

Wittgenstein on Other Minds:

Introduction:

In Wittgenstein's philosophy, the problem of other minds has been very much discussed in many ways. The problem of the sensation of pain is an important factor in understanding the other minds, and we find a great deal of discussion in this regard. It's been said that during the year 1929-30, a group of students who surrounded Wittgenstein was considered as 'Toothache club' which shows the importance of their discussion on this problem. In our discussion on Wittgenstein's understanding of other minds we will, first of all, discuss private language argument, and then try to analyse the importance of the sensation of pain which is of much importance in knowing other minds. And finally, we will end our analysis by understanding Wittgenstein's concept of form of life.

I. The Private Language Argument:

A language is said to be 'private' only when the speaker alone or only a limited group of people can understand. This may be in the form of codes or abbreviations that are understandable only to those individuals or a group. But this can't be said as private language because be it in the form of codes or abbreviations, these are transcribed by using any common language that people speak. And this type of language is of little importance to philosophers as nothing can be done further.

There is another type of private language which is of philosophical interest and which Wittgenstein espouses. Accordingly, private language is something that an individual uses to describe his immediate sensation of which others can't know or understand about it. However, it is hard to imagine how such type of language can be structured.

Based on the above two definitions of private language Ashok Vohra defines: "Private language is a language that refers to the experiences of which only the speaker is aware and of which it is not merely the case that it is not understood by anyone other than the speaker, but more, that it is logically impossible that it should be understood by anyone other than the speaker."¹

The private linguist uses the words that we use in our ordinary language. But how can a private language be a common language? A hint occurs in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigation* where he states; "what reason have we for calling 'S' the sign for a sensation? For 'sensation' is a word of our common language, not of one intelligible to me alone. And it would not help either to say that it need

¹Vorha, Ashok, *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mind*, Croom Helm Publication, Australia, 1986, p. 35.

not be a sensation: that when he writes ‘S’ he has something and that is all that can be said. ‘has’ and ‘something’ also belong to our common language.”²

Wittgenstein here is pointing out the impossibility of private language. Thus, if the private linguist wants to use common words of our ordinary language, then by doing this, he is only misusing its primary purpose for which it was meant, and thus it no longer becomes a private language. Another important thing is that words of our ordinary language are governed by rules of grammar which is a part of our language. Thus to understand words in a language one also has to know the rules that regulate that language. But since the private linguist can’t make use of our words, it also becomes meaningless to say how he can use rules of our language to express his private language. Thus, anyone who wants to make use of private language not only fails in his project of making his private language intelligible but also fails to communicate it to others. This brings out two important aspects of the problem,

- (a) Only the speaker alone can know and understand the language used to describe his sensations, feelings, and experiences and secondly,
- (b) Others won’t be able to understand anything about the speaker’s experience.

In this private language argument, there are two fundamental mistakes. The first is related to language that something is private to me because only I alone can know about it. This can be stated as incommunicability of experience. The mistake here is that one can obtain the meaning of a particular sensation only when he has experienced that sensation for himself, but he can’t be able to communicate it to others. Incommunicability of experience seems to be something absurd and meaningless. It is absurd because unless and until I communicate my experiences to others I may not know or understand the meaningfulness of my experience. Because if I say I alone can know what my experiences are that would be meaningless. The reason is that by denying this, I deny something that is very much known to others. It is also absurd because knowing something doesn’t merely confine to oneself; it also includes other. Hence, if I say only I alone can know my pain, then it is nonsense because others can easily be able to know whether I am in pain or not.

Thus, according to Wittgenstein, as long as the experience is concerned, it is always communicable. My use of the concept ‘pain’ or ‘a toothache’ is not private because these are the words of our common language and their meanings are accessible to others and are understandable by others. Therefore, all the experiences that we express are not private but publicly expressed in our ordinary language. It is understood by others and responded as well. If it is stated that experience is incommunicable, then that may not be considered as experience as such.

²Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigation* (Ed) by G.E.M. Anscombe, & R. Rhees, (Trans) by G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1953, Sect. 261. (Henceforth PI.)

The second mistake about the private language argument is related to our experience. The mistake about the nature of experience is the acceptance of the view that experience can be private and that I alone can have it or possess it. This means we can't know the feelings and experiences of another. This would mean I have the private ownership of my feelings and experiences. This is understood as inalienability of experience which expresses a tautology.

