kind of brute spatial correspondence between the spatial characteristics of the stimuli and the cortical geography that turns discrete stimuli into full-fledged objects with repeatable class-properties.

Evidently in such neurological theories it is the brain takes the place of the mysterious 'inner' saddling us with a new dualism – the brain-body dualism. Wittgenstein would say that it is not the flat two-dimensional fragments in the brain and at the originary point of visual perception that gradually generates thicker and more complete representations through a structure of milliseconds – all supposedly enclosed in the brain. Rather it is motion and action, starting from infant's movements - like oscillation of eye-balls, turning around the head, and gradually rotating its whole body, moving up to the standing posture and walking – all these that bend, blend and break space into full-fledged perceptions. It is at this juncture that a new genre of neuro-fictions or neuro-movies can come in. Let these genres narrate the neural happenings inside the brain parallelly with perception, which will clearly show that the exercise of sweeping out the flat disconnected proto-objects into full-fledged objects is nothing but action. Perhaps these holistic yarns of neuro-fictions can successfully show that all the intermediary linkages - the highly sophisticated tools of FFS, LRP, 2d images, 2.5d images changing in the mind-boggling speed in the brain - will still have to be integrated with the simple incidence of human action and participation.¹⁰

Comprehending later Wittgenstein's anti-foundationalist approach had always been like walking on waters, or laboring under an intellectual vertigo – where you are always prone to

⁹ Raftopoulos, A. 'Reference, Perception and Attention', *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 144, 2009, pp. 339–60.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein L. *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. Rush Rhees, Tr: Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1975, p 100-101

land back on a seemingly hard ground, and let your relentlessly dissipative exercise ossify into a putative foundation. If reaching out to fictional narratives seems to be far-fetched or misguided, let philosophy find out its own narrative space - in the shape of philosophical fictions or docu-dramas that would weave out a story – ever indeterminate and ever-incomplete.

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