The Causal Problem for non-Materialism

It seems increasingly likely that biology is completely reducible to chemistry which is, in its turn, completely reducible to physics. That is to say, it seems increasingly likely that all chemical and biological happenings are explicable in principle as particular applications of the laws of physics that govern non-chemical and non-biological phenomena.

Consider what this means for a non-Materialist theory of the mind. It means that the whole world studied by science contains nothing by physical things operating according to the laws of physics with the exception of the mind. Only psychology is forced to recognize a new thing, or at any rate a new sort of property of things, in the world. Given the laws of physics alone, and the initial configuration of the things physics deals with, the future seems to be predictable in theory... ...Mental happenings, and mental happenings alone, would escape. They, and they alone, could not be predicted, even in principle, by physics.

Imagine a language... [that] is meant to serve for communication between builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words “block”, “pillar”, “slab”, “beam”. A calls them out; –B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.

-- Wittgenstein, Investigations §2

We could imagine that the language of §2 was the whole language of A and B; even the whole language of a tribe. The children are brought up to perform these actions, to use these words as they do so, and to react in this way to the words of others.

An important part of the training will consist in the teacher’s pointing to the objects, directing the child’s attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word; for instance, the word “slab” as he points to that shape... ...This ostensive teaching of words can be said to establish an association between the word and the thing. But what does this mean? Well, it can mean various things; but one very likely thinks first of all that a picture of the object comes before the child’s mind when it hears the word. But now, if this does happen–is it the purpose of the word?–Yes, it can be the purpose.... ...But in the language of §2 it is not the purpose of the words to evoke images.

But if ostensive teaching has this effect,—am I to say that if effects an understanding of the word? Don’t you understand the call “Slab!” if you act upon it in such-and-such a way?

-- Wittgenstein, Investigations, §6
Private Language II

Applied to Sensation

Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign “S” and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation.—I will remark first of all that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated.—But still I can dive myself a kind of ostensive definition.—How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation—and so, as it were, point to it inwardly.—But what is this ceremony for? For that is all it seems to be! A definition surely servers to establish the meaning of a sign.—Well that is done precisely by the concentration of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between the sign and the sensation.—But “I impress it on myself” can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion right in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can’t talk about ‘right’.

-- Wittgenstein, Investigations, §258

The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have this or something else.

-- Wittgenstein, Investigations, §272

An ‘inner process’ stands in need of outward criteria.