SELF-KNOWLEDGE, FIRST-PERSON AUTHORITY AND AN EXTERNALIST ACCOUNT OF THE MIND

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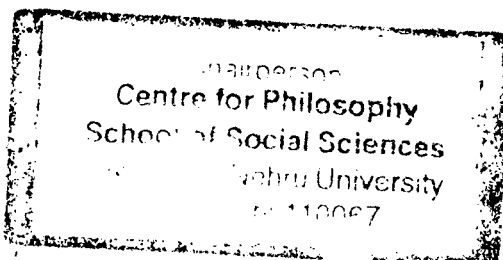
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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, "SELF-KNOWLEDGE, FIRST-PERSON AUTHORITY AND AN EXTERNALIST ACCOUNT OF THE MIND", submitted by Kishor Dere, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University, is to the best of our knowledge, is his own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree in this or any other university.

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DECLARATION

I, Kishor Dere, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled, "SELF-KNOWLEDGE, FIRST-PERSON AUTHORITY AND AN EXTERNALIST ACCOUNT OF THE MIND", submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my original work and has not been submitted by me or anyone else for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university.

Kishor Dere

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

0.1 Introducing the Problem

This M. Phil. Dissertation seeks to study recent externalist philosophical debates on the theme of compatibility and/or incompatibility between knowledge of contents of one's own mental states and first-person authority.

The term 'self-knowledge' refers to knowledge of contents of one's particular mental states, including one's particular beliefs, hopes, desires and sensations. First person- authority stands for the presumption that when the speaker claims that he has a belief, hope, desire or intention, etc. he is not wrong, is not mistaken, in attaching these mental states to himself.

The traditional philosophical view on self-knowledge is that it is purely internal, private, secret matter accessible to the subject exclusively through some form of privileged access to happenings in his mind. Externalism, on the other hand, argues that knowledge of contents of one's mental states and processes is, at least, partially determined by factors outside the mind, such as social and physical environment, linguistic and cultural practices, contexts and history of which the subject may not be even aware of. This, according to most of the externalist philosophers. undermines the notion of first-person authority

and privileged access. Thus, several of them do not subscribe to the thesis of compatibility between self-knowledge and first-person authority.

The theme of self-knowledge has always evoked keen interest among philosophers across all ages and traditions. Right since Socrates, and through Descartes to the present day, problem of self-knowledge has been central to philosophy. Usually, philosophers use the term 'self-knowledge' to refer to knowledge of one's particular mental states, including one's particular beliefs, desires and sensations. However, self-knowledge, at times, also means knowledge about a persisting self - its ontological nature, identity conditions or characteristics.

The temple of Delphic oracle used to carry the world famous precept, 'know thyself'. It seems that even today the dictum has its relevance. In today's era of information technology revolution, when information, perhaps, is being mistaken for knowledge, question of knowing one's own mind in relation to others and the external environment becomes even more important and meaningful.

The experience of people all over the world, however, shows reluctance in following this advice of the Delphic oracle. Everybody seems to be interested more and more, in knowing about others and the world around oneself. Perhaps. one of the reasons behind this could be that knowing oneself is much more difficult than knowing others. Had our powers of self-knowledge been so ordinary, nothing would have been

easier than knowing oneself. Furthermore, knowing oneself, and knowing others may be so integrally related that one cannot be had without the other. Hence, the puzzle surrounding self-knowledge still remains philosophically significant.

Crispin Wright in Wright, Smith and Macdonald ed. (1998, p. 12) says,

> "It is only in recent philosophy that psychological self-knowledge has come to be seen as problematical; once upon a time, the hardest philosophical difficulties all seemed to attend our knowledge of others. But as philosophers have canvassed various models of the mental that would make knowledge of other minds less intractable, so it has become unobvious how to accommodate what once seemed evident and straightforward-the wide and seemingly immediate cognitive dominion of minds over themselves".

However, before one goes through arguments on compatibility and/or incompatibility between self-knowledge and first-person authority, it is necessary to have a brief look at the internalist - externalist debate. This may help better understand the arguments centering around self-knowledge, first-person authority and privileged access.

0.2 The Internalist-Externalist debate in different branches of Philosophy

The two terms. 'internalism' and 'externalism', are used in many different branches of philosophy, including epistemology, ethics and philosophy of

mind. In epistemology, internalism and externalism are employed to signify the most basic distinction between views on epistemic justification of belief and knowledge. In both these cases, internalism means the irreducible normativeness of justification of knowledge, and justification of knowledge depend upon the subject's belief system. The most common understanding in the domain of justification is provided by what is known as access internalism – the view that only what is cognitively accessible to the subject, in some strong fashion, can have bearing on justification. So, in this case, one can define externalism as the denial of this restriction.

The subject of ethics is dominated by questions about the possibility and nature of moral motivation. However, philosophers have disagreed about the role that motivational investigations should play within the larger subject of ethical theory. These disagreements relate to dispute about whether moral thought is necessarily motivating. While internalists affirm that it is, externalists deny this. Externalism is a thesis that ethics is primarily about the truth of theories, construed as sets of propositions. Internalism states that morality is a set of principles that guides the practical deliberations of individual agents.

0.3 The Internalist-Externalist debate in the Philosophy of Mind

When it comes to philosophy of mind. the internalist-externalist debate assumes a different form. The central problem in philosophy of mind is

to explain how mental states can represent states of affairs in the world. For instance, say one wants water and thinks there is some in the tap, which makes one to turn on the tap. Though contents of these mental states pertain to things in the world (water and tap), it would seem that their causal efficacy depends only on their internal characteristics of the mind, not on their external relations. In other words, one could be in just those states and those states could play just the same psychological roles, even if there were no water or tap for them to refer to.

But other arguments, based on imaginative thought experiments, have made many philosophers think that thought contents do depend on external factors, physical as well as social. The supporters of externalist view have classified contents as wide and narrow. Wide content consists of the referential relations that mental states bear to things and their properties. Narrow content, on the other hand, comprises determinants of psychological role. There has been a debate among philosophers over viability of both these notions of content and their relationship.

In recent times, philosophy of mind has witnessed heated exchanges among philosophers over the question whether mental states are 'in the head', a phrase coined by Hilary Putnam (1975) in an article, "The Meaning of Meaning". in *Philosophical Papers 2: Mind, Language and Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 215-271). In fact, it

was mainly this paper by Putnam that had sparked off this debate in 1975.[1]

Internalism states that mental states are located in the head of the subject while externalism suggests otherwise. The central disagreement between internalism and externalism lies in their differing notions of the relation between the mind and the world. Internalism takes the contents of mind to be essentially independent of the surrounding world while externalism supposes there to be a close linkage between states of mind and conditions in the non-mental world.

0.4 Cartesian Dualism and Privileged Access

In modern times, it was Descartes who pioneered the study of mind and body by claiming that the two are distinct entities. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), he argued that while mind is thinking and unextended, body is unthinking but extended in space. As a part of his mind-body dualism, Descartes also propounded the theory of Privileged Access according to which the subject has an exclusive way of knowing the contents of his or her mind. Cartesianism wholeheartedly supports the thesis of First- Person Authority in self-knowledge. So, self-knowledge is all about the mental states which are there inside the mind solely accessible to the person whose mental states they are and nobody

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[1] Tyler. Burge (1979). *Midwest Studies in Philosophy.* 4: 73-122.

else. As a result, the concerned self is the final authority on his or her mental contents.

The three features that characterise self-knowledge are: immediacy, authoritativeness and salience. By immediacy, one means there is no need to rely on any independently articulatable grounds while referring to one's self-knowledge. Authoritativeness of self-knowledge suggests that the very fact that a concerned person states something about his or her sensations, emotions and intentional states is enough to accept it as true about that person. Salience of self-knowledge shows some mental state being typical to a particular person. All these features together, in turn, show that we have privileged access to our own minds and that is what constitutes first- person authority.

The problem with this way of understanding self-knowledge is that of reconciling the first-person authority of self-knowledge with externalism as a thesis about the content of mental states. There exists a great deal of genuine tension between the thesis of content externalism and the prime issue of first-person authority in self-knowledge. This point becomes very acute when first-person privilege is explained by a special access to inner facts. Some of externalist philosophers of self-knowledge claim that this tension is superficial, and hence are not willing to abandon the first-person authority. However, there are important philosophers who hold the view that first-person authority is

incompatible with an externalist account of the mental. As content externalism debates go on, it becomes necessary to look into various aspects of the controversy, and if possible, try to settle the issue.

This dissertation seeks to articulate the ongoing externalism-internalism debate in the philosophy of mind and to show how externalism may be reconciled with first-person authority. In doing that, a close study of both the externalist position in Philosophy of Mind, and the theory of self-knowledge would be re-evaluated.

Externalism seems to contradict the view of privileged access and first-person authority. How to match the two is really a challenging task before every philosopher of mind.

0.5 Self-Knowledge and Externalism

As per the debate among philosophers of self-knowledge, an externalist like Donald Davidson (1987), in his very important paper, "Knowing One's Own Mind," believes the two are compatible with one anther. But he fears that the version of externalism supported by Tyler Burge (1988), in his paper, "Individualism and Self-knowledge" and Hilary Putnam in his "The meaning of 'meaning'" [1975] has the potential to undermine first-person authority of self- knowledge. The position that shall be set forth and argued for will be Davidsonian in spirit, i.e. externalism can go along with first- person authority.

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As we know, Gilbert Ryle (1949) in *The Concept of Mind*, repudiates the prevailing Cartesian doctrine of mind-body dualism and the theory of privileged access. He argues that our method of acquiring self-knowledge is the same as that of acquiring other-knowledge, and that one can go wrong in both cases.

Donald Davidson (1987), however, differs from Ryle. He points out that in order to know what someone else believes, one needs to rely on observation and evidence, but it hardly ever happens that one needs to depend on observation and evidence in finding out what one believes oneself. He also says that there is first-person authority when it comes to propositional attitudes. He concedes that at times, claims about one's own beliefs can be mistaken, but most of the times one knows what he or she believes. According to Davidson, the very fact that one has a thought is enough to justify that belief.

Davidson [1987] disagrees with Tyler Burge and Hilary Putnam as well. He says that those externalists who hold that contents of our thoughts and meanings of our words are often fixed by factors of which we are ignorant of have not been much concerned with consequences of their views. He points out that even such externalists have conceded that they are not absolutely right. However, it seems that they have not done enough to resolve the seeming conflict between their views and the strong intuition that the first-person authority exists.

According to Davidson's proposal of resolving this impasse, above-mentioned situation may not arise if we: (1) change our views regarding the way in which external factors help in identifying mental content, and (2) free ourselves from the assumption that thoughts must have mysterious objects as their content. These help us see how the fact that mental states as commonly conceived are identified in part by their natural history not only fails to touch the internal character of such states or to challenge first-person authority, but it also explains the first person authority.

The explanation comes with the realisation that what somebody's words mean depends usually on the types of objects and events that have caused the person to hold the words to be applicable. Similarly, it is the case with what his or her thoughts are to be. Davidson observes that an interpreter of another's words and thoughts ought to rely on information from various sources, training and upbringing and also imaginative ways of understanding the other person. But the speaker himself cannot but be generally sure whether words used by him refer to appropriate objects and events because whatever he usually applies them to gives his words the meaning they have and his thoughts the contents they have.

Davidson concedes that in any particular case the speaker may be wrong in what he believes about the world, but it is not at all possible that he would be wrong every time. So, Davidson firmly states that first-

person authority, the social character of the language, and the external determinants of thought and meaning go hand-in-hand if one abandons the "myth of the subjective the idea that thoughts require mental objects," (Davidson, 2001, pp.37-38). So, Davidson redefines external environment and subjective domain to prove that self-knowledge and first-person authority are not mutually exclusively but rather they are complementary to one another.

Ludwig Wittgenstein was yet another externalist philosopher of self-knowledge. In his book, *Philosophical Investigations* (1978), he questions incorrigibility of claims about one's own sensations. He argues that no knowledge or self-knowledge is possible without doubts and errors. For Wittgenstein, mental states are expressible. He claims any mental state or thought can be articulated through language. So, it is possible to have self-knowledge by understanding the language of the person. Wittgensteinian notion of self-knowledge equates self-knowledge with the expressivism. We can interpret Wittgenstein's expressivist enterprise really as an externalist enterprise. There are various hints in Wittgenstein, which indicate towards an externalist account of the mental. So, a study of these different positions is worth taking up in order to find an alternative solution to the problem of reconciling first-person authority with externalism.

0.6 General Introduction to the Chapters

The dissertation is divided into five parts, three chapters, preceded by an Introduction and followed by Conclusion.

Chapter one problematises the relationship between Self-Knowledge and Privileged Access. This chapter mainly deals with the Cartesian dichotomy and Ryle's reaction to that. Ryle refutes Cartesian mind-body dualism and discards the notion of first-person authority or privileged access to mental contents. He vehemently argues that there is difference of degree, not of kind, between self-knowledge and other-knowledge. His view is that the mistakes one commits while knowing others can be committed in case of self-knowledge as well. Besides, at times one can know others in a better way than knowing oneself and vice-versa.