The mistake about the nature of experience leads to solipsism. A solipsist bases his ground on the mistaken use of the nature of language. For solipsism in principle, existence would mean the existence of his self and his mental states alone. And experiences, in reality, would mean no other experiences than one's own. According to Wittgenstein solipsism would mean anything that an individual comes to know is known only to the individual himself and reality would refer to his own present experiences alone.

In this regard, Wittgenstein says that: "The solipsist's mistakes a grammatical proposition, namely, 'I can't have another man's pain' to be an experimental proposition. The proposition 'I can't have another man's pain' expresses a logical and not a physical impossibility."³ According to Pradhan: "The grammatical proposition that 'I can't have someone's pain' doesn't deny that I may feel pain in A's body or that A's pain and my pain are the same. This is because, in our form of language that I understand and sympathize with my friend in his suffering. In our form of life, there is no doubt that we understand one another and that we pity a suffering man, or, that we feel his pain by administering medicine."⁴

There is certainly a distinction between a grammatical and experimental proposition, and that which can be logically impossible needn't have to be impossible in reality. There are thus two ways Wittgenstein has dismissed solipsism. First of all the solipsist considers a grammatical proposition to be experimental proposition and considers experiences and feelings of others as experimental proposition and denies its accessibility by others. And secondly, from the private language argument point of view that we discussed earlier. What Pradhan tells is also something interesting, for when I say I can't feel someone else's pain doesn't mean that my pain and someone else's pain can't be same. Because, our form of life enables us to understand one another and so when someone says that I feel headache my pain also can be similar to him when I feel headache.

³ Moore, G. E., "From Wittgenstein's lectures 1930-33," in *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds*, (Ed.) by Harold, Morick, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1967, p. 120.

⁴ Pradhan, R. C., *Language and Experience*, Anu Prakashan, India, 1981, p. 23.

ii. The Sensation of Pain and the Problem of Other Minds:

What would Wittgenstein's response be to a question like; 'How our words refer to sensations?' Wittgenstein would say that whenever we express a sensation sentence like 'I am in pain' it doesn't mean that it refers to certain of our sensations; it rather expresses the pain itself. So what Wittgenstein might be having in his mind is that he is rather trying to focus our attention on our expression of pain to what we call them as pain. The pain he would mean as crying. It is not a kind of description, but expression using our external behavior which doesn't refer to pain rather expresses pain itself. For Malcolm, sensation words are to be considered as our natural expression of sensation in place of behavior. That means, there is a similarity of behavior and expression of sensation using sensation words. In other words, verbal utterances don't refer to behavioral expression rather, it expresses pain itself. Later we will see the importance of expression in knowing mental states of others.

Let us take up few objections that may be raised here. How will someone know that a child coordinates between his sensations of pain to his natural pain behaviour? When the child expresses sensation words, then there may be occasions that it might have learned sensation words using its corresponding behavior. And then later it must have known primitive expressions using mere utterances of words. There is another possibility which can't simply be ignored, for the child may also have developed learning sensation words and behavior from its parents and close relatives.

Let us take the example of 'toothache' and try to analyse this. Suppose, I wanted to teach a child what toothache would mean and to teach I would show a tooth and tell that anyone who feels a toothache will feel that deep down his tooth there develops a sensation of discomfort that causes great pain and as a consequence of this the person feels severe pain. Now, after having explained this, if it happens to the child to whom I have explained and he behaves in the manner I have explained then will I or someone say that he has learned the word toothache? Will I know what toothache means according to him? Did the child understand what toothache means? Thus, we can accept the view that a child may have picked up expression of sensations from one's parents. However, there is no logical necessity involved in it. And so, we can say that our understanding of pain is expressed in our natural expression of pain and so the concept of 'referring' becomes irrelevant and pain therefore is the expression of pain itself and it doesn't refer to pain behavior.

