

1. My aim today is to begin to provide an account of a particular kind of relation between our mental states and our behaviour. I call the relation in question “expression”. The paper also serves as an exploration of certain aspects of the philosophy of Wittgenstein—and in fact, when the notion of “expression” figures in contemporary philosophical literature, it is often in relation to certain sections of the *Philosophical Investigations* related to issues concerning self-knowledge and first-person authority. Consider, for instance, the following oft-quoted passage from §244:

[W]ords are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensations and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.

“So you are saying that pain really means crying?” – On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it. (Wittgenstein 2001a: §244)

The form of speech the child learns—a first-person avowal of pain—is compared to the natural or primitive expression of pain in the form of winces, cries, and groans. Seeing this connection helps break a particular picture of the way in which our language works here. In the first-personal case, one part of this picture is the idea psychological states are “inner” items that only their bearer can “observe”: she can attest to their presence with an authority that no one else enjoys because she stands in a special epistemic position in relation to them. Wittgenstein’s comparison to the behaviour of a pre-linguistic infant is supposed to help break the grip this picture has on us. It encourages us to see such self-ascriptions as expressive of the states they ascribe, and thus as not standing in any justificatory relation to those states: a person who says “My foot hurts” does not need any evidence for such a claim, any more than he needs evidence for saying “Ow!”.

My interest lies in different, but related topics. The third-personal equivalent of this picture is the thought that the observable behaviour of other human beings is a mere causal

upshot of some inner mental item or process, a “side-effect” of the real psychological phenomena (cf. Wittgenstein (1967: §53)). Versions of this picture are usually raised in the context of an epistemological investigation into our knowledge of other minds: behaviour is treated as evidence for claims about a person’s psychology, with our knowledge represented as inferential or analogical. On such a picture, while we can make inferences to a person’s inner states based on what we observe of their behaviour, there is at best an external relation between the behaviour and the mental phenomenon that produced it. To adopt a metaphor that Wittgenstein often deploys, the behaviour itself seems dead, and the psychological states become an external source of life, “a hocus-pocus...performed only by the soul” (Wittgenstein 2001a: 454). Such a picture tends to foster a philosophical skepticism about the possibility of knowing other minds.

I think that one can find a similar notion of the relation between psychology and behaviour in accounts of psychological explanation, though the skepticism that attends such a picture is often less apparent here. From the perspective of such an account, behaviour is treated as a merely causal upshot of the psychological states that explain it, at best externally related to them.¹ The problems with such accounts are perhaps clearest when we consider the relations between sensations like pain, or emotions like anger, and the behaviour in which they find expression. But I want to suggest that the problem is more pervasive, and applies to psychological states in general. In fact, it becomes particularly acute when the states in question have propositional content which is supposed to stand in rational relations to the behaviour it explains. For then it can seem like we are forced to tell two different stories about the explanation of such behaviour: one concerning the content, and the justificatory relations it stands in to the behaviour in question; and another concerning the state, and the causal relations it stands in to the same behaviour. Though I will not defend this claim today, my ultimate hope is that seeing behaviour as expressive

¹I say “from the perspective of the account” because such an account could be combined with a view that insists there are other resources for showing the intelligent character of behaviour, besides these merely causal relations. Were I defending this claim today, I would need to show that moves like this come too late.

of psychological states can help us see how these two strands can belong to a single form of explanation.²

Today my aim is more limited. I want to see if I can make sense of the idea that intelligent behaviour is expressive of psychological states. More specifically, I want to argue that to say that some behaviour is expressive of a psychological state is to say that it is expressive of the content of that state, and that this means that understanding the behaviour requires seeing it in terms of this content—or, as I will put it, requires seeing this content expressed in the behaviour.

As will become apparent, I mean here to be extending the word “expression” beyond its everyday use, and one real worry that remains present throughout is that I am stretching the word past breaking point. Writing this paper, and presenting it at the workshop, is an attempt to see if that is what has happened.

I begin the paper with a discussion of pain and pain-behaviour, whose purpose is to help give you some sense of the significant features of expression. It will actually turn out that, given my concerns, cases like the expression of pain in pain-behaviour are not the most central examples of the phenomena I am interested in. In some ways, they can be seen as primitive, or limit-cases of expression, and this means that taken by themselves, they are not the best way to get at the most significant features of expression given my concerns.

This is because I want to focus on cases in which behaviour can be said to be expressive of *content*, such that understanding that behaviour requires grasping that content. As will become obvious, I am using the word “content” in an extended sense as well, such that pain could indeed be a limit case of such content. But in the central cases that I want to focus on, the content in question will be propositional or conceptually-articulated.³

²Again, I shall not defend this claim today, I think that such a picture forces us to conceive of the causal relations that enter into the explanation of the behaviour in an equally distorted manner.