Chapter two seeks to understand the relationship between Self-Knowledge and Externalism. This chapter deals with the tension between external notion of self-knowledge and privileged access. Externalism states that contents of mind, apparently internal, are at least partially determined by outside factors, such as, one's physical environment, linguistic community and historical context, which the subject may not be always aware of.

Though there is an apparent tension in the philosophical positions of externalists like Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge over the issue of externalism and first person authority, Davidson resolves the problem.

His position is that of taking a middle path. He agrees with Putnam, Burge and others who say that ordinary mental states, at least the propositional attitudes, are partly identified by relations to society and the rest of the environment, relations which may not be fully known to the person in those states. He also supports their subsequent argument that the concepts of "folk psychology" cannot be incorporated into a 'coherent and comprehensive system of laws of the kind for which physics strives. The point, however, on which Davidson differs, is that of we not knowing what we think, at least in the way we think we do. He calls it a puzzling discovery. Hence the main aim of this chapter is to articulate the debate between Davidson, on the one hand, and Putnam and Burge on the other.

Chapter three is Externalist Account of Self-Knowledge and Its Relation to Expressivism in the philosophy of mind. Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*, (Blackwell, 1953), puts forward a view of the mind which is termed 'expressivism'. He cautions not to construe 'understanding', 'hoping', 'fearing', 'intending', so on and so forth as mental states having propositional content which can be regarded true or false. This distinction becomes clearer when Wittgenstein in his *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (Blackwell, 1980) uses the terminology of dispositions versus states of consciousness. Wittgenstein's expressivism proceeds by a critique of the private language argument. According to him, the private linguist cannot distinguish between what seems to be

right to him and what is really right. Furthermore he argues that language used in articulating mental states and processes cannot be regarded as either true or false, but are really expressions of those mental states and processes.

After having looked at the various theories of self-knowledge the dissertation concludes by considering Donald Davidson's suggestion that we must change our picture of the mind as a theater in which the conscious self watches the show. According to him, first-person authority, the social character of language, and the external determinants of thought and meaning can, and do, go hand in hand if we bid farewell to the myth of the subjective, that is, the idea that thoughts require mental objects. He believes that when one abandons the assumption that thoughts must have mysterious objects, one can open the way to an explanation of first- person authority. The explanation comes with the realisation that what a person's words mean depends on the kinds of objects and events that have caused the person to hold the words to be applicable and what the person's thoughts are about. What we require is to abandon 'the myth of the subjective' that has dominated philosophy from its very inception.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NOTION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND PRIVILEGED ACCESS

1.1 Introduction

The problem of knowing our own mind in philosophy or rather philosophy of mind is as old as philosophy.

The problem, as mentioned in the introduction, concerns the place of mind, its contents, locating the contents of mind and how does one know what one knows about his minds. Quassim Cassam writes, in Introduction to his edited book *Self-Knowledge*, (OUP 1994), ideally a theory of self-knowledge should deal both with our knowledge of the kind of thing that we are, and the nature and extent of the knowledge of our particular thoughts, sensations, perceptual experiences, physical properties and actions. Cassam clarifies that our knowledge of our thoughts comprises not only knowledge that we think but also our knowledge of the contents of our thoughts. According to Cassam, these different levels of self-knowledge, such as our knowledge of what we are, and particular self-knowledge cannot be totally different. He illustrates this point by saying that when one talks about knowledge of one's specific physical characteristics, one acknowledges that one is the kind of thing which possesses such properties. And if one subscribes to an immaterialist view of the self, then one needs to reinterpret claims about one's own physical properties or rather claims about properties of the

physical thing to which one is very closely joined.[1] Descartes thought that he was propounding a view concerning what kind of an entity a self is. However, Gassandi. Descartes' contemporary critic, disagrees with the view of Descartes and argues that, merely knowing that one thinks, doubts, understands, and so on is not enough to know what one is. In his own words, "although you recognise that you are thinking, you do not know what kind of thing you who are thinking, are".[2]

As per David Hume, the "actions and sensations" of the mind are transparent and are known to us by consciousness. However, one must have recourse to the "most profound metaphysics" for deciding the nature of self.[3] Immanuel Kant argues that the nature of the self cannot be known, and the one only has knowledge of oneself as one appears to oneself.[4] So, Kant is suggesting that self-knowledge is not possible. Here both Hume and Kant adhere to what may be called the elusiveness thesis.

Taking introspection to be the source of self-knowledge, Hume had claimed that his introspection always led him to one or the other perception and never to the self, which remains unknown and

[1] Cottingham. Stothoff. and Murdoch (ed.). 1984. p. 57
[2] Fifth Set of Objections. Ibid. p. 234, cited in Cottingham. Stothoff, and Murdoch (ed.), 1984.

[3] Hume. David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 2nd edition. ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford. 1978). p.190. cited in Cottingham. Stothoff and Murdoch (ed.). 1984.
[4] Kant. Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. trans. N. Kemp Smith. (London. 1929) p. B 158. cited in Cottingham. Stothoff and Murdoch (ed.). 1984.

unknowable.[5] Kant went one step further and argued that no persisting, substantial self could be there in the flux of perceptions accessible to inner sense. He says. "Consciousness of self according to the determinations of our state in inner perception is merely empirical, and always changing. No fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances".[6] Yet another philosopher who supports the idea of inner sense, is D.M. Armstrong who thinks that inner sense only reveals the occurrence of individual happenings, and mind is a theoretical concept that links together all the individual happenings, which we become aware through introspection".[7]

1.2 Self-Knowledge and the Nature of Avowals

Though we may commit mistakes, misjudge the situation, over-/undervalue our capabilities in knowing ourselves, by and large we know ourselves much better than we know others and better than others know us. We observe ourselves round the clock. Nobody else is as much around us as we are. Therefore, selves have the most concrete and convincing evidence about themselves.

Wright points out that in the most typical cases of self-knowledge, we not only know ourselves best but also we know ourselves differently from the way in which we know others and they know us. This he calls an avowal

[5] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 1978. p. 252. cited in Cottingham. Stothoff and Murdoch (ed.), 1984

[6] Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. 1929. p. A 107. cited in Cottingham. Stothoff and Murdoch (ed.). 1984

[7] D.M. Armstrong in *Self-Knowledge*. by Cassam (ed.). 1994 p. 117.

having a stamp of three distinct features, namely, immediacy, authoritativeness and non-inferentiality. The main philosophical problem of self-knowledge, according to Wright, is to explain the phenomenon of avowal; i.e. to locate, characterise, and account for the advantage which selves seem to possess vis a vis avowals.[8] Avowals are present tense self-ascriptions. In this sense they are to be differentiate from self-ascriptions, which are about the past or the future.

Despite different types of avowals and their characteristics, there seems to exist general consensus among philosophers of self-knowledge that sincere avowals convey truth about the current mental state of the subject. They are present-tense self-ascriptions of occurrent metal states, different from ordinary empirical reports and other utterances having apparent grammatical similarities. The subjects are usually supposed to be in a better position to say what they are thinking at present than they are to assess the current mental states of others.

Crispin Wright classifies avowals into two broad groups, phenomenal avowals and content-bearing or attitudinal levels. Phenomenal avowals are groundless (do not require evidence or reason to be corroborated) authoritative (guarantee of truth in claims of a subject), and transparent (the subject's ignorance of truth or falsity of an avowal is not an option). He illustrates phenomenal avowals by citing cases of someone claiming to have a headache, sore feet, feeling tired elated, thinking that vision is blurred and ears ringing.

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[8] Wright (1998) in Wright. Smith and Macdonald (1998). p. 14.

Attitudinal avowals or content-bearing avowals on the others hand, are psychological characteristics, processes and states. They are partially individuated by the propositional content, or intentional direction that informs them. For example, 'I am frightened of snake', 'I am worried about examination' 'I think that rich people are happy', such claims can be made by people as part of a process of self-interpretation, especially when they say they have learnt about their attitudes by finding that certain events cause happiness, sadness or fear etc. Unlike phenomenal avowals, attitudinal avowals, at least in self-interpretative cases, lack groundlessness, strong authority and transparency.

But such self-interpretative cases, though common are, not the basic ones. It is so because the information or data on the basis of which self-interpretation may be done cannot be always recollected behaviour. Self-interpretation usually derives authority from non-inferential knowledge of a basic range of attitudes. Rather the basic attitudes and intentional responses refer to cases, which, for a specific subject in a specific content do not need any interpretation to become known. Such examples constitute attitudinal avowals.[9] In such cases content-bearing avowals also have groundlessness, transparency and weak authority.

Groundlessness means, if interpretational basis is removed a subject does not have anything to justify a self-ascription, transparency, except when interpretation is involved, means the subject must know what he desires or believes. and weak authority means that. unless there is

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[9] Ibid. pp. 15-16

external reason to doubt the subject's claims to knowledge of his own mental states, he is taken to be the best person to know what he thinks. No one can be chronically unreliable vis-à-vis the subject matter of his attitudinal avowals. Although a subject may make mistakes, one cannot always question what he hopes, believes, feats and intends. Unless it is a case of doubt about sincerity or understanding there cannot be a lock, stock and barrel suspicion of the subject's attitudinal avowals. Otherwise it goes against the very notion of treating the subject as an intentional subject, argues Wright.[10]

Crispin Wright, Barry Smith and Cynthia Macdonald further remind us that everybody happens to know a lot about his characteristics that fit into his rationality, sentience and affective susceptibilities such as beliefs, hopes, desires, fears, feelings of joy and sadness and likes and dislikes. For example, when I say 'I am very hungry', 'I dislike meat, pork, beef', 'I like vegetables fruits and milk', others cannot doubt, question, challenge or dismiss what I utter. It is because I know myself better, I am the only one experiencing and undergoing those feelings, and having those states of mind.[11]

1.3 The Cartesian View of the Mental

This internalist notion of self-knowledge can be traced in the works of the 17th century French philosopher Rene Descartes. Though Descartes was not the first ever philosopher to undertake the study of mind, its contents, its knowledge and possibility of self-knowledge, he provided a

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[10] Ibid. pp. 17-18
[11] Wright, Smith. and Macdonald. ed., (1998). pp.1-2

new direction to the study of these issues. The most important point made by Descartes was that mind is an immaterial substance which can be separated from all other material bodies, including the body it resides in.

Descartes' inquiries into the nature and structure of the material universe, his views on human freedom and the existence of God, and his account of the human condition and the relationship between mind and matter are important philosophical contributions. He was in search of an indubitable method of knowledge. His quest for truth began with his celebrated precept, "*Cogito ergo sum*" (I think, therefore I am).

At the age of 22, when Descartes began a journey of Europe, he had "resolved to seek no knowledge other than that which could be found dither in myself or in the great book of the world".[12] Desecrates claimed that he wanted to follow the self-evident "inner light of reason" which when it operates on its own is less liable to go wrong than when it anxiously strives to follow numerous different rules, the inventions of human ingenuity and idleness, which serve more to corrupt it than to render it more perfect".[13]

Descartes had urged philosophers to sweep all their existing prejudices and make a new beginning. He said, "once in a lifetime we must

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[12] Cottingham. J.G.. Stoothoff. R.. and Murdoch. D.(eds.) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes.* 2 Vols.. Cambridge University Press. 19985. Vol. 1 . p. 115.
[13] Ibid. p. 7.

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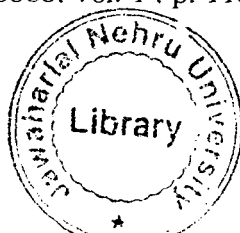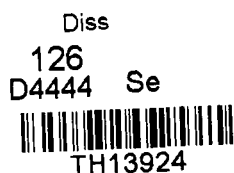
demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations".[14] Descartes, in his early age, was influenced by mathematics and particularly by the precision and certainty of mathematical knowledge. This helped him to search for a reliable and systematic knowledge based on indubitable first principles, like that of an axiom of mathematics.

The aforementioned quotations clearly suggest that Descartes had attached special importance to mind and treated it separately from the outside world, including the human body. One of Descartes lasting contributions to philosophy is his argument for mind-body dualism. He begins by contending that it is conceivable that mind exist without body. In his Second and Sixth Meditation, he argues that mind and body are really distinct. As a result of the sceptical arguments in the First Meditation, in the Second Meditation Descartes doubts that there are any bodies. However, he is certain that he thinks and therefore, exists. Thereafter, he uses these observations to argue that he has a clear and distinct perception of the mind as a thinking, unextended thing. In the Sixth Meditation, he makes use of this perception to prove that the mind is an incorporeal substance, really distinct from the body.

In the Sixth Mediation. Descartes writes,

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[14] Ibid. Vol. 2. p. 12.

"Since I know that anything that I clearly and distinctly understand can be brought about by God just as I understand it, it is sufficient that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing without another in order for me to be certain that one is different from the other, since they can be placed apart at least by God. And it does not matter by what power that happens, in order that I know that I exist, and that at the same time I notice nothing else at all to pertain to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I conclude correctly that my essence consists in this one thing, that I am a thinking thing. And although I have a body, which is very closely joined to me, nevertheless because I have on one hand a clear and distinct idea of myself, insofar as I am only a thinking, not an extended thing, and on the other hand a distinct idea of body insofar as it is only an extended thing, not thinking, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it".[15]*

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[15] Quoted in Rozemond. (1998). p. 3.