Thus, when I say 'I am in pain' then it doesn't mean I simply express those words nor does it refer to the expression of my behaviour rather my expression of pain and behavior are the same thing. According to Malcolm; "the important similarity that Wittgenstein is trying to bring to light is that the

verbal utterance and the natural pain behaviour are each incorrigible.”⁵ Thus when an individual says that he is in pain he can’t be said to be in error, for he can’t say by mistake that ‘he is in pain’ nor is it possible to groan by mistake. I can’t misidentify a pain to be a tickle or my pain in hand to be in my leg. It is possible that I may not be able to make a distinction between what is called pain and ache but that doesn’t mean that I can’t know that I have a sensation of pain. What I can’t do is that I can’t express what my exact sensation is but that doesn’t hinder me to say that I am in pain. Thus, using ‘incorrigibility of the utterance’ I am in pain Wittgenstein is saying that; “‘I know I am in pain’ and ‘I don’t know whether I am in pain’ are both senseless.”⁶

He further states “It can’t be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I know I am in pain, what is it supposed to mean except perhaps that I am in pain? Other people cannot be said to learn of my sensations only from my behaviour, for I cannot be said to learn of them, I have them. The truth is: it makes sense to say about other people that they doubt whether I am in pain, but not to say it about myself.”⁷ Thus, whenever I say ‘I am in pain’ it is a genuine expression, where there is no deception involved in it.

Another important passage where Wittgenstein explicitly expresses the other minds problem is: “If one has to imagine someone else’s pain on the model of one’s own, this is none too easy a thing to do; for I have to imagine pain which I don’t feel on the model of the pain which I do feel. That is, what I have to do is not simply to make a transition in imagination from one place of pain to another, as from pain in hand to pain in the arm. For, I am not to imagine that I feel pain in some region of his body. (Which would also be possible).”⁸

What this would mean is that, if I am to know what pain is by seeing how the other is feeling the pain, then I would know the feeling of pain after I have felt it. Once I know the feeling of pain, I will also know properties involved in pain in my case which I experience. For, it would be impossible for me to speak of another’s pain unless I have experienced what pain itself is and of which Wittgenstein said; ‘this is none too easy’ to which we will later prove wrong, or Wittgenstein himself would prove wrong.

One would again bring the ‘sameness’ concept here as it seems in the above passage. But Wittgenstein would deny this. He says: “But if I suppose that someone has pain, then I am simply supposing that he has just the same as I have so often had. That gets us no further. It is as if I were to say: ‘you surely know what ‘It is 5 o’clock here’ means; so you also know what ‘it’s 5 o’clock on the

⁵ Malcolm, Norman, “Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigation” in *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds*, (Ed.) by Harold, Morick, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1967, p. 60.

⁶Ibid, p. 60.

⁷ PI, Sec.246.

⁸PI.Sec-302.

sun' means. It means simply that it is just the same time there as it is here when it is 5 o'clock'- the explanation by means of identity doesn't work here. For I know well enough that one can tell 5 o'clock here and 5 o'clock there is 'the same time,' but what I don't know is in what cases one is to speak of its being the same time here and there." So, the idea of sameness of pain can't be brought into the purview in knowing the pain of others.

And again,

"In the same way it is no explanation to say: the supposition that he has a pain is simply the supposition that he has the same as I, for that part of the grammar is quite clear to me: that is, that one will say that the stove has the same experience as I, if one says: it is in pain and I am in pain."⁹

When we discuss the above passages, we find that the sameness aspect applying in both cases does not seem to help in any way. For, we are not able to decide whether both the cases are same. I can't say that I have the same pain as a dog or a cat would have or another human being would have. There is always a difference in the manner I feel pain, and the manner other animals or things or in that case other human beings feel pain. My feeling of pain, therefore, can't be similar to others feeling of pain. Hence, inferring the pain of others based on my pain and saying that they too must be undergoing similar pain would not work in case of Wittgenstein. That is to say that from the inferential argument perspective Wittgenstein doesn't solve the problem of other minds.

There is another aphorism of Wittgenstein where he says; "My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul."¹⁰ What he means is very much obvious. For whenever we see an individual writhing in pain, we rush towards him to help him, care him, if necessary do first aid medications or else try to take him to a nearby hospital and so on. At that moment, we don't develop a kind of attitude that we would have towards a mechanism even if it is very much valuable to us. What we do is, we would only try to find out its malfunction and try to repair it if necessary and would not express our sympathy towards it as we would do towards a pet or a suffering man. We, however, don't express any sorrow towards a mechanism.