³Perhaps a better way of putting this point would be to say that content is such as to be conceptually-articulable. In a sense, my pain is conceptually-articulable: at least if we treat “I have a pain in my foot” as (a) an expression of pain, and (b) conceptually-articulated.

Ultimately what I would like to do is to show that the expressive character of human behaviour means that there is a distinctive kind of understanding involved in finding it intelligible. This in turn shapes explanations of human behaviour, and in particular the way such explanations explicitly or implicitly involve psychological states. However most of this will remain to be done at the end of the paper. My aim today is just to give some sense of what I mean by “expression”.

2. In thinking about expression we can start with the relation between pain and pain-behaviour.

In the sections of the *Philosophical Investigations* surrounding the so-called Private Language Argument (§243-§317), Wittgenstein is concerned with the public character of sensations like pain, in the face of his interlocutors repeated insistence that pains are something private and hidden. One strand in his response is to insist on the ways in which pain can be *visible* to us, perhaps in the face of the person who is suffering. Wittgenstein makes an analogous point about emotions in *Zettel*:

“We see emotion.” – As opposed to what? – We do not see facial contortions and make inferences from them (like a doctor framing a diagnosis) to joy, grief, boredom. We describe a face immediately as sad, radiant, bored, even when we are unable to give any other description of its features. – Grief, one would like to say, is personified in the face. (Wittgenstein 1967: §225)

It is the repeated insistence on these points that raise the specter of behaviourism throughout the work: it seems to the interlocutor that Wittgenstein is *denying* the existence of the private thing, and insisting that all there is to pain is the behaviour we observe. But what

The same will be said of more diffuse cases such as moods: they are such as to be conceptually-articulated, both in the sense that I can say “I am depressed”, and that be an expression of my depression; but also in the sense that I can make sense of my mood by showing you its relation to certain beliefs, e.g. “Well, we’re all going to die, and it all just seems so futile in the the face of that”. In offering explanations of this sort I am expressing the content of the relevant state. Here I am following Bäckström (2013).

Wittgenstein wants us to see if that we are only forced into this choice—a hidden something, or nothing beyond behaviour—by a particular picture of how our language works here. Recognizing that talking about a person’s pains often *is* talking about their behaviour helps us see that we do not have to make this choice.

Consider, for instance, the following sequence from II.v:

Then psychology treats of behaviour, not of the mind?

What do psychologists record? – What do they observe? Isn’t it the behaviour of human beings, in particular their utterances? But these are not about behaviour.

“I noticed that he was out of humour.” Is this a report about his behaviour or his state of mind? (“The sky looks threatening”: is this about the present or the future?) Both; not side-by-side, however, but about the one via the other. (Wittgenstein 2001a: II.v)

We might think of this last phrase as bringing out the way in which descriptions of human behaviour can at the same time be descriptions of human psychology. A description of what someone does as a wince or a grimace can be both about their behaviour *and* their sensations: not side-by-side, but one via the other.

Behaviour that can be characterized in this way is expressive of the state in question: describing the behaviour accurately will be describing the relevant state.

3. Adopting a phrase Wittgenstein uses in the *Tractatus*, we might say that expressions of pain such as winces and groans are “internally related” to the states they express.⁴ What

⁴Wittgenstein discusses “internal relations”, along with the related concept of an “internal property”, in §4.122-4.1252:

A property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object should not possess it.

(This shade of blue and that one stand, eo ipso, in the internal relation of lighter to darker. It is unthinkable that *these* two objects should not stand in this relation.)

(Here the shifting use of the word ‘object’ corresponds to the shifting use of the words ‘property’ and ‘relation’. (Wittgenstein 2001b: §4.123)

this means, for our purposes today at least, is that part of what it is to understand such behaviour is to see it *as* an expression of this state.

However, if this is to be a helpful gloss on the notion of “expression”, we need some sense of what it means to say that the behaviour is “internally related” to the pain. After all, a person with a pain in his foot might, if the pain was bad enough, sweat profusely and start to shake. His heartbeat might increase, and the colour might drain from his face. Are these expressions of his pain too? They certainly make sense in light of it: if you want to know why he is shaking, or why the colour has drained from his face, I can explain things to you by telling you about the pain. It also, I think, makes sense to call them “manifestations” of his pain—at least, until we have a more precise sense of something else we might mean by that word.