Following this real distinction argument, Descartes argues that sensation and imagination belong to his mind, and the properties of extension, location, shapes, belong to his body – a corporeal substance. Again in the Sixth Meditation, Descartes writes,

> "Moreover, I find in me faculties for certain special modes of thinking, namely the faculties of imaging and sensing. I can clearly and distinctly understand myself as a whole without them; but not vice-versa, them without me, that is, without an intelligent substance in which they inhere: for they include some intellection in their formal concept, and hence I perceive that they are distinguished from me as modes from a thing. I also recognise certain other faculties such as the capacity to change place, to have various shapes, and the like, which can no more be understood without some substance in which they inhere than the preceding ones, and which therefore can also not exist without it: but it is manifest that if these faculties exist, they must inhere in a corporeal or extended, not an intelligent substance, because their clear and distinct concept certainly contains some extension, but no intellection".[16]

As we know, Descartes begins his metaphysical writings by raising doubts so that preconceived opinions and invalid presuppositions unreliable sources could be cleared. The mediator questions the nature and existence of the world around him and even the most basic truths of mathematics. By the end of the first Mediation, Descartes imagines a

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[16] Ibid., p. 4.

malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning" who deceives him he writes, " I shall suppose that the sky, the earth, the air, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams devised (by God) to ensnare my judgment." [17]

But the process of endlessly doubting comes to an end by the beginning of the second Meditation. He realizes that he has an indubitable knowledge of his own existence as a thinking being. He says, " I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind."[18] Descartes' starting point in his quest for truth is his *cogito ergo sum* ("I am thinking therefore, I exist"), which has become the most celebrated philosophical precept on the basis of which Descartes sought to build a new reliable system of knowledge. He asserted that this proposition, 'I think, therefore I am', was so firm that "even the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were not able to shake it".[19]

According to Descartes, the key to knowledge was to be found not in the deliverances of the past but by turning inward to the resources of the human mind itself. He wrote, "I shall bring to light the true riches of our souls opening up to each of us the means whereby we can find, within ourselves without any help from anyone else, all the knowledge we may need for the conduct of life and the means of using it in order to acquire

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[17] Rene Descartes. *A Discourse On Method. Meditations On the First Philosophy* translated by John Veitch. London: Everyman. 1994. p. 78.
[18] Ibid. p. 82-83
[19] Ibid. p. 25-26

all the most abstruse items of human knowledge that human reason is capable of processing".[20]

While writing about *cogito*, Descartes claims that it is self-evident inner "light of reason" which when it "operates on its own, is less liable to go wrong than when it anxiously strives to follow numerous different rules, the inventions of human ingenuity and idleness, which serve more to corrupt it than to render it more perfect".[21] When he says, "I am thinking therefore, I exist," he means, I am thinking and whatever is thinking must exist and therefore, I exist.

Above-mentioned few references to Descartes' writings make it clear that mind has a career of its own and separate history.

Self has direct knowledge of the best possible kind of the happenings inside it. As a result, mental states and processes are also conscious states and processes. The consciousness which emits from them cannot create any illusions or give rise to doubts. The subject's present thinking, feelings, desires, perceptions, acts of remembering and imaginations are inherently clear. Their existence and nature is conveyed or made accessible to the self directly. So mental or inner life is a stream of consciousness to which the subject has an unmediated access.

Only a conscious and aware self of this kind has a privileged access to its contents. Others cannot know the true mental states of the self. From

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[20] Adam C. and Tannery. P. (eds.). *Works of Descartes* . Revised edition. 12 Vols.. 1964-76. Vol. X. p. 496.
[21] Cottingham, Stoothoff and Murdoch (eds.). 1985. Vol. II. p. 415.

26

Cartesian point of view, there is a special way of interpreting mental states. The verbs, nouns and adjectives, with which, in daily life, people describe characters, performances, and wits, need to be understood as signifying special events that occur. When somebody is described as believing, guessing, knowing, hoping, fearing, intending or avoiding something, these verbs are supposed to indicate happenings of particular changes in the subject's stream of consciousness. An authentic testimony to prove whether these mental-conduct verbs were indeed correctly applied or not, can come only from the self who enjoys privileged access to this stream of direct consciousness and introspection. The onlookers, bystanders, however physically, mentally or emotionally closer-they may be to the person cannot ever have access to true contents of mind of the subject.[22]

Though there have been critics of the Cartesian doctrine of mind, it still remains influential. Though his contemporaries criticised Descartes, there is an overwhelming support to his philosophy. In fact, one must realize that despite a lot of valid criticism, and his theories being rendered obsolete by new scientific and technological developments, it is difficult to understand modern philosophy without studying the structures of thought mainly determined by Cartesian ideas. After all, it is these ideas, which provided new models of knowledge, and understanding against which the 20th century philosophers were

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[22] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*. New York : Penguin. 1994, pp. 13-17.

reacting. Descartes views on knowledge and science subjectivity, and reality, matter and consciousness have profoundly influenced the philosophical discourse.

1.4 Ryle on the nature of the Mental

Gilbert Ryle, though a vehement critic of Descartes, takes into account the dominant although untenable, position of Cartesianism. He prefers to call in an "official doctrine" that enjoyed support of all but "idiots and infants in arms." He also refers to Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body as " the dogma of the Ghost in the machine".[23] Ryle argues that Cartesian view on self-knowledge and privileged access is wrong, not in detail but in principle. In Ryle's own words, Cartesian view on self-knowledge is not merely an "assemblage of mistakes but a big mistake" and mistake of a special type, what may be termed "a category mistake". Ryle's objection is that Descartes presents the facts of mental life as if they were of one logical category or a group of categories though they in reality belong to another. So, he comments that this dogma is Descartes' myth. By category mistake, he means the inability of a person to appropriately use words and concepts when it comes to abstract thinking. Improper allocation of concepts to logical types to which they do not belong results in category mistake.

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[23] Ibid.

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The intellectual origins of Cartesian category mistake, says Ryle, lie in the ambivalence of Descartes. Being a man of scientific temperament, he subscribed to Galileo's mechanical theory encompassing everything that is there in the space. And also being a religious and moral person, he refused to accept a rider to claims of mechanics that mental could not just be a variety of the mechanical. His "escape route" was that since mental conduct words are not to be understood as signifying occurrence of mechanical processes, they must be regarded as signifying the occurrence of non-mechanical processes. As mechanical laws tend to explain movements in space as the effects of other movements in space, other laws must explain some of the non-spatial workings of minds.

Ryle further points out that the differences between the physical and mental were shown as differences within the general framework of the categories of thing, 'stuff', 'attribute', 'state', 'process', 'change', 'cause' and 'effect'. Therefore, Cartesianism argues minds are things, but different sorts of things from bodies, mental processes are causes and effects but different kinds of causes and effects from bodily movements. So, while repudiating mechanism Descartes and his followers represented minds as extra centers of causal processes rather like machines but also very different from them. Their theory was "a para-machanical hypothesis" says Ryle.[26]

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[26] Ryle (1994). pp. 20-21

There are a number of theoretical difficulties, according to Ryles, in explaining how minds can influence and be influenced by bodies. How can a mental process, like willing, cause spatial movement of the tongue? How can a physical change in the optic nerve have among its effects as mind's perception of a flash of light? Ryle still appreciates Descartes for unwittingly adhering to the grammar of mechanics, and thereby averting the disaster. It is due to this practice that Descartes described minds in obverse vocabulary of mechanics.

For example, Descartes describes the working of minds in terms of mere negatives of the specific description given to bodies. He says minds are not in space, they are not motions they are not modifications of matter, they are not accessible to public observation. Yet another negative description of mind is minds are not bits of clockwork. Though the human body is an engine, it is not quite an ordinary engine because it is run by another engine inside it. This interior engine is of a special sort, which is invisible, inaudible and weightless, without any size.

Second major drawback of Cartesian dichotomy, according to Ryle, was moral issue. Since the official doctrine claimed that rigid mechanical laws govern body, other philosophers thought that mind is governed by rigid non-mechanical laws. The problem of free will according to Ryle was how to reconcile the hypothesis that minds are to be described in terms

of the categories of mechanics with knowing it well that higher-grade human behavior is not a part of or similar to the behavior of machines.[27] Ryle draws our attention to yet another flaw in the theory, which postulates that outsiders could never know or even guess whether their criteria of mental concepts would apply to others or not. So, Ryle says that it would be next to impossible for anybody to claim logical consistency or sanity even for himself-because one cannot compare one's performance with those of others.

According to Ryle, Descartes had mistaken the logic of his problem. Instead of asking what criteria could distinguish intelligent and non-intelligent behaviour, he asked if the principle of mechanical causation does not tell us the difference what other causal principle will tell it us? Descartes thought that just because mechanics could not answer the question, there could be some counterpart of mechanics to do the job.

Official doctrine's one more folly is that of not developing conjunctive propositions to accommodate two terms of the some category. It maintains that there exist both bodies and minds. There occur physical and mental processes; there are mechanical causes of bodily movements and psychological causes of bodily movements. Ryle calls these analogous conjunctions absurd. He does not deny that there occur mental processes. But he points out that it does not mean the same

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[27] Ibid. pp. 21-22

thing as saying that there occur physical processes, and therefore there is no point in either conjoining or disjoining the two.[28]

Only good thing about the Cartesian myth of body and mind, according to Ryle, was that its para-mechnical myth superseded the then prevalent para-political myth. Until the enunciation of Cartesian dichotomy, philosophers had been using analogies of political superiors and subordinates to describe mind and its faculties. The idioms of ruling, obeying collaborating and rebelling were replaced by the new myth of hidden operations, impulses and agencies. It was an advance over the old myth of dictations, deferences and disobediences.[29]

Ryle's point-by-point rebuttal of Cartesian mind-body dualism results in his rejection of the very possibility of existence of self-knowledge and privileged access. He says mind is not an organ, the way ears and eyes are. Mind, just indicates one's ability and proneness to do certain things and is not some piece of personal instrument without which one could or would not do something. According to Ryle, the questions; like, 'What knowledge can a person get of the workings of his mind?, and 'how does he get it?- suggest absurd answers. These questions imply that in order to know one's mental state, one must have peeped into a windowless chamber illuminated by a special light accessible to the person only. Similarly, the parallel questions- 'What knowledge can one get of the

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[28] Ibid. p. 23

[29] Ibid. pp. 24-25

workings of another mind?, and 'How does one get it? - rule out any answer. They suggest that one has peeped into another secret chamber, which is not at all possible in Cartesian theory. [30]

For Ryle, just as others can observe our behaviors and draw inferences about our states of mind, so can we. At times one may misjudge oneself, while other may assess our performance in a more correct and better way. Whatever mistakes one can commit while observing other, one can commit the same mistake while talking about one's own mental states. Self-Knowledge and other knowledge are not at all different as was claimed by Descartes. There is no scope for privileged access. Nothing is hidden or secret about self-knowledge, it is not at all a private, internal affair accessible to oneself only. Self-knowledge and other knowledge, not being different, they are public affairs. He also argues that self-knowledge is not attained by consciousness and introspection, which he terms as involving logical muddles. For Ryle, there is an approximate parity between the two, the difference between the two is a matter of degree, not of kind. The methods of finding them out are almost same. Minor differences do not make a case for self-knowledge. In some situations a person can find out what others know in a much easier way than what he himself knows.[31]

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[30] Ibid. pp. 19-20
[31] Ibid. pp. 148-149

33

Thus, Ryle goes to other extreme, discounts the very possibility of self-knowledge and discards the notion of privileged access or first- person authority.

However, Ryle's views have not gone unchallenged. Donald Davidson though in agreement with Ryle, starts his article, "Knowing One's Own Mind", (1998, p. 15), by criticizing Ryle as follows:

> "Ryle was with the poet and painter.. he stoutly maintained that we know our minds in exactly the same way we know the minds of others, by observing what we say, do and paint. Ryle was wrong. It is seldom the case that I need or appeal to evidence or observation in order to find out what I believe; normally I know what I think before I act or speak. Even when I have evidence, I seldom make use of it. I can be wrong about my own thoughts. and so the appeal to what can be publicly determined is not irrelevant. But the possibility that one may be mistaken about one's own thoughts cannot defeat the overriding presumption that a person knows what he or she believes; in general, the belief that one has a thought is enough to justify that belief".

Donald Davidson adopts the middle-path. He does not fully support an internalist and a dualist like Descartes, nor does he support Ryle who equates self-knowledge with other knowledge. Davison, however, is an externalist. In Davidson's opinion, there are both the possibilities, of self-knowledge with first-person authority as well as self-knowledge not being purely a private matter. In the next chapter, we take up Davidson's position as a counter-point to both Descartes and Ryle.

CHAPTER TWO

RECONCILING EXTERNALISM WITH FIRST-PERSON AUTHORITY

2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Introduction, this chapter seeks to reconcile the differences between the thesis of externalism and first-person authority. It is generally believed that if self-knowledge is authoritative and the subject has privileged access to it, then there cannot be an externalist account of the subject's first-person present tense mental states and processes. So, if one adheres to externalism in philosophy, one has to reject first-person authoritative access to one's own mental states. It is so because externalism postulates that self-knowledge or knowledge of contents about one's mental states and processes is at least partially determined by factors external to the mind, including social and physical environment, which the self may not be always aware of or have any control over them.