Wittgenstein offers various remarks as to how we express our attitude towards a suffering man. But we don't develop a belief in this regard rather it is something else, for example, Kripke says: "Wittgenstein would reject any attempt to 'explain' my attitude and behaviour toward a sufferer by 'belief' about his 'inner state.' Rather, once again the order is to be inverted; I can be said to think of

⁹Ibid, Sec-350.

¹⁰PI, Part, II, p, 178.

him as having a mind; and in particular as suffering from pain, in virtue of my attitude and behavior toward him, not the reverse.”¹¹

All these passages give the idea that we don't give justification of our behaviour by appealing to the belief in the inner states of others even if they seem to be so. For this would again bring us back to our original problem of other minds. In such circumstance, we shouldn't think about truth conditions as in logic rather we should look into the circumstance where such sensations have been attributed to others as well to us. But if we do this then how will we understand pain in our language game? It might be that because of my experience of pain, I can imagine the pain of a sufferer and it wouldn't be possible if I were to learn words or rules of a language simply.

According to Kripke; “What plays the appropriate role in the formation of my attitude is not a ‘belief’ that he ‘feels the same as I,’ but an imaginative ability to ‘put myself in his situation.’”¹² And Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Remark* §65 says; “When I am sorry for someone else because he is in pain, I do of course imagine the pain, but I imagine that I have it.”¹³ Kripke thus says that: “When I am sorry for him, I ‘put myself in his place,’ I imagine myself as in pain and expressing the pain.”¹⁴ So, even if we think that some kind of inference is involved in this and yet it can't simply be given over emphasis.

Wittgenstein reduces the question ‘how are we to know the minds of others?’ to ‘how do you know that others have pain?’ and on this topic, we had a great deal of discussion. Expression of pain is constitutive of our behaviour which is the essence of our form of life. Thus, we don't attribute sensations or pains either to stone or tables or chairs but to beings who have human bodies and shapes. Here, we can again reiterate Wittgenstein's statement; ‘my attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul.’ And human bodies are considered as the best representation of our soul. Thus, we come to know that others are in pain from their expression of pain and also from their genuine utterances. Thus, behavioral manifestation or expression is one of the most important aspects of knowing others.

According to Wittgenstein, let us imagine there is a particular tribe of people where their masters would think that their slaves have no feelings and sensations, and so have no souls and so they are just like automatons, in spite of knowing the fact that these slaves have physical human bodies. They would also behave just like their masters; speak the language as their masters speak or as it is spoken in their tribe or community. And again whenever a slave feels sick gets injured or any other type of pain these

¹¹Kripke, Saul, A, *Wittgenstein on Rules & Private Language*, Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 138.

¹²ibid. p. 140.

¹³ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Remarks*, (Ed) by Rush Rhees, & (Trans) by Raymond Hargreaves & Roger White, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1975, Sec-65.

¹⁴Kripke, Saul, A, *Wittgenstein on Rules & Private Language*, Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 140.

masters being fully aware of what is genuine and what is not, they would come forward all the way and help these slaves in all possible ways. The masters would take pleasure in making use of these slaves in any manner they would like. They would observe their behaviour; complain about their unsatisfied work, their carelessness and so on. They would even reject any slave who is not capable of work, but they wouldn't remain silent if a slave were to be seriously injured.

Now, the question is; were the masters thinking of their slaves as human beings just like them or as automatons availing themselves for any purpose for them to meet? We cannot believe that they are automata as they have bodies, and express their emotions just as we would do in the similar circumstance, speak the same language and so on, and hence the master would never think their slaves as automata. That is where we explained Wittgenstein's statement about one's attitude to another having a soul. As well as "his attitude is proof of his attitude."¹⁵ That means, it is the attitude of the master that is expressed in his behaviour, in his communication and it is using behaviour that we can know that others have minds.

The important thing that concerns here is whenever I find a being with the same physical type and expressing a pain behaviour, I don't think that he is an automaton. In Kripke's words, 'develop a belief that someone is suffering rather it is a matter of placing oneself in the place of the suffering man and feel the pain.' (We saw above) It is only then one can say that 'my attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul' and rush towards him and comfort him. Thus, when we see pain behavior of someone we see the pain in him, and we show our sympathy towards him. The fact that we show such gestures itself proves that we go beyond ourselves than mere saying 'he is in pain' even though he is in such circumstance.