Still, it seems to me at least that the man’s wincing and groans are related to his pain in a way that these other manifestations are not: recognizing the wince for what it is depends on seeing it in relation to the pain it expresses, whereas this is not true of other kinds of manifestation. We can bring this out by considering the ways in which someone might fall short in their understanding here. For instance, a person might notice the man’s facial contortions, and wonder if he was wincing or not; or they might recognize it as a wince, but wonder whether he was wincing in embarrassment or in pain; or they might recognize it as a wince of pain, but not know *where* the pain was localized; and so on. In each case, they have *some* understanding of the behaviour in question, but are aware of how that understanding falls short: they only fully recognize the behaviour for what it is when they see that the person is wincing at the pain in his foot. Indeed, we can imagine another, stranger, kind of case, in which a person *knows* (because they were told) that this was an expression of pain, but confesses that they cannot see it as such. They are unable to see pain *in* the wince, in the way in which we characteristically do. I think it would also make

sense to say that this person's understanding was limited, though obviously in a different manner.⁵

Another way of putting these points would be to say that the behaviour in question is "essentially characterizable" as an expression of the relevant state: in other words, *what it is* is an expression of this state, and if someone fails to grasp this, there is an important sense in which they would fail to grasp something essential about the behaviour in question.⁶

So this is the first claim I want to make about the relation of expression: if X is expressive of Y , then X is internally related to Y , or essentially characterized *as* an expression of Y .

4. But doesn't everything I've said apply to the fact that the man is sweating, or the way the colour drains from his face as well? Doesn't understanding these also require that we see them as hanging-together with the pain in his foot? One difference is that these symptoms seem to be things that happen to a person, rather than something the person does. Of course, if we understand "doing something" to mean "doing something intentionally" or "doing something with a particular end in view", wincing or groaning needn't be something a person does either. The man *could* wince intentionally, perhaps to let someone know that they are hurting him; but winces needn't take this form. Still, it again seems to me that there is a sense in which the winces and groans of a man can be seen as his acts, whereas the changing pallor of his face or the speed of his heartbeat cannot.

⁵Cf. Wittgenstein's discussion of "aspect-blindness" in Wittgenstein (2001a: II.xi)

⁶This point can be obscured somewhat in two related ways. First, there is the fact that we can get some piece of behaviour "fully in view" (our vision is not in anyway impaired or obscured) and yet not know how to characterize it: we might wonder, for instance, if someone was wincing in pain, or wincing at a bad joke we just made. Since the behaviour is there before us, fully present in our observation, how can there be something *essential* to it that we are missing? Second, along the same lines, a person might do the same thing—move their face in the exact same way—and yet not be wincing in pain, but rather in embarrassment, or maybe even not wincing at all. Again, if they *are* doing the same thing, how can the behaviour be "essentially characterized" in terms of something that is not common across these cases?

I will not try to refute these objections here. Instead I will simply acknowledge that I am committed to saying that there is a fundamental sense in which (a) you do not know what it is you are confronted with if you do not recognize it as an expression of a particular state; and (b) you do not "do the same thing" when you wince in pain and wince in embarrassment. We can certainly abstract from such differences to compare the behaviour in question, but the fully characterized version enjoys a certain kind of primacy.

One thing that characterizes acts in this sense is that we treat their agent as having a particular authority about their significance. The relation between the psychological state and the behaviour that expresses it is one that we expect the subject to be conscious of: if he is not, something is amiss. This is not true of the man's shaking, sweating, or changing colour. To start with the latter, he might not even know that the colour has drained from his face, though he certainly knows that he is in pain. Since he needn't know that the colour of his face has changed, there need be nothing amiss if he does not know that this change is related to his pain. Perhaps a man cannot sweat profusely or shake without noticing that he is: but even here there need be nothing amiss if he doesn't know whether these are manifestations of his pain, or of something else. We might ask the man: "Why are you sweating so profusely? Is it the pain, or is it too hot in here?" Nothing need be amiss if the person replies that he doesn't know.

We might put these points as follows: it is characteristic of the behaviour I am concerned with that we expect the subject to understand it. Indeed, in looking for an explanation of the acts in question, we aim to understand the subject *as she understands herself*.⁷ I might put the point like this: her explanations of her behaviour enjoy a particular authority because in explaining the behaviour she gives expression to the states that were also expressed in what she did. This authority spans involuntary gestures and spontaneous expressions of states like pain, right through to deliberate and calculated intentional actions: in each case, when the subject explains what she did, she gives expression to the states that explain her act.