Externalism, however, is not a standard, homogenous monolithic, uni-layered philosophical doctrine. There are externalism and externalists of different shades, hues and colours. There is only a broad understanding among them that self-knowledge, as traditionally conceived by Descartes and his followers, is not totally and always internal and private matter providing scope for privileged access and first-person authority. While some externalist philosophers totally debunk the idea of first-person

authority, there are others who think that first-person authority, and externalist account of the mind can go hand in hand. If not in all the cases, at least in some, the two can be compatible. While Ryle equated self-knowledge with other-knowledge, several others did not go that far. This chapter deals with the views of externalists, mainly that of Hilary Putnam, Tyler Burge and Donald Davidson. All these three philosophers have been in the forefront of the debate on externalism and first-person authority. While Putnam stresses on linguistic, socio-cultural aspects of human life, Burge talks about physical environment which determines knowledge of contents of one's mental states and processes. Their writings show outright rejection of the thesis of first- person authority. Davidson, however, argues that there exist circumstances in which the thesis of first-person authority holds water and at other times it does not. He says there must be realisation of the fact that the speaker, even if wrong at times, is basically a thinking subject.

2.2 Putnam on Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind

The debate on relationship externalism, mental content and first-person authority began in a major way in 1975 following publication of an article by Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of Meaning".[1] When he said that the meaning of words "just ain't in the head"[2], Putnam expresses disappointment, from the point of view of philosophers, with the available

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[1] Putnam (1975). pp. 131-193.
[2] Ibid

literature in linguistics since it did not concern with the meaning of words. He observes that analysis of the deep structure of linguistic forms provides a meaningful description of the syntax of natural languages. He, however, laments that the dimension of language associated with word 'meaning' is as much in the dark as it ever was.

Putnam challenges the two unchallenged assumptions of the traditional theory of meaning as propounded by positivistic philosophers. The assumptions are as follows:

1. That knowing the meaning of a term is just a matter of being in a certain psychological state.

2. That the meaning of a term, in the sense of intention, determines its extension (in the sense that sameness of intension entails sameness of extension).

Putnam argues that these two assumptions cannot be jointly satisfied by any notion of meaning. So, he claims that the traditional concept of meaning is a concept that is based on a false theory.[3]

2.2.1 Psychological State and Methodological Solipsism

There is, according to many philosophers of language, a close connection between understanding the meaning of a word and being in a particular psychological state.

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[3] Putnam (1975)

By psychological state, one means a state, which is studied or described by psychology. So, knowing the meaning of the word 'water' is a cognitive psychological state, being in pain is a mentalistic psychological state, as opposed to, say, being seven feet tall, which is a physical state.

Putnam says that traditional philosophical reference to psychological or mental states was based on the assumption of Methodological solipsism. Methodological solipsism assumed that no psychological state presupposes the existence of any individual other than the subject to whom that state is ascribed. The assumption in its original form was that no psychological state presupposes the existence of even the subject's body. So, if P is a psychological state, then it must be logically possible for a disembodied mind to be in P. While this assumption is implicit in traditional philosophical psychology, it is quite explicit in philosophical writings of Rene Descartes.

While commenting on methodological solipsism, Putnam says it is a restrictive program that deliberately limits the scope and nature of psychology. According to him, this was being done to accommodate certain mentalistic preconceptions or, in some cases, to fit an idealistic reconstruction of knowledge and the world. Putnam laments that the highly restrictive nature of the programme and subsequent failures of mentalistic psychology for three centuries to reform itself speaks volumes of futility of methodological solipsism.

According to the theory of methodological solipsism, the psychological states must determine the extension of the terms A and B just as much as the meanings ('intentions') do. Putnam strongly refutes the above claim that has appeared as a result of the joint assumptions 1 and 2 which claims that psychological state of the speaker decides the intension and extension of the term. He claims that two speakers can be in the same psychological state in the narrow sense even though the extension of the term K in the idiolect of the one is different from the extension of the term K in the idiolect of the other. The point that Putnam wants to make is that extension is not determined by the nature of the psychological state.

2.2.2 Are Meanings in the Head?

The philosophical question that haunts Putnam is whether meanings of words lie in the head of the user of those words. He finds an answer to this question by considering both scientific and non-scientific fictitious examples. He supposes existence of a planet called Twin Earth in the galaxy. Twin Earth is very much like Earth except for having few differences. In the first science-fiction illustration, Putnam mentions one of the peculiarities of Twin Earth where water is not H_2O but a different liquid whose chemical formula, being lengthy and difficult, is abbreviated as XYZ. He assumes that XYZ and water cannot be distinguished at normal temperatures and pressures. It has the same taste as that of water and performs the function of quenching thirst the way water does. Putnam also supposes that the water bodies such as lakes, rivers, ponds, oceans and wells of Twin Earth contain XYZ and not water. When it rains on Twin Earth, XYZ rains and not water.

Visitors from Earth to Twin Earth, would have the initial impression that the term 'water' has the same meaning on Earth as well as Twin Earth, the reason being that from their private experiential/psychological point of view there is no difference between the two compounds. This first impression or supposition, however, can be corrected later on when the visitors from Earth notice that on Twin Earth, the word 'water' means XYZ. It is noteworthy that here the word 'means' accounts for the doctrine that 'extension' is one sense of meanings.

Likewise when visitors from Twin Earth reach the Earth, then they will initially think that the word 'water' has an equal meaning on Twin Earth as well as on Earth. But later on they will realise their mistake and be corrected after realizing that water on Earth is H_2O state that on Earth the word water means H_2O.

At this stage, it should be clear that there is no problem about the extension of the term 'water'. The word has two different meanings because the way it is used on Twin Earth is not the same as the way it is used on Earth, and vice-versa. The extension of water on Twin Earth is the set of XYZ molecules and on Earth, it is set of H_2O molecules.

One must note following points about the Twin Earth thought experiment.

1. Twin earth kind of thought experiments try to refute the internalist view that psychological facts are facts about individuals which hold independently of their relation to the external world.

2. Twin earth thought experiments, as opposed to the above position, tries to show that we might be exactly similar to someone else as far as our psychological states are concerned, yet while one person's words mean or refer to something, other person's words mean or refer to something completely different due to the difference in their environment.

3. The general strategy followed by the twin earth examples is, we can illustrate the point that there are facts about understanding a word which go beyond the understanding's own resources, by imagining parallel or twin cases in which two minds that ought to understand a word in the same way, in fact, are understanding the word in different ways.

The second example cited by Putnam is a non-science fiction one. He supposes there are two people who cannot distinguish an elm from a beech tree. The extension of elm in John's vocabulary is the same as the extension of 'elm' in any body else's, that is the set of all elm trees, and the set of all beech trees in the extension of beech in both of their idiolects. Thus elm in John's terminology has a different extension from beech in Michael's vocabulary.

It would be incorrect to say that the difference in John's extension is due to difference in his concepts from that of Michael. John's concept of an elm tree is the same as that of a beech tree. This only proves that the identification of meaning in the sense of intention' with concept is wrong.

Even if someone were to claim that the difference between the extension of 'elm' and the extension of 'beech' in John's terminology is due to difference in his psychological state, one can prove such arguments wrong by constructing a Twin Earth example just by switching the words 'elm' and 'beech' on Twin Earth. The speaker John supposes he has a doppelganger on Twin Earth who is identical with him. One may think that John's doppelganger thinks the same way as John does, has the same data, dispositions etc. Despite all these similarities, when the doppelganger means beech when he says elm and John means elm when he says elm. Once again, Putnam's point is that meanings do not lie in the head.

2.2.3 Socio-Linguistic Hypothesis

Putnam introduces the concept of division of linguistic labour in order to understand how meanings are construed. By the division of labour he means that every linguistic community has at least few terms whose associated criteria are known only to a handful of speakers who acquire the terms. And the use of such terms by other speakers depends upon a "structured cooperation" between them and the tiny minority of experts.

So, when an average speaker acquires a term, he does not have the capacity of deciding its extension. The speaker's individual psychological state certainly does not fix extension of the term. It is only the socio linguistic state of the collective linguistic body to which the speaker belongs that fixes the extension.

Putnam concludes this interesting philosophical discussion on whether meanings of words lie in the head of the speaker of those words by pointing out that there are two sorts of tools in the world, namely Screwdriver or hammer and steamship. The difference between the two types of tools, is that while hammer and screwdriver can be used by only one person, tools like steamship need the cooperative activity of a lot of people to use. Putnam regrets that words have been mostly thought of as the former category of tool.[4]

Putnam's thought experiments emphasise mainly on the physical environment in the determination of meaning and only hints at the social environment through his introduction of the 'division of linguistic labour'. But Putnam is not clear how the relationship between roles of physical and the social environments in individual psychology is to be understood. This is where Burge comes in.

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[4] Putnam (1974)

2.3 Tyler Burge on Self-Knowledge and Externalism

2.3.1 Individualism of Thoughts

Tyler Burge (1988), in his article, "Individualism and Self-Knowledge", *Journal of Philosophy*, 85/11, pp. 649-663, discusses the problem arising from the juxtaposition of a limited Cartesian conception of knowledge of one's own thoughts and non-individualistic conception of the individuation of thoughts. Tyler Burge terms both these conceptions as complex and controversial.

Burge agrees with Descartes' view that human beings know some of their prepositional mental events not just in an empirical manner but in a direct, and authoritative way. He, however, adds that much of self-knowledge is similar to the knowledge of others' mental events. According to Burge, it depends on observation of one's own behaviour and reliance on perceptions of others about oneself. There is a lot that one does not know about oneself or even misunderstands, misinterprets about one's own mental states. Burge points out that Descartes neglects these important points and overestimates the power of self-knowledge.

While talking about individuation of one's thoughts, Burge says that thoughts are individuated non-individualistically. Burge believes that individuating human or animal mental states, including thoughts about physical objects and properties. is necessarily dependent on relations that the person has with the physical and/or social environment. Burge

arrives at this conclusion after conducting a series of thought experiments presented in his article, "Individualism and the Mental", in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 4(1979), 73-121 and other writings. Throughout these thought experiments, Burge holds constant the history of the person's bodily motion, surface stimulations and internal chemistry. Then, he varies the environment with which the person interacts holding constant the effects on the person's body, and tries to prove that some of the thoughts of the person vary in accordance with the variation in the environment.

2.3.2 The Thought Experiment

The thought experiment conducted by Burge assumes that our thoughts about the environment are determined by the nature of entities to which those thoughts are causally linked. The results of his thought experiments show that a person with the same individualistic physical history could have different thoughts if the environment were different. In other words, a person with the same individualistic physical history operating in different environments could not, by introspection, tell the difference between set of thoughts, one from another.

One of his thought experiments talks about arthritis. There is a subject who thinks that he has arthritis in his thighs. The person did not know that arthritis is an inflammation of the joints, and therefore, does not know that his belief and his subsequent utterance, 'My arthritis has

spread to my thighs' is false. At this point Burge asks us to imagine a world in which the word 'arthritis' happened actually to apply to inflammation of the joints as well as limbs. In that case, the sentence, 'My arthritis has spread to my thighs' would have been true, not false, and the belief that the subject expressed by this sentence, would not have been the false belief. Yet in the hypothetical world all of the subject's physical states, his 'internal qualitative experiences', his behaviour, and dispositions to behave, would have been the same as they are in this world. The subject's belief would have changed, but he had no reason to suppose that it had, and so could not be said to know what he believed.[5] So, he bases the argument on the possibility that somebody can have a propositional attitude without having mastered the notion in its content. Mastering the meaning of a content depends upon the social environment in which the person is placed.

While talking about knowledge of one's thoughts, Burge says knowing what one is thinking when one has thoughts about physical entities presupposes some of the same conditions that determine the contents of the empirical thoughts one knows one is thinking. From the point of view of Burge, this is a result of the second-order character of the thoughts. He opines that a knowledgeable judgment that one is thinking that water is a liquid must be grounded in an ability to think that water is a liquid.

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[5] Burge (1988)

46

Therefore, when one knows that one is thinking that water, one is not taking one's thought (or thinking) that water merely as an object. One is thinking that water in the very event of thinking knowledgeably that one is thinking it. It is thought and thought about in the same mental act of thinking.

In other words, both empirical thoughts and thinking that one is thinking such thoughts presume external conditions that determine their contents. And in both these cases, some of these conditions can be known to be satisfied only by empirical means. None of these points imply that one cannot know what one is thinking that such and such unless one makes an empirical investigation that shows that the conditions for thinking such and such are satisfied.

2.3.3 Self-Knowledge and Perceptual Knowledge

Burge's analysis of self-knowledge also involves parallel issue regarding perceptual knowledge. He thinks that it is a very basic mistake to think that perceptual knowledge of physical entities requires, as a precondition, knowledge of the conditions that make such knowledge possible. This is so, because one's epistemic right to one's perceptual judgements does not rest on any prior justified belief that certain enabling conditions are met. So is the case with self-knowledge.