Thus, whenever an individual is suffering from acute pain, then I don't have a different attitude towards him. I don't doubt or presuppose which is contrary to what I see. Thus, when I try to comfort him, it doesn't presuppose anything. Because my presupposition will lead me to doubt, but in such circumstances, my doubt must be brought to an end. Hence, the criterion for someone being in pain would be first of all, it is the individual's pain that is important. Secondly, his pain is expressed through his behavior or by uttering words in his language. And both take place in a circumstance in which the individual is situated. But that does not mean that whenever an individual is in pain means we refer to his pain behavior. Pain behavior itself, therefore, is pain. And so it is the behavioral expression and genuine utterance that are important in knowing the other is in pain.

¹⁵PI, Sec- 310.

Many philosophers think that if we take analogy as a solution to our psychological states, then Wittgenstein's solution may fall in line with logical behaviorism. But for Wittgenstein what is most important is, it is a pain and not the behavior. But later he considers the behavior and not what goes into the mind of an individual (pain). Thus, if we think that it is not the pain that is important in the case of a suffering man rather his behavior that matters to us much, then can we just forget the pain or ignore it and adhere to pain behavior. We however can't detach pain from pain behavior, and therefore, pain and pain behavior becomes same for a suffering man. His cry which is the manifestation of his behavior and his utterances of words both are the expression of pain itself. Hence, if we think sensations and feelings are inner and belong to the particular individual and therefore, they don't belong to the public language, then does it mean that only those language that is public will be meaningful in public?

Many philosophers think Wittgenstein to have stated in this manner, but many too have gone against this view. So, what has been said above and what must be adhered here is that it is not whatever goes on in the mental states of others that are important but leaving aside this, it is the behavioral expression of pain that is very much important, and it is this which represents pain itself. Pain behavior, therefore, is nothing other than pain itself.

Let us assume that someone is suffering from a headache, she ties a towel on her head, applies balm and so on. Now, from Wittgenstein's perspective, it is the natural expression that he gives importance. But can we take into consideration of her feeling of headache independently of her behaviour? In Overgaard's word: "Because pain denotes a type of sensation rather than a type of bodily movement, that it denotes such a sensation as considered completely independently of all behaviour, bodily expression, etc. This simply doesn't follow."¹⁶ And again; "Pain is a phenomenon that stretches its arms out in many directions. Pain, considered just as a type of unpleasant sensation, plays many roles in publicly observable reality."¹⁷ Wittgenstein thus defines pain as a "pattern in the weave of our lives".¹⁸ So, when we think of someone suffering from 'a headache' it's been expressed through her behaviour of catching her head, applying balm and so on we don't make a distinction between pain and pain behaviour; these are the same thing.

Suppose we separate pain from pain behavior then it will be difficult for us to understand the concept pain and many philosophical problems that may be raised. And the application of pain in cases where we are supposed to apply or not apply wouldn't be known. But how can we positively work it out for a solution? It may be possible through the concept 'expression' which would not make a distinction

¹⁶ Overgaard, Soren, "Rethinking Other Minds: Wittgenstein and Levinas on Expression," *Inquiry*, Vol-48, No-3, 2005, p. 254.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 256.

¹⁸ Wittgenstein, L, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol-II, (Eds.) G. H. Von Wright & H. Nyman, (Trans) C. G. Luckhardt, & M.A. E. Aue, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, p. 42.

between pain and pain behaviour and bring them closer to one another. We then have to consider that it is the living human body which is the locus of both pain and pain behavior and expression would be the new term we would make use of it. Let us take a few of Wittgenstein's examples.

"We see emotions- as opposed to what? We don't see facial contortions and make the inference that he is feeling, joy, grief, boredom. We describe a face immediately as sad, radiant, bored, even when we are unable to give any other description of the features. Grief, one would like to say, is personified in the face."¹⁹

Again he says: "Look into someone else's face, and see the consciousness in it, and a particular shade of consciousness. You see on it, in it, joy, indifference, interest, excitement, torpor, and so on. The light in other people's faces. Do you look into yourself in order to recognize the fury in his face? It is there as clearly as in your own breasts."²⁰

Wittgenstein, first of all, rejected the idea of inference in knowing the feelings of others. He rather pointed out that we can see happiness or joy in other's faces immediately. It becomes very much obvious in our facial expression. Even if it is difficult for us to find out what is happening behind someone's face yet, it would certainly be known or personified in the faces. Thus, it is in the body where I see or find the sensations and feelings.