5. So far we have the idea that particular kinds of behaviour—wincing, groaning, grunting, etc.—are expressive of our psychological states, and essentially characterized *as* expressions of those states. I've glossed this by saying that understanding the behaviour is a

⁷This does not rule out the possibility that a person *not* understand their own behaviour; in such cases, we say the person is alienated from what they do, and this is a recognition that something is amiss.

matter of recognizing it as an expression of the relevant state. But it is not just isolated pieces of behaviour that can be seen in this way: whole stretches of behaviour need to be understood in the same terms. For instance, a person might observe our man for a while, noticing the way he grimaces occasionally, that he is quieter than usual, that he is slow to get up and is walking strangely. All of a sudden it dawns on her: he is in pain; he has hurt his foot. She now sees a range of behaviour as making sense in light of a particular state. This is to *recognize* the particular grimaces etc. for what they are, where she did not recognize them before; but it also to see the grimaces together with other features of the man's behaviour, to see it all as having a certain kind of unity, or as hanging-together in a particular way. She sees this *because* she now sees it all in light of some aspect of his psychology.

I want to extend the idea of expression to these broader stretches of behaviour as well. Here I mean to be following David Finkelstein, who describes expression as “a generic internal relation—a hanging-together relation—that obtains between mental states and behaviour” (Finkelstein 1999: 92). We could say that these things that the man does have a particular kind of unity because they are expressions of this state; that they hang-together in a particular way. And here, again, understanding these stretches of behaviour involves seeing them as unified in this way: they begin to make sense when we see that they are, together, expressions of a particular state.

In fact, there is a way in which these broader unities have a certain kind of priority over more local, isolated instances of expression: for it is only against a background in which unities of this sort are discernible that we can make sense of particular acts *as* expressions. A wince, for instance, is only recognizable as such in particular circumstances. If it does not hang together with other things that a man does, such that we can see how he might be in some kind of pain, we will lose our grip on the idea that it is a wince.⁸

⁸Cf: (Wittgenstein 2001a: II.i)

Talk of “hanging-together” and “unity” remains vague here, and that is in part because the kind of unities in question—the way things hang-together—will vary depending on the state or psychological concept in question. Different states have different grammars, and that is reflected in what we count as expressions of that state. Consider, for instance, the student Wittgenstein describes in the sections on rule-following. His behaviour hangs together in light of his understanding of the rule “Add 2”. This will be true “locally”, as it were, in the his continuation of the series: each act of writing hangs together with those that came before as a continuation of the *same* series. It will also be true “globally”: if the student really understands the concepts involved here, he will be able to deploy them on other occasions: we might see all such occasions as unified by his understanding of this same concept. And if we *cannot* see such broader patterns in the student’s behaviour, we will lose our grip on the idea that what he is doing involves following the relevant rule⁹

But we can make these points even without getting into the complexities of the sections on rule-following. With the case of pain, there is the local unity that expressions of *that pain* enjoy; and to recognize particular expressions as such, we need to be able to see how they fit with the man’s other behaviour at the time. But even these will only be recognizable as expressions of pain if we can see them as part of the life of a creature who is such as to feel pain: recognizing *that* will involve unities and patterns that go far beyond these particular states and the behaviour that expresses them.¹⁰

This is part of what I think Wittgenstein is getting at in the following quotations from *Zettel*:

⁹We can even go beyond the student himself, and think about the practice of elementary arithmetic to which the concept belongs. Acts of this practice also have a certain kind of unity, hang-together in particular ways, *as* acts of this practice.

¹⁰There are various sections in the *Philosophical Investigations* in which Wittgenstein gives voice to these ideas. Cf.:

“But doesn’t what you say come to this: that there is no pain, for example, without pain-behaviour?”—It comes to this: only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious.
(Wittgenstein 2001a: §281)

§533. Pain has *this* position in our life; has *these* connexions; (That is to say: we only call “pain” what has *this* position, *these* connections.)

§534. Only surrounded by certain normal manifestations of life, is there such a thing as an expression of pain. Only surrounded by an even more far-reaching particular manifestation of life, such a thing as the expression of sorrow or affection. And so on. (Wittgenstein 1967)

6. For our purposes, the thing to see here is that particular stretches of behaviour can be seen as unified by a particular psychological state, and thus as to be understood in terms of that state. This can be applied to other cases besides pain and pain-behaviour. Consider, for example, the following passage from *Zettel*:

An expectation is embedded in a situation from which it takes its rise. The expectation of an explosion for example, may arise from a situation in which an explosion is *to be expected*. The man who expects it had heard two people whispering: “Tomorrow at ten o’clock the fuse will be lit”. Then he thinks: perhaps someone means to blow up a house around here. Towards ten o’clock he becomes uneasy, jumps at every sound, and at last answers the question why he is so tense: “I’m expecting...”. This answer will e.g. make his behaviour intelligible. It will enable us to fill out the picture of his thoughts and feelings. (Wittgenstein 1967: §67)