This way of looking at self-knowledge as being on a par with perceptual knowledge, goes against Cartesian view. Descartes gives importance to

47

knowing enabling conditions of self-knowledge because self-knowledge is more certain than perceptual knowledge. Burge disagrees with Descartes and says that the source of one's strong epistemic right, justification in basic self-knowledge is not that one knows a lot about each thought one knows one has. Nor is it that one can explain and analyse its nature and enabling conditions. Rather it is that one is in the position of thinking those thoughts in the second-order and self-verifying way. Justification lies in the character and functioning of the self-evaluating judgments, not in the having of supplemental background knowledge.

Burge criticises Descartes for blurring the line of distinction between a prior knowledge and authoritative self-knowledge. He says one clearly does not have first-person authority about whether one of one's thoughts is to be explicated or individuated in a particular way. Nor is there any reason to assume that. In general, one must be able to explain and analyse one's thoughts correctly in order to know that one is thinking them.

Burge agrees with the view that in order to think thoughts and to think cogito-like thoughts, one must understand what one is thinking well enough to think it. He, however, argues that it does not mean that such understanding suggests an ability to explain correctly one's thoughts or concepts through other thoughts and concepts; nor does it suggest

immunity to failures of explanation. To put it in other words, one can know one's thoughts even when one understands them only partially.

We may conclude our discussion by noting:

1. Putnam and Burge argue for two different kinds of externalism.

2. Putnam's thought experiments take into account only natural kinds of terms, like 'water', while Burge's thought experiments take into consideration non-natural terms, like 'arthritis' or 'chair'.

3. Both these forms of externalism are anti-Cartesian.

2.4 Davidson on Externalism and First-Person Authority

2.4.1 Existence of First-Person Authority

After having had familiarised oneself with the views of Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge on the crucial issue of externalism and first-person authority in the field of self-knowledge, it is worthwhile to understand how Donald Davidson handles this tricky issue. While Putnam has considered linguistic community and Burge has stressed the causal linkages between subject's thoughts and nature of entities to which those thoughts are linked as determinants of what the self-knowledge is, Davidson follows a different approach..

Davidson in his article, "First Person Authority"[6], writes that when a speaker claims that he has some belief, hope, intention or desire, it is presumed that he is not mistaken. This presumption, however, does not attach to his ascriptions of mental states to others. Davidson explains this asymmetry between attributions of attitudes to our present selves and attributions of same attitudes to other selves. He also answers the question what accounts for the authority accorded first-person present tense claims of this sort, and denied to second- or third-person claims.

Davidson reminds us that the connection between the problem of first-person authority and the problem of other minds is obvious. However, his focus is only on the 'narrower problem' of first-person authority. He terms it so, because he considers it to be applicable to propositional attitudes like desire, belief and intention; being pleased, astonished, afraid of or being proud of; or knowing, remembering, noticing or perceiving.

According to Davidson all propositional attitudes exhibit first-person authority in various degrees and kinds. He says, while belief and desire are relatively clear and simple, the other ones, such as intention, perception, memory and knowledge are complex. Special authority attaches directly to claims about the necessary causal connection. Despite these differences among the ways in which first-person authority

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[6] Donald Davidson. *Knowing One's Own Mind*. pp. 3-14

applies to propositional attitudes, one must bear in mind that in each of these cases, first-person authority is relevant. Davidson deals with the case of belief in detail. since one can say that belief is the basic prepositional attitude upon which other prepositional attitudes depend.

Unlike the hardcore internalists, Davidson concedes that though there is first-person authority with respect to beliefs and other propositional attitudes, error is still possible. He arrives at this conclusion on the basis of the fact that the attitudes are dispositions that manifest themselves in a variety of ways and over a period of time. Just as error is possible, so is doubt. As a result, one cannot always have indubitable or certain knowledge of one's own mental states and processes. Nor can one's claims about self-knowledge be incorrigible. It is quite likely that the evidence that others have can invalidate self-judgements.

2.4.2 Self-Knowledge and Evidence

Davidson argues that the self-attributer in first-person authority usually does not base his claims on evidence or observation, nor does it even make sense to ask the self-attributer why does he believe that he has beliefs, desires or intentions which he claims to have. He reminds us that this particular dimension of self-attributions was observed by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* (remark 377) where he said, "What is the criterion for the redness of an image? For me, when it

is **in** ***** ***** **else's** image: nothing".[7] It may be recalled that a number of philic ***** ***** **have** adopted this approach of Wittgenstein, and applied the **sin** ***** **criterion** to the propositional attitudes.

Though **the** aforementioned feature of first-person authority may not appear **to be** an explanation of the authority due to employment of qualifying **conditions**, such as 'normally we do not...', 'usually it doesn't make sense to ....', but one must note that even in the exceptional cases, first-person authority persists. Although a self-attribution may be in doubt, the person with the attitude speaks about it with a special command, weight and authority.

In Davidson's view, contemporary philosophers working on first-person authority have not made adequate efforts to answer the question why self-ascriptions are privileged. On the other hand, it is an outdated practice to account for self-knowledge on the basis of introspection because this approach only gives rise to the question why one should see any better when one inspects one's own mind than when one inspects the minds of others.

There are, however, philosophers who have ruled out the possibility of existence of asymmetry between the self and the other on the basis of evidence. Ryle is the most prominent example of this category. As we

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[7] Cited in Davidson (2001). p.4

mentioned, Ryle remarks that 'privileged access' is considered simply because of the fact the subject is better placed to observe himself than others are. He goes on to say that, "In principle, as distinct from practice, John Doe's ways of finding about John Doe are the same as John Doe's ways of finding out about Richard Roe". Ryle further adds, " The differences are differences of degree, not of kind".[8]

Davidson agrees with Ryle that any effort to account for the asymmetry between first person present tense claims about attitudes, and other person or other tense claims, by reference to a special way of knowing or a special kind of knowledge, ought to yield a sceptical outcome. Davidson opines that any such explanation must acknowledge the asymmetry, but points out that Ryle neither accepts nor explains the asymmetry. According to Davidson, since the asymmetry clearly exists, it is wrong to argue from the absence of a special way of knowing or a special mode or kind of knowledge to the absence of special authority. He suggests that rather one should look for some other source of the asymmetry.

Davidson refers to A.J. Ayer's initial agreement with Ryle. Ayer wrote in the *The Concept of a Person* that first-person ascriptions can be wrong, and talks about the authority of self-ascriptions by comparing it to the authority vested in an eyewitness and second- hand reports. Davidson

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[8] Ryle (1949). pp. 156. 179.

disagrees with this kind of analogy because it fails to explain why a subject is like an eyewitness of his own mental states and events while others are not; it also fails to provide a correct description of first-person authority. Davison argues that the first-person attributions are based on no evidence and the authority of the eyewitness can be based only on inductive probabilities, which can be superseded in specific instances. If an eyewitness happens to be an unreliable, biased or short-sighted, his evidence can be questioned and ignored. Unlike the eyewitness, the concerned self or person does not lose his special claim to be right about his own attitudes even if his claim is called into question.

Davidson concludes his discussion by asking the question why there should be a presumption that speakers, but not their interpreters are not wrong about what their words mean. Davidson says the presumption is necessary in order to understand the nature of interpretation which is a process of understanding the utterances of a speaker. Davidson asserts that this process cannot be the same for the utterer and for his listeners.

In other words one cannot be always sure that a listener correctly interprets a speaker. However sincere, competent and well-versed a listener could be, he can commit mistakes while interpreting a speaker. The listener interprets the utterances of the speaker without pause, on the basis of clues, such as actions and words of the speaker, education, birthplace, wit and profession of the speaker, the relation of the speaker

to objects near and far, and so forth. The speaker cannot interpret his own words in the same way; nor can be wonder whether he means what he says because his objective is to be understood by the listeners.

The speaker can be wrong about what his own words mean. Therefore, first-person authority is not infallible. The asymmetry is not eliminated by the possibility of error because it is based on the fact that the interpreter must, while the speaker does not, rely on what would be a difficult inference in interpreting the speaker. There is a possibility that at times neither speaker nor hearer knows in a special or mysterious way what the speaker's words mean; and even both of them can be wrong. Still there is a difference.

Davidson says this difference can be understood by imagining a situation in which two people speak different languages, are ignorant of each other's languages and are left alone to learn how to communicate. Understanding and deciphering a new language is different from learning a first language because a beginner lacks the vocabulary, concepts and reasoning power.

When the imagined speaker and interpreter try to communicate by speaking, it does not matter even if the speaker uses his first language because his earlier situation is irrelevant. The imaginary speaker does not want to train the hearer into his linguistic community. Rather be just wants to be interpretable by using limited number of sounds used for

objects and situations necessary from his point of view. At times, the speaker may fail in his task. In such cases, the interpreter can be said not to know what his words mean. But it is equally important that the interpreter has nothing to go but the pattern of sounds the speaker shows with actions and events. So, it is incorrect to ask whether the speaker is wrong. Whenever his behaviour is interpretable, what his words mean is what he wants them to mean.

Since the language that the speaker is speaking has no other listeners, the idea of the speaker misusing his language is not applicable. Thus, there is a presumption in the nature of interpretation – that the speaker usually knows what the means. So, if he knows that he holds a sentence true, he knows what he believes.

2.4.3 Davidson's critic of Putnam and Burge

Though there is an apparent tension in the philosophical positions of externalists like Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge over the issue of externalism and first person authority, Davidson resolves the problem. His position is that of middle path. He agrees with Putnam, Burge and others who say that ordinary mental states, at least the propositional attitudes, are partly identified by relations to society and the rest of the environment, relations which may not be fully known to the person in those states. He also supports their subsequent argument that the concepts of "folk psychology" cannot be incorporated into a 'coherent and

comprehensive system of laws of the kind for which physics strives. The concepts of folk psychology are part of a common sense theory used to describe, interpret and explain human behaviour.

Davidson refers to a host of other externalists, including Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge. All externalists believe that mental states are partly determined by social and other external factors. Davidson also subscribes to this view and cites Putnam's famous example of Earth and Twin Earth with a doppelganger. Davidson opines that ordinary mental states are inner in the sense of being identical with states of the body, and so identifiable without reference to objects or events outside the body. But these mental states are at the same time non-individualistic, that is, they can be identified in part by their casual relations to events and objects outside the subject whose states they are. Davidson also remarks that contrary to what is assumed, first-person authority can without any contradiction apply to mental states that are commonly identified by their relations to events and objects outside the person.

Putnam (1975) in his article, "The Meaning of Meaning", argues that meaning "just ain't in the head". Putnam makes a point that meanings of words depend on more than what is there in one's head. Through a variety of examples, he tries to say that aspects of natural history of how one learnt the usage of a word really make a difference to what that word means. Logical consequence of the argument is that although two

individuals might be in physically identical states, they can mean different things by the same words. Davidson argues that if the meaning does not lie in the subject's head, nor can it lie in the subject's beliefs, desires, intentions and expectations.

Davidson agrees with Putnam, Burge, Denett, Fodor and Stitch when they say that ordinary mental states, at least the propositional states, are partly identified by relations to society and the rest of the environment, which one may not know in some respects. He also supports their view that at least for this reason concepts of folk psychology cannot be incorporated into a coherent and comprehensive system of laws.

But Davidson is worried about what he calls a 'puzzling discovery' that the subject apparently does not know what he or she thinks- at least in the way he or she does. He calls this a puzzle because if external factors partly decide the contents of our thoughts and if we believe that in general we know in a way others do not what we think, then accepting identifying and individuating roles of external factors makes one conclude that our thoughts may not be known to us.

Davidson rejects Tyler Burge's point that we give a person's words the meaning they have in his linguistic community and to interpret his propositional attitudes on the same basis. But he makes another crucial argument about how social factors control what a speaker means by his words. Davidson rightly points out that if a speaker wants to be

understood, he must use his words to be interpreted in a certain way, and must provide the audience with the clues or hints they need to arrive at the intended interpretation. He says this condition is applicable irrespective of the audience being sophisticated user of the language that the speaker knows or being a learner of a first language. Davidson opines that the necessity of learnability and interpretability provides irreducible social factor, and therefore, one cannot mean something by his words that cannot be correctly understood and interpreted by another.

Davidson offers solution to the problem of the situation in Putnam's thesis whereby acceptance of the identifying and individuating role of external factors compels people to arrive at a conclusion that the speaker himself or herself may not know what he or she thinks, at least in the way the speaker does. Davidson's solution to this problem is that we must change our stereotyped notion that thoughts must have mysterious objects and the dogmatic picture of mind as a theater in which the conscious self watches a passing show. He concludes, one can be wrong in a particular situation, not every time. Therefore, first-person authority, the social character of language, and the external determinants of thought and meaning naturally go together, as soon as we abandon the myth of the subjective, or the idea that thoughts require mental objects.

2.5 Redefining the Subjective

Davidson suggests that in order to find a solution to the problem at hand, we must change our picture of the mind as a theater in which the conscious self watches the show. According to him, first-person authority, the social character of language, and the external determinants of thought and meaning can, and do, go hand in hand if we bid farewell to the myth of the subjective, that is, the idea that thoughts require mental objects. He believes that when one abandons the assumption that thoughts must have mysterious objects before their minds, it opens the way to an explanation of first person authority. The explanation comes with the realisation that what a person's words mean depends on the kinds of objects and events that have caused the person to hold the words to be applicable and what the person's thoughts are about.