But how about pretension? Pretension is a kind of simulated expression as against genuine expression. Genuine expressions are that which is completely transparent where one can't find any place for insincerity. The genuine facial expressions are not to be taken as a combination of something that is partly inner and partly outer, something genuine and something pretending. They are rather like "the body pulling out of itself closer to mind and mind dragging out of itself and both getting closer to one another."²¹ Genuine expression, therefore, would be a genuine expression of the totality of body and genuine expression of the totality of mind, something that is transparent to both. That is, where we may find Wittgenstein as closer when he says 'one sees his soul' which would mean both body and soul expresses the same thing. So, we can't imagine pretension here, or the question of pretension doesn't arise here. Wittgenstein, therefore, is trying to highlight the expression aspect of our behavior in understanding others.

But how would we understand the concept of knowing, thinking or the feeling of nostalgia? How would someone know that I am thinking about my exam and know that I am not going to fare well?

¹⁹ Wittgenstein, L, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol-II, (Eds.) G. H. Von Wright & H. Nyman, (Trans) C. G. Luckhardt, & M.A. E. Aue, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, Sec-570.

²⁰ Ibid, Sec-927.

²¹ Overgaard, Soren, "Rethinking Other Minds: Wittgenstein and Levinas on Expression," *Inquiry*, Vol-48, No-3, 2005, p. 257.

How would someone know that I am thinking about my mother and yet becoming helpless of not being able to reach out to her in her serious illness? And we may add innumerable other things. Once again, how do you explain about my present sensations, like perceptions, beliefs and understandings and so on? This is where we can also ask for the first person present psychological statements. In this regard Wittgenstein says; “we should not lump all ‘mental’ phenomena together and think that they are alike in all important respects. Our mental concepts are ‘widely branched,’ and the phenomena are widely dispersed.”²² Thus Overgaard in this regard says that; “what should be gained from all this, according to Wittgenstein, is the insight that the mental life of another is something that we can have cognitive access to; something that, under suitable circumstances, in various ways and with varying degrees of certainty, can be directly seen in the facial and behavioral expressions of the other person.”²³ Thus, Wittgenstein is projecting the importance of behavioral expression as a manifestation of the inner mental state of others.

But this seems to be going in line with behaviorism, for pain is one thing and expressing through behaviour is another. Having toothache and expressing is one thing while seeing my toothache without seeing my behavioral expression by others is different. Of course, there is the possibility of seeing this, yet it is also possible that we may not be able to see the pain of others. But think about the reverse of the argument. Do I see my toothache? How would Wittgenstein react about this? According to him: “It can’t be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I know I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean except perhaps that I am in pain?”²⁴ If I say that I see my toothache, then it would seem that I distance myself from my pain, start observing it and so on. But that I can’t apply to others, for I will be able to see their behavior and know their expressions.

Thus, when we try to understand the problem regarding the dichotomy between the expression of pain and pain in one’s case and trying to know the expression of pain in others as different, then the problem would always remain insolvable. In my case, there can’t be any distinction between my pain and the expression of pain, but in the case of others, it is. And we thus come to the conclusion that it is the expression be it facial or behavioral in others that give us knowledge of the existence of other minds

iii. The Form of life:

In Wittgenstein’s writings form of life is very much related to his notion of ‘language game.’ Language is a medium through which human beings communicate; it is a kind of linguistic activity. Because of the complexity involved in our language, simultaneously there is also change in our linguistic activity.

²² Wittgenstein; Ludwig, *Zettle*, (Ed) By G. E. M. Anscombe & G. H. Von Wright, (Trans) By G. E. M. Anscombe, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967, Part-110.

²³ Overgaard, Soren, “Rethinking Other Minds: Wittgenstein and Levinas on Expression,” *Inquiry*, Vol-48, No-3, 2005, p. 258.

²⁴ Wittgenstein, L, *The Blue and Brown Books*, (Ed) R. Rhees, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1958, p. 55.