Notice that all kinds of things hang together here: utterances, thoughts, involuntary movements, and (if we expanded the example a little) intentional actions.¹¹ Wittgenstein says that it is on learning that the man is expecting an explosion that all of this becomes intelligible; once we know this, we can see how it all hangs together; we can “fill out the picture” in various ways. Of course, some of what the man does might make sense in its own right, apart from being an expression of his expectation. For instance, perhaps the man goes about his daily tasks, for the same reasons he always does. Here the fact that he is expecting an explosion is evident not in *what* he does, but in *how* he does it: he

¹¹E.g. we might imagine the man going to his window to see if anyone is lingering outside one of the houses.

seems distracted, worried, nervous, and this manifests itself in the way he goes about his business. This means that someone else might understand a great deal of this behaviour *without* recognizing it as an expression of his expectation: such a person might see that the man is, for example, cleaning up his kitchen, getting dressed for work, and so on, and understand all of this perfectly well. But she would not see that the man was nervous: part of this would be not noticing particular aspects of his behaviour, but part might also be noticing particular things but not taking them together, e.g. his glancing at the clock and the nervous twitching in his leg. To this extent her understanding of what was going on would be limited, and her coming to understand things better would be seeing them as expressions of the relevant state.

So, at this point I've said a number of things about "expression". First, that expressions of psychological states are internally related to those states, and that understanding the expressive behaviour is a matter of seeing this relation. Second, that psychological states give a certain unity to behaviour that is expressive of them, and that understanding such behaviour is a matter of recognizing this unity. I have also suggested that a characteristic mark of expressive behaviour is that we expect the subject to understand it, and count something as amiss if she does not.

In the second half of the paper, I want to supplement this with the claim that expressive behaviour is characterized by the content of the state it expresses. To do this, I will take a detour through a related use of the word "expression". However, before beginning this detour, I want to raise some potential worries about what I've said so far.

7. One thing that follows from what I've said is that the same psychological state can be expressed in a variety of ways. If my foot hurts, this might find expression in a wince or a grimace. But it could also be expressed in an exclamation or an apology: "My God!

It hurts!", or "I'm afraid I can't concentrate, I'm in some pain". Indeed, pain might also be explanatory of other things I do as well: keeping my weight off the foot when I walk, canceling a squash game, booking a doctor's appointment, and so on. The pain, I want to say, is expressed in all of this.

One thing that might seem to speak against what I'm saying here is that it would be odd to call my booking a doctor's appointment an "expression of pain". Cries, winces, exclamations—maybe a strained voice or an awkward gait—*these* are what we call expressions of pain. Intentional actions, while perhaps grounded by the fact I am in pain, can't really be called *expressions* of that pain. This actually seems right to me, at least as regarding whatever everyday use there is of the phrase "an expression of pain". What I am suggesting is that there is a point to extending our use of the word "expression" beyond these cases, albeit one that depends for its sense on the way we use the phrase in talking about winces and groans. This is, if you like, to use the word "expression" in a reflective or philosophical sense, and to that extent it will come apart from our ordinary language, but hopefully in a way which makes its roots in that language clear.

Perhaps considering some intermediate cases helps: it doesn't seem immediately obvious to me to call the apology an expression of pain either. Of course, if the man made it through gritted teeth and in a strained voice, maybe... But he needn't say it like that. Still, I think, we might see a point in setting it alongside things we would call "expressions of pain": doing this might, for instance, help break the grip of a particular picture of how we use language in talking about our sensations (cf. *Philosophical Investigations* §244). My hope is that an extended use of the word "expression" might likewise help undermine a particular picture of how appeals to psychological states figure in the explanation of human behaviour.

8. There is another use of the word “expression” that can at first seem quite distant from things like pain and pain behaviour. A philosopher might talk about a sentence as expressing a particular thought or content. For instance, here is Frege in his paper *Thought*:

Without offering this as a definition, I call a ‘thought’ something for which the question of truth can arise at all. So I count what is false among thoughts no less than what is true. So I can say: thoughts are sense of sentences, without wishing to assert that the sense of every sentence is a thought. The thought, in itself imperceptible by the senses, gets clothed in the perceptible garb of a sentence, and thereby we are enabled to grasp it. We say a sentence *expresses* a thought. (Frege 1997c)

Or again, in a different piece of writing:

A thought is something impersonal. If we see the sentence ‘ $2 + 3 = 5$ ’ written on a wall, we have no difficulty