Davidson illustrates this point by saying that an interpreter of another's words and thoughts depends on scattered information, training and imaginative surmise to understand the other. However, the agent himself, in normal circumstances, cannot keep wondering whether he is using the words properly that refer to objects and events. The reason for this, according to Davidson, is that whatever he regularly does apply his words to, gives his contents the meaning they have and his thoughts the contents they have. In a particular case, the person can go wrong in his

belief about the world, but not every time or most of the time. The obvious reason is that unless there is a presumption that the speaker knows what he means –getting his own language right, nothing would be left for an interpreter to interpret. In other words, nothing could count if some one regularly misapplies his own words. So, it cannot happen that the subject himself does not know what he thinks. This is possible when we scrap the traditional notion that to have a thought is to have an object before the mind, and the identity of the object determines what the thought is. This is how Davidson revises the idea of the subjective in the understanding of self-knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

EXTERNALIST ACCOUNT OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND ITS RELATION TO EXPRESSIVIM IN PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

3.1 Introduction

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is acclaimed for his contribution to philosophical writings on questions concerning mind, mental states, processes and acts, and language and the relationship between mind, language and the world. One must, however, concede the point that "there is very little agreement about the nature of his contribution."[1] David G. Stern remarks that the most striking feature of disagreement among those who are writing on Wittgenstein is about what he believed in and why. Now almost five and half decades after his demise, despite voluminous literature being published on his work, his philosophy continues to be differently interpreted by different philosophers.

The most important reason for the continuing unavailability of Wittgenstein's philosophy to readers is the fact he had published only one of his books *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* during his lifetime in 1921.

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1 David G. Stern, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Philosophy". *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996. p. 442.

This chapter, however, is going to consider mainly his later book, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) and the available secondary sources that project Wittgenstein as anti-Cartesian, thereby an externalist philosopher of self-knowledge. Wittgenstein is also referred to as an expressivist, who argued that all those ideas that are there in human mind can be articulated, expressed on the basis of which others can know what is there in the other person's mind. Language and grammar have been accorded the highest level of importance by Wittgenstein in order to understand our own mental states and processes.

3.2 Language, Grammar and Arbitrariness of Language Use

Wittgenstein initially held that philosophy was based on logic. He argues in *Tractatus* that language mirrors reality and logic is essence of language. What he means is that reality must have the same form or structure as logic, a logical form. Over a period of time, Wittgenstein rejected his exclusive reliance of logical form, on rigid correlations of names and objects, on hidden essences, and on there being one and only one use of language. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein was interested in knowing how we words to describe our feelings, such as pain, memory, intentions, seeing so on and so forth. He did it on the basis of grammar - on the basis of distinctive uses of language, or language-games, with which key

63

words are associated. In trying to bring out the arbitrariness of language and hence grammar, he writes in *Philosophical Grammar*, "Grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning, and so they themselves are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary." (*Philosophical Grammar* p. 184)[2]

A careful study of Wittgenstein shows that he goes beyond grammatical descriptivism and uses grammar as a critical instrument. For instance, he clearly states in *Philosophical Investigations* (p. 222), "It is correct to say 'I know what you are thinking,' and wrong to say 'I know what I am thinking'. (A whole cloud of philosophy condenses into a drop of grammar)." Wittgenstein uses the words 'right' and 'wrong' to report whether that there exists or does not exist a provision for such an expression in the language-game of making knowledge-claims about one's own mental states. Wittgenstein reaches the same conclusion by following a rule that a proposition makes sense if and only if its negation makes sense. Jut as, "I do not know what I am thinking" seems absurd and nonsense, "I know what I am thinking" is equally nonsense.

Wittgenstein in his later writings disagreed with early analytic philosophers like Frege and Russell on the issue of adopting scientific

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2   Sluga and Stern. ed.. (1996). p.148.

method in philosophy. He believed that the two enterprises are different. He argued science seeks to make empirical generalisations, philosophy attempts to break down superficial grammatical generalisations. While science moves ahead by using hypothesis and deductive explanation, philosophy uses imaginary illustrations and intermediate case. In his opinion, treating philosophy as grammar is like having pedagogy and therapy, not science.

Wittgenstein identifies language use with activity and emphasis on the need for an agreement in practical judgement. He writes in his Last writings on the Philosophy of Psychology vol. I (p. 913), "words have meaning only in the stream of life." He also adds in Philosophical Investigations (p. 242), "If language is to be a means of communications there must be agreement not only in definition but also in judgements".[3] His focus is on grammar because he thinks grammar helps unravel philosophical problems.

It is worthwhile to mention that most of the language-games that Wittgenstein talks about are aspects of human life, e.g. orders, jokes and greetings which take place in concrete situations; reports, sensations, dreams and intentions are also part of his language-games. In the Philosophical Grammar (p. 66) he says, "I am only

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3   Sluga and Stern. ed.. (1996). p. 151

65

describing language, not explaining anything".[4] He accepts language-games as given. They already exist and are there as features of human life. He writes in *Philosophical Investigations* (p. 654-6),

> Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought
> to look at what happens as a "proto-phenomenon." That
> is, where we ought to have said: this language-game is
> played. The question is not one of explaining a language-
> game by means of our experiences, but of noting a
> language-game. What is the purpose of telling someone
> that a time ago I had such-and-such a wish? – Look on
> the language game as the primary thing.

In bringing out the relationship between grammar and language games, Wittgenstein writes in *Philosophical Grammar* (p. 60), "Grammar describes the use of words in the language. So, it has the same relation to the language as the description of the game, the rules of the game, have to the game". So, grammar and rules are given to us only as underlying social facts.

3.3 Anti-Cartesian Stance

Wittgenstein was living in an era when anti-Cartesianism was a prominent idea, and objections to the Cartesian conception of mind

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4 Sluga and Stern. ed.. (1996). p. 156.

were familiar. Hume and Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, as well as Mach and Freud studied the mind as one or another from of anti-Cartesiansim. Wittgenstein's anti-Cartesian attitude is evident even in the *Tractatus* (5.631) where be argues "there is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas".[5] In the *Blue Book* (p. 69), he writes, first, our language creates the illusion that the word "I" refers to "something bodiless, which, however, has its seat in our body," and then adds: "In fact this seems to be the real ego, the one of which it was said, "Cogito, ergo sum' ".[6] Again in *Philosophical Investigations* (410), he writes:

> "I" is not the name of a person, nor "here" of a place, and "this" is not a name. But they are connected with names. Names are explained by means of them. It is also true that it is characteristic of physics not to use these words.

Along with anti-Cartesianism, Wittgenstein's writings also reveal influence of anti-objectivism and anti-referentialism on him. In his *Notebooks* (p. 80) Wittgenstein writes, "the 'I' is not an object". If one were to understand him, it would mean 'I' does not refer to a constituent of the world at all. The word 'I' is not a name for a simple object nor a description of a complex. Though Wittgenstein subscribed to the physicalist picture of empirical reality, he also held that

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5   Sluga and Stern. ed.. (1996). p. 321.
6   Ibid p. 321.

physicalism could not explain an understanding of human subjectivity. So, his remark, 'I' is not an object, means that objectivism does not work with respect to the self. 'I' cannot be regarded as a mental object, Cartesian substance, nor can it be treated as a material thing. But this does not necessarily result in abolition or abandoning the subject or self or I. He adds in his *Notebook* (P. 80) "I objectively confronts every object. But not the I". Iie further writes, "So, there really is a way in which we can and must acknowledge the I in a non-psychological sense in philosophy."[7]

To conceive of 'I' in a non-psychological sense helps one get rid of scientific theorising and also to regard to as something not objectively given as part of the world. While 'I' is not reduced to nothing, it also does not have stature of an object in the world of a something. One can draw an analogy of Wittgenstein's another point when he says sensation of pain is "not a something, but not a nothing either", in *Philosophical Investigations* (p. 304)[8].

If one were to go by anti-objectivism that argues I is neither a simple object nor a complex, it implies that any word one might use to speak about the subject must, according to referentialism, be meaningless. Although there is no such thing as a worldly subject or a Cartesian

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7 Sluga and Stern, ed.. (1996). p. 328.
8. Ibid p. 328.

68

self for Wittgenstein, he concedes that there exists a phenomenon of subjectivity. This can be noticed in the fact that complete description of the world will not, and need not, mention the word 'I', but the world so described is still called "The world as I found it". Thus, Wittgenstein means, the objective world should be conceived as a world given to a subjectivity and it is in this that the subject has to appear.

3.4 Wittgenstein on Self-Knowledge and Avowals once again

After having had gone through some of the most important ideas of Wittegenstein on the subject of self, mind, language, anti-Catersianism, anti-referentialism, and antiobjectivism, it would be worthwhile to study his views on expressivist form of self knowledge.

The expressivist model of self-knowledge is a non-epistemic model which treats self-attributions as performances showing the subject's mental states. This approach reveals similarity between self-attributions and other modes of self-expression, such as shouting "yay!, "ouch!" or "give me that!". These expressions of performances lack propositional content. They cannot be true or false. Pure expressivism postulates that self-attributions that appear to be propositional, such as "I am happy", "I am in pain", and "I want that", also lack propositional content, but they express the person's mental states the way shouting "yay!" expresses joy, and blushing expresses embarrassment.

69

Those who criticise pure expressivism argue that self-attributions cannot be non-propositional as suggested by pure expressivism. They point out that if self-attributions are non-propositional, then subjects cannot provide either true or false description of their own states. But pure expressivism acknowledges that others can describe one's state, correctly or incorrectly. This view implies that subjects are restricted and undermines first-person authority because the subject cannot express him/herself.

Pure expressivism, however, accepts the view that the subject is specially capable of expressing his/her own states in terms of avowals. Neo-expressivism propounded by Bar-On (2000) and Bar-on and Long (2001) considers self-attributions to be propositional. Some of the self-attributions, which are not the product of observations or reflection and are not based on reasons, are termed as avowals. Avowals express the subject's mental states, by originating directly from those states. Avowals are somehow special because it is through avowals only that one can express a mental state in such a way that it is both direct and has propositional content. For example, when one exclaims "he wants water!", it is both propositional and directly expresses one's desire for water.

Though neo-expressivism identifies the distinctive element of self-attributions as non-epistemic, it provides for first person authority by

defending the subject's unique ability to express his mental states through avowals[9].

Some of the philosophers who have done work on self-knowledge and expressivism, say expressivism is found mainly in later philosophy of Wittgenstein, especially in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) that was published posthumously. Crispin Wright, John McDowell, Edward Sankowski, Rockney Jacobsen, Dorit Bar-on and Douglas Long have been writing on expressivism and self-knowledge.

In order to understand Wittgenstein's expressivism let us try to review Crispin Wright's article, "Self-Knowledge: The Wittgensteinian Legacy", in *Knowing Our Own Minds* (1998) ed. Crispin Wright, Barry C. Smith and Cynthia Macdonald, where he presents a detailed analysis of problems about psychological self-knowledge. In this article he highlights contribution of Wittgenstein, especially the anti-explanatory approach in *Philosophical Investigations*.[10]

Wright opens the discussion by saying that though people can be variously deluded about themselves, in terms of their motives-by being optimistic, pessimistic, confident and diffident – most of the time they know themselves best – at least better than one knows others and vice-versa. The most common explanation for this could be

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9 Self-Knowledge in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

10 Crispin Wright. Barry C. Smith and Cynthia Macdonald. ed.. (1998). pp. 13-45

one's own presence in the situation. There is nobody to observe us as much as we observe ourselves.

The vital case that Wright seeks to deal with is that which leads to the phenomenon of avowal. He defines avowals as mentioned earlier, as authoritative, non-inferential self-ascriptions. Wright's fundamental philosophical problem of self- knowledge is to explain the phenomenon of avowal. He seeks to do this by locating, characterising, and explaining the advantage which selves have in making claims of self-knowledge.

Wright, for the sake of convenience, divides avowals into two categories, phenomenal avowals-'I have a headache', 'my feet are sore', 'I am tired', 'I feel happy', 'My vision is blurred', 'My ears are ringing', I feel sick' so on and so forth. In the analysis of Wright, such illustrations have three features.

A careful study of the aforesaid phenomenal avowals shows that they are not having a content-bearing state. What Wright classifies as attitudinal avowals, that is, the pscychological characteristics, processes and states are at least partially separated by the propositional content or intentional direction. e.g. 'I believe that you are fine', I hope that everything goes smoothly', ' I think that children are the happiest of all', 'I am scared of the snakes', 'I am thinking of my sister'. We arrive at a knowledge of mental states through a process of self-interpretation.

Wright points out that in self-interpretative cases of this sort, the three features of groundlessness, strong authority and transparency present in phenomenal avowals are conspicuous by their absence. However, self-interpretation depends on non-inferential knowledge of certain basic attitudes and intentionally characterised responses. Wright believes that these will not be differentiated from non-basic, interpretative cases by any generic features of their content. From the point of view of Wright, it is these basic cases that count as attitudinal avowals.