Wittgenstein, for example, writes: “Giving orders and obeying them...guessing riddles, making a joke and telling it, solving a problem in practical arithmetic. Translating from one language to another, asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying.”²⁵ According to Wittgenstein, the important aspect of language game is the representation of activity or the so-called form of life. He says: “I shall call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the language game.”²⁶ Language is indissolubly related to our daily activities. A form of life, therefore, is a form of activity. Language has a total involvement in our daily activities.

Wittgenstein terms ‘language game’ because language is very much essential for human beings. It is through the expression of language we can understand one another. Language guides our activities and maintains human relation. Language, therefore, is a form of life. All the aspects of our lives are related to our using language. Everything that we do, say or act has an involvement of language. A language may have only commands or orders and reports, but ultimately they are expressed in the performance of activities or through behaviour. Thus, Wittgenstein said: “To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.”²⁷ And it is because of the use of language we can understand others and others are also able to understand us. Thus, the communication of language is a medium to exchange our ideas, views and so on. In this regard McGinn says that: “The fact of the existence of other is something that is woven into my habitual ways of acting and responding to the world, in a way that makes it part of the structure of my form of life, the fact that I am one among others doesn’t enter my life as a discovery or as an item of knowledge (i.e. as something judged), but constitutes the form of the world I inhabit.”²⁸ The existence of others, therefore, is as much important to me as it is to them. Hence, their interaction, their way of dealing with myself and the world give meaning to my existence in the world. We, therefore, constitute a form of life because of our shared world where we exchange our ideas, feelings, and so on.

Language is fundamental to the very life and existence of people. It is a social phenomenon which makes our existence possible. As there is a continuous evolution of language so also new language game come into the picture, a new form of life adapted. Hence, what is most important is that we should not justify our forms of life. Our justification should rather be incorporated into our language game. They are to be embodied to our language games which form a part of our lives. Malcolm thus says that: “As philosophers, we must not attempt to justify the form of life, to give reasons for them to argue, for example, that we pity the injured man because we believe, assume, presuppose, or know that in addition

²⁵PI, Sec-23.

²⁶Ibid, Sec-7.

²⁷Ibid, Sec-19.

²⁸McGinn, Marie, “The Real Problem of Others: Cavell, Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein on Scepticism about Other Minds,” *European journal of Philosophy*, Vol.6, No-1, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1898, p. 54.

to the groans and writhing, there is a pain. The fact is we pity him!”²⁹ Both Malcolm and Wittgenstein thus simply reject the inferential argument in knowing others and instead of solving the problem Wittgenstein rather dissolves the problem. This Wittgenstein considers as a form of life, and Malcolm again would say from such important thought we get into another important insight of Wittgenstein which states: “That Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.”³⁰ “It leaves everything as it is.”³¹ Hence, knowing others doesn’t require a kind of inference nor analogy, it is something that is part and parcel of our human existence. For, understanding of other minds is possible because we understand others through language. And we share a common form of life, in the sense; we share our world and all that is available in it. In every activity of ours, others become a part, and they add something to the meaningfulness of our lives, and in turn, we add something to their lives. We thus share a common form of life where the question of other minds has no place. The other human beings are thus already a fact of my form of life.

Conclusion:

In our discussion on the problem of other minds of Wittgenstein, we found that he has in many ways tried to discuss the issue. The concept of pain is an important aspect to understand the problem of other minds and hence through the discussion of the sensation of pain we found that pain is not merely to be understood as something that is confined to oneself rather it is very much involved in our behavioral expressions. They are the manifestation of what is internal to us. Hence I am not to suppose that whenever I see someone else writhing in pain, I shouldn't develop a belief rather I should place myself in his place and feel the kind of pain that he would feel. It is thus, becoming one with the other. It is a kind of attitude that needs to be developed by everyone. We are communicative beings living with others. On account of our communication, others become a part as much as we become a part of their life. Language is fundamental to the very form of life and existence of people; it is a kind of social phenomenon. We are thus not to give justification rather accept others as they are, as we accept ourselves. It is here that the gap between self and the other comes to an end. Wittgenstein thus neither develops analogical nor any other inferential argument regarding other minds, and instead of solving the problem he rather dissolves the problem.

²⁹Malcolm, Norman, “Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigation” (In) *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds*, (Ed) Harold, Morick, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1967, p. 71.

³⁰PI, Sec-126.

³¹Ibid, Sec-124.

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