According to Wright, such attitudinal avowals also have groundlessness and transparency though not strong authority. He says in the case of self-interpretation, there will be very little a subject can say in favor of a self-ascription, if the basis of interpretation itself is excluded. So, groundlessness is certain. Again about transparency except in the case of self-interpretation, the person must know what he believes, desires, thinks, hopes etc. Attitudinal avowals lack the strong authority of phenomenon avowals. Whenever there is possibility of confusion and self-deception, the sincerity and understanding of a subject cannot ensure truthfulness of even fundamental self-ascriptions of intentional states. It is better to neglect an avowal if its acceptance can hinder the process of understanding the behaviour of the subject. However, attitudinal avowals allow one to seek an explanation of a person's readiness to

find out any false avowal other than those provided by confusion, misinterpretation, misunderstanding and insincerity.

Wright says attitudinal avowals show weak authority by providing criterial justification, which is empirically assumptionless, for the corresponding third-person claims. Unlike in phenomenal avowals (weak) authority of attitudinal avowals is not in sincerity and understanding of the subject.

Wright draws our attention to yet another feature of phenomenal and attitudinal avowals. He cites a passage in the *Blue Book* where Wittgenstein writes:

> There are two different cases in the use of the word 'I' (or 'my') which I might call 'use as object' and the 'use as subject'. Examples of the first kind of use are these: 'My arm is broken', 'I have grown six inches', I have a bump on my forehead', 'The wind blows my hair about'. Examples of the second kind are: "I see so-and-so', 'I hear so-and-so', 'I have a toothache'. One can point to the difference between these two categories by saying: the cases of first category involve the recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error or as I should rather put it: The possibility of an error has been provided for ... [but] it is

as impossible that in making the statement 'I have a toothache', I should have mistaken another person for myself, as it is to moan with pain by mistake, having mistaken someone else for me.[11]

Sydney Shoemaker calls this particular characteristic underscored by Wittgenstein by the name immunity to error through misidentification.[12] In several cases when one makes a subject-predicate claim, one is likely to mistake or misidentify the subject in such a way that there seems to be no such possibility in the case of an avowal. For example, if I see somebody climbing the hill, and think that he is my friend, and say he will reach the top shortly, I may be mistaken in either identifying the subject or making the predication. But if somebody shows his lack of interest in casting vote in an impending election, then only his predication can be corrected, because that person cannot be mistaken about whom he is making the predication of.

From Wright's point of view, the central problem of self-knowledge is how to explain why avowals express the signs they do? What it is about their subject-matter, and the subject's relationship to it, which explains and justifies our acceptance of the subject's honest

11 Wittgenstein (1964). pp. 66-70. cited in Wright. Smith and Macdonald (1998). p. 18.

12 Shoemaker (1968)

utterances about it, with each of groundlessness, strong authority and transparency in phenomenal avowals and groundlessness, weak authority and transparency in attitudinal avowals. How can subjects know these matters non-inferentially? How is it impossible for the subjects to know these matters? Last but not least, what is the source of the special authority present in the subject's judgements?[13]

3.5 Wittgenstein on Expressivism

As noted earlier, the Cartesian approach to the problem of avowals postulates that the truth-values of such utterances are known to the subject non-inferentially through his unique and immediate awareness of events and states in a special theatre of his consciousness. Others can have only indirect inferential knowledge of it. In the case of phenomenal avowals, this immediate awareness is also infallible and transparent. And in the case of attitudinal avowals, the awareness is just reliable or sometimes, very strongly available. So, the Cartesian approach talks about transparency of one's own mind, and opacity of others. It also shows first person and third person asymmetries, thanks to the privacy of the inner world and privileged observation of one's own mind.

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13 Wittgenstein (1964), pp. 66-70, cited in Wright, Smith and Macdonald (1998), p. 18.

Wittgenstein attempts to strike a blow to this privileged-observational mode. It was a two-pronged attack by Wittgenstein on the Cartesian picture. The two prongs correspond to the distinction between phenomenal and attitudinal avowals. Wittgenstein in remarks 243 to early 300s of the *Philosophical Investigations* debunks the private language argument related to the idea of phenomenal avowals as inner observation reports. He also challenges the notion of attitudinal avowals by various phenomenological and other considerations when he says this is not a mental process in various passages of the *Philosophical Investigations.*[14] In his book *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology,* Wittgenstein uses the words dispositions versus states of consciousness.[15]

Wittgenstein comments in remark 258 of the *Philosophical Investigations* that private linguist is not equipped to distinguish between what seems right and what is right from the contents of the reports of the subject. It becomes necessary to have this distinction to confirm objectivity implied in the observational report of reality. It, however, is not clear whether such a distinction holds water only if the diarist can make retrospective judgements about occasions when he was ignorant or mistaken. Wright believes it should suffice if

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14   Wittgenstein (1953) Remarks 34. 146. 152. 154. 205, 303, 330-2, 427. 577. 673: in part II. Remark Vi. p. 181. and remark xi. pp. 217-18. cited in Ibid. p. 21.

15   Cited in Wright. Smith and Macdonald (1998). p. 21.

accuracy of a report and diarist's impression of its correctness are not the same even though nobody can ever ascertain the one without the other.

After referring to the anti-private language argument of Wittgenstein, Crispin Wright takes up second Wittgensteinian deconstruction of Cartesianism. It is related to difficulties in the idea that attitudinal avowals describe introspectable mental occurrences. Wright observes that one such difficulty concerns the answerability of ascriptions of intentional states, such as hope, expectation and belief, to aspects of a subject's outward performance, which may just not be available at the time of avowal. What he wants to say is that the conception of attitudinal avowals as reports of inner observation supports a view of their subject-matter which is incompatiable with another basic feature of their grammar, that is they have a 'disposition-like theoreticity'.[16]

Wittgenstein himself says in *Philosophical Investigations* (Part II, remark iii), "What makes my image of him into an image of *him?*", and replies, having said that the same question applies to the expression "I see him now vividly before me" as to the image', 'Nothing in it or simultaneous with it'. Wright is right, however, in saying that this aspect, the intentional content, of expectation, belief, hope and such

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16 .Crispin Wright (1989). p. 237. cited in Wright. Smith and Macdonald. ed. (1998). p. 30.

others comes under the purview of non-inferential authority which is associated with attitudinal avowals. It, however, continues to be a fact that the Cartesian model of inner observation is not capable of explaining this phenomenon. [17]

According to Wright, the point of Wittgenstein's second prong of attack is that the internal relations to the outer which are there in the intentionality of psychological items, of whatever kind, are all of the sunburn-type. Therefore, there is a permanent puzzle in the idea that an appropriate characterisation of them, accommodating such intentionality, is assured to their subject by something like observation, privileged observation by the subject which stresses on first-person authority of such states.[18]

Wittgenstein writes in *Philosophical Investigations*, (remark 308):

> How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behavourism arise? The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them we think. But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter

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17   Ibid. p. 31
18   Ibid p. 32.

And in remark 304, he argues that we need to 'make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose to convey thoughts which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please'.[19]

Both these quotations of Wittgenstein indicate that our problems in this topic are created by 'the grammar which tries to force itself on us here' (remark 304). Wittgenstein says that these problems go with the notion of avowals as reports and the related notion of a self-standing subject-matter which they report.

In other words, conception of avowals as reports of states and processes that are going on, seems to imply that either Cartesianism should be accepted, which cannot include ordinary knowledge of others or some kind of externalisation be accepted, either behaviourism or physicalism, that cannot support role of self-knowledge.

So, Wright suggests scrapping of original assumption by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* (remark 244), where he denies that avowals are assertions which make statements true or false, and puts forth a view that avowals be conceived of as expressions of the relevant aspects of the person's psychology.

19   Cited in Wright. Smith and Macdonald (ed) (1998). p. 33.

To express an aspect of one's psychology means to display it, the way smile on ones' face shows that one is pleased, clenching of the teeth shows one is angry, wincing and a sharp intake of breath may display stab of pain. Wright says that even propositional attitudes can have natural expressions of this kind: a prisoner's rattling the bars of his cell is a natural expression of a desire to get out.

Wittgenstein suggests in remark 244 that one should treat the avowal of pain as an acquired form of pain behaviour-something one uses to supplant or augment the natural expression of pain and which, the expressivist tradition suggests, is no more a statement--something with a truth-evaluable content--than are such natural forms of expression.[20]

Wright says though the expressivist treatment of avowals can handle their distinctive marks not too badly, the expressivist proposal has remained a non-starter to a great extent. It is due to the perception that no coherent philosophy of language can be made out of it. For example, the claim that the avowal 'I am in pain' serves to make no statement, true or false, needs to be reconciled with a variety of linguistic phenomena whose natural explanation would exploit the opposed idea, that it is the affirmation of a truth-evaluable content.

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[20] Ibid. p. 34.

Wright presents four such difficulties which are as follows:

1. What does the expressivist proposal say about transformations of tense, such as 'I was in pain' and 'I will be in pain'? If either of the two happens to be a true assertion, why should there not be such a thing as an author's making the same assertion at a time when doing so would need its present-tense transform? On the other hand, if they are just expressions, what do they express? Should not an expression occur at the same time as what it expresses?

2. How does the expressivist proposal interpret an utterance like 'He knows that I am in pain'? The point is, if there a use of words 'I am in pain' which a subject can use to express the content of somebody else's possible knowledge, why may the subject not assert that very content by using the same words?

3. How can a genuine statement, which is logically related to 'I am in pain' is necessarily entailed by a mere expression, such as 'Someone is in pain'.

4. How can a mere expression or rather assertion be denied? For example, 'It's not the case I am in pain' and 'If I am in pain, I would better take an aspirin' are syntactically acceptable expressions. Here 'I am in pain' comes like any normal

assertoric content in logical constructions such as negation and the conditional.

Moreover, should the antecedent of a conditional not be considered as a hypothesis that something is the case?

Wright calls this whole issue the Geach Point following P.T. Geach's emphasis on such difficulties in moral expressivism. There is a difference between moral expressivism and Wittgensteinian exprissivism. In the ethical case, expressivism postulates that there are no real moral states of affairs. As a result, apparently truth-evaluable contents presented in moral terms, constitute an illusion. So, the Geach Point challenges moral expressivism by arguing that moral thought misuses standard syntactic resources in ordinary sentential logic to claim or pretend that truth-evaluable moral contents exist. Wittgenstein's expressivism, however, does not say that there is nothing like a statement of ordinary psychological fact. In expressivism, nobody questions that 'He is in pain' is an assertion. The expressivist proposal exclusively deals with avowals.

Wright adds, if an account of avowals is to be based on Wittgenstein's expressivism, even in the case of sensations where there are really natural, non-linguistic forms of expression, such as pains, itches and tickles, the explanation would be very narrow. He suggests contrasting this notion of avowal with the sensation of coolness in one

foot and the smell of vanilla. He says in the latter case, the theorist would be forced to live with the idea of a range of sensations whose only expression is in their avowals since the prescribed model of acquiring competence in the avowal would not apply. This applies to psychological items other than sensations. Wright fears that this problem could undermine the important concept of expression.

So, just by thinking of avowals as expressive does not, especially when it matches an acceptance of the reality of the states of affairs that they show, help one evading the question-how, in a broad sense, should one conceive of the kind of states of affairs which confers truth on psychological descriptions, and in what sort of epistemological relationship do their subjects themselves in general stand to such states of affairs?

To put it in other words, the content of avowals is always there in subject's thoughts, without their public expression. For example, somebody is reading a book, and thinks to himself, that his headache is over, without ever showing any behavioural changes, that person is right. Wright says as per ordinary psychology, if a subject has a thought, not by just entertaining it, but by endorsing it, the concerned person would be a right authority; there is no way that someone's headache could have been over unless he would have supported such a thought – transparency; and one's readiness to

approve of it cannot a be result of inference or independently formulable grounds – groundlessness. Analogues of marks of avowals engage corresponding unarticulated thoughts. The proper explanation of the bearing of them by avowals is not related to illocutionary distinctions.

Wright again comments that the expressivist proposal flies further than expected but is also a 'dead duck' at the same time.[21]

According to him, the evidence for attributing epxressivism to Wittgenstein was far from adequate. He urges caution in reading remark 244 of *Philosophical Investigations*. Rather Wright prefers to focus on Wittgenstein's revised views on relation between language and reality and 'autonomy of grammar'. In Wright's opinion, while going through early 300s (remarks), in *Philosophical Investigations*, the problem that Wittgenstein had noticed in philosophical understanding of mental process and states is not the assumption of truth-evaluability of avowals, as claimed by expressivists, but rather a broad picture of the working of truth-evaluable language. Wittgenstein rejects his old views on language meaning various statements conveying same thoughts. The old approach to language involved treating assertion as propositions which are against reality (*Tractatus*)

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[21] Ibid. p. 38

so that there should self-supporting states of affairs to match with avowals, when they are true.

Wittgenstein says the source of the philosophical problem about mental states and process lies in our insistence on interpreting the truth-evaluability of avowals. The Geach Point is based on these very linguistic features. Wright believes Wittgenstein wanted to neglect these questions of truth-evaluability of avowals.

In Wright's analysis, the most outstanding change in Wittgenstein's later philosophy was to stop thinking about the relationship between language and reality, and about the truth-predicate in an analogous way.

Drawing upon the anti-explanatory approach, especially from the point of view of self-knowledge, Wright generalises any avowable subject-matter, including phenomenal and attitudinal subject-matter, including phenomenal and attitudinal avowals. He says,

Wright argues that this anti-explanatory view clashes with Wittgenstein's diagnostic thought. Wittgenstein himself had said that the philosophical problems crop up because we, merely on the basis of surface-grammatical analogies, form expectations about an area of discourse, which are appropriate only for a specific surface-grammatical analogue of it. So, in the case of self-knowledge also,

analogy is between the sure of avowals and ordinary reports of observations.

But then Wright points out that the diagnosis itself needs explanatory questions to be raised in the case of ordinary reports of observations, though not in the case of avowals. So, an argument that the explanatory questions are misplaced in the case of psychological self-ascriptions is dogmatic, asserts Wright.

He refers to an assumption, being made on the basis of Wittgensteinian insight, the marks of avowals must be consequential, i.e. they must either derive from the nature of the subject-matter or else from some unobvious feature of the semantics of first-person psychological discourse, which should be expressive rather than assertoric.

After having had gone through defence of as well as objections to expressivism by Wright, one can say with a fair degree of confidence that expressivism can successfully overcome the problems by making few changes. Avowals which are sincere, spontaneous and ureflective utterances can be voiced or can be held silently as well. While in some cases, the subject's expression is public, in other cases it is private. It would be wrong to say that personal or private reflections do not count as expressions. As Mandipa Sen, rightly observes, "It is not clear why expressions have to be publicly available in order for

expressivism to work as a theory regarding avowals. Both public and private expressions can be subjected to expressivist interpretations. In both the cases we are giving voice to our concurrent mental state--in one case it is available to the subject, while in another instance it is available to others as well".[22]

Similarly, while talking about, first-person privilege, Sen says the privilege is not totally denied to the person in expressivism. She adds, subjects always have a non-epistemic privilege over others about their mental stales and processes. After all, it is the subject who feels, experiences, suffers, enjoys, undergoes and overcomes those mental states. It is almost impossible to think of any scenario in which the subject is denied a privileged position vis-à-vis his mental states and processes. This is a very unique, special kind of privilege enjoyed by the subject, thanks to the peculiar position that the person finds himself in. It is this very special expressive position that ensures the presumptive acceptability of avowals in general. Moreover, when there is no difference of time and space in the subject's showing or expressing pain and the feeling or experiencing of pain, avowals continue to remain unaffected by any judgement. This makes it certain that the concerned person has a privileged position regarding his avowals. Nobody else, neither second nor third person can ever have this privilege.

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[22] Sen (Apr-June 2004) p. 67.

his avowals. Nobody else, neither second nor third person can ever have this privilege.

Another point raised by Wright is about public behavioural signs of expression. Avowals do not need to be expressing and impressing others. They are not even accompanied by any such explicit intention. So, even if the subject does not express his feeling of pain or pleasure in public, he is always in a better position to report those psychological experiences to others.

Though the Wittgensteinian expressivism could be inadequate, reformed expressivism that draws upon distinction between ethical or moral expressivism, and psychological or mentalistic expressivism can do justice to self-knowledge in a better way. The reformed or modified expressivism not only acknowledges that there are psychological facts that could be reported by sentences like 'He is in pain', but it also clarifies that the basic function of avowal is to express. And this cardinal function is to be performed along with stating mental contents. This amended version of avowals states that though the relationship between the avowal and the subject is not an epistemic one, in some situations, an avowal conveys information about the

subject's state of mind. This new conception is in harmony with the prevailing view of how language is used to perform multiple tasks.[23]

There is no doubt about it that expressivism has relevance when it comes to the study of self-knowledge.

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[23] Sen (Apr-June 2004). pp.49-70.

CONCLUSION

A REFORMULATION OF THE IDEA OF THE SUBJECTIVE IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

It is indeed difficult to say or write anything concrete with a sense of authority on an exciting yet intriguing subject, such as self-knowledge, first-person authority and an externalist account of the mind. It would be, however, incorrect and irresponsible to argue that one cannot write anything at all on this ever-green topic of compatibility and/or incompatibility between self-knowledge and first-person authority without any authority. There would not be any exaggeration in saying that making such arguments is tantamount to denying the very notion and existence of self, knowledge of self, mind, and mental states and processes that are there in one's own life. As Davidson (2001, p. 38) rightly says, one can be wrong about knowledge of contents of one's mental states and processes in few cases, not all cases. He adds that there must be a presumption that the subject knows what he means, i.e. getting his language right. In other words human beings are thinking beings.

It is an educative, informative and thought-provoking exercise to go through philosophical debates on self-knowledge, mainly views of externalist philosophers. especially those who have been

spearheading this discussion. The thesis of externalism is really an eye-opener. It questions the received wisdom about mind, self, language, grammar, mental states and processes and self-knowledge by raising a number of pertinent questions about the sources of self-knowledge and prompts one to think in a new direction. It explodes the myth of and removes a revered superstition of self-knowledge being totally internal, exclusive, personal, private, confidential and secret matter that is always known only to the subject, and never to be known to others. It adequately highlights importance of a variety of, hitherto neglected, external factors, such as socio-cultural and linguistic practices, physical environment, grammar and multiple uses of language as determinants of contents of mental states and processes.

One may not necessarily agree with each and every theory propounded by externalist philosophers of self-knowledge. For example, what Davidson (2001, p.25), himself an externalist, calls the 'puzzling discovery' that the subject does not know what he thinks, at least in the way he does. This is indeed a puzzle because if one accepts that external factors, at least partially, determine contents of thoughts, then one cannot, at the same time believe that normally a subject knows, in a manner others do not, what he thinks. Davidson believes that the problem has its origins in conceding the identifying and individuating role of external factors. He blames philosophical

theories, which postulate that propositional attitudes are identified by objects such as ·propositions, tokens of propositions, or representations that are 'in' or 'before' the mind, and contain or incorporate objects or events outside the self. He opines that such theories lead to the conclusion that the subject is ignorant of endless features of every external object. Davidson clearly rejects the assumptions giving rise to such conclusions, which deny first-person authority.

Davidson also criticises the traditional philosophical picture of mind for creating the confusion. Conventionally it has been thought that the mind is a theater in which the conscious self watches a passing show that includes appearances, sense data, qualia and what is given in experience. Thus, what is seen on the stage are not ordinary objects in the world noticed by eyes but their purported representatives. So, whatever the self learns about the outside world, is derived from what it draws upon the inner clues.

This kind of portrayal of the mental raises the question how to keep a reliable track from inside to outside. Another question is how to locate 'self' in the picture because while, on the one hand, self seems to include theater, stage, actors and audience, on the other hand, what is known and recorded relates to the audience alone. So, the question is whether the objects are located in the mind or merely seen by it?

It is obvious that the old-fashioned picture of mind is getting disturbed following the discovery that external facts enter into the individuation of states of mind. If to be in a state of mind is for the mind to be in some relation to an object, then anything that helps in deciding what object is must also be known if the mind is to know what state it is in. This becomes clear if an external object is an 'ingredient' in the object before the mind. In either of the two cases, the subject who is in the state of mind cannot know what state of mind he is in.

Davidson believes that at this point the notion of the subjective – of a state of mind – unravels. While there are true inner states about which the mind retains authority, there are ordinary states of belief, desire, intention and meaning which are 'polluted' by their required connections with the social and public world.

Davidson illustrates this problem by providing an analogy of the difficulty being faced by a sunburn specialist who cannot decide after inspecting the skin whether it is a case of sunburn or merely an identical condition with another cause. This problem can be resolved by distinguishing sunburn from sunnishburn, the latter is just like sunburn except that the sun may or may not be involved. If it is a case of sunnishburn, the specialist can spot it merely by looking at it, but not in the case of sunburn. But Davidson argues that this

approach succeeds here because skin conditions, unlike objects of mind, do not need any specialist who can tell, merely by looking at it, whether or not the condition exists.

The solution in the case of mental states offered by Davison is different and 'simpler'. He suggests one must get rid of the metaphor of objects before the mind. He says that just as philosophers have abandoned the idea of perceptions, sense data and the flow of experience as things given to the mind, they should also treat propositional objects likewise. Though people have wishes, doubts etc. it does not mean that beliefs, wishes, doubts are entities in or before the mind, or that being in such state necessitates existence of corresponding mental objects.

Davidson does not say that belief sentences and sentences that attribute the other attitudes are not relational in nature. His suggestion is that the objects to which one relates people to describe their attitudes need not in any sense be psychological objects, or objects to be grasped, known or entertained by the person whose attitudes are described.

So, Davidson objects to the dogma that to have a thought is to have an object before the mind. He clearly states that the arguments of Burge, Putnam and other externalists to prove that propositions cannot both determine the contents of our thoughts and be

subjectivity assured. According to Davidson, if to have a thought is to have an object before the mind, and the identity of the object determines what the thought is, then one can be always mistaken about what one is thinking. As long as one does not know everything about the object, there will always be senses in which one does not know what object it is. There have been attempts in philosophy to find a relation between a person and an object which will be true in all circumstances and the person knows what object it is by intuition.

According to Davidson one should get rid of the assumption that thoughts must have mysterious objects. This enables one to notice how the fact that mental states, as commonly understood, are identified in part by their natural history, not only fails to touch the internal character of such states or threaten first-person authority; but it also facilitates explanation of the first-person authority. This explanation follows once it is understood that what a person's words mean depends in the most basic cases on the kinds of objects and events that have caused the person to hold the words to be applicable; likewise what the person's thoughts are about.

Davidson in his article, "The Myth of the Subjective", elaborates on the relation between the human mind and the rest of nature, or the famous subjective- objective dichotomy.

Davidson's point is that if the ultimate evidence for schemes and theories, the raw material on which they are based is subjective (i.e. an ultimate source of evidence the character of which can be wholly specified without reference to what it is evidence for), then so is anything based on that- beliefs, desires, intentions and what the subject means by his words. Though these constitute the subject's worldview, they preserve their independence from what they purport to be about that the evidence on which they are based. Though beliefs represent something objective, the character of their subjectivity prevents the subject from deciding whether they claim to represent.

Davidson prefers to term this scheme-content dichotomy as subjective-objective because both of them have a common origin: a concept of the mind with its private states and objects. He welcomes modifications in these dualisms resulting in a revised view of the relation between mind and the world.

Davidson's focus is on subjectivity. He begins with what it is one knows or grasps, when one knows the meaning of a word or sentence. Words and sentences derive their meaning from the objects and circumstances in which they were learnt. When two speakers mean the same thing by an expression, they do not need to have anything more in common than their dispositions to appropriate verbal behaviour. In other words. two speakers may be alike in 'relevant'

physical respects, and yet they may mean different things by the same words due to differences in the external situations in which they learnt the words.

It is also true that the correct interpretation of what a speaker means is not decided simply on the basis of what is in his head; it also depends on the natural history of what is in the head.

Davidson says if the meanings of sentences are propositions, and propositions are the objects of attitudes like belief, intention and desire, then what is true about meanings must also be true of all the propositional attitudes. If the subjectivity of the meaning is in doubt, so is that of thought.

These circumstances have implications for theory of knowledge. Davidson claims that if words and thoughts are necessarily about the sorts of objects and events that commonly cause them, then there is no scope for Cartesian doubts about the separate existence of such objects and events. This does not mean that there would not be any doubts at all. But there would not be anything the subject is indubitably right about for it to be certain that the subject is right about the nature of the world. Talking about scepticism, Davidson says it is based on the fallacy of reasoning from the fact we might be wrong, to the conclusion that we might be wrong about everything.

Davidson makes following points about the contents of the mind:

1. States of mind like doubts, wishes, beliefs and desires are identified by the social and historical context in which they are acquired. In this regard, they are like other states, which are identified by their causes.

2. States of mind can be physical states as well. The way mental events and states are identified and described does not determine where those states and events are.

3. The states of mind, including what is meant by the words and sentences used by a speaker, are identified by casual relations with external objects and events. This fact is prerequisite to the possibility of communication, and it makes one mind accessible to another. It is noteworthy that this public and interactive aspect of the mind does not undermine the importance of first-person authority.

4. It is a mistake to think that there is a fundamental distinction between uninterpreted experience and an organising conceptual scheme. The origins of this erroneous conception lie in the traditional incoherent picture of mind as a passive but critical spectator of an inner show.

5. Postulation of 'objects of thought', whether along the model of sense data, or as propositions is wrong. Though there are several

states of mind, their description does not necessitate presence of ghost-like entities that the mind thinks of.

Davidson observes that two dimensions of the subjective persist. First is, thoughts are private, the way property can be private, that is, it belongs to one person. And second, knowledge of thoughts is asymmetrical, that is the person who has a thought generally knows he has it in a way others cannot.

However, thought is essentially a part of common public world. It cannot be a preserve of somebody and get insulated. Others can learn what the subject thinks by noting the casual dependencies that provide content to the thoughts of the subject. Moreover, the very possibility of thought requires common criteria of truth and objectivity.

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102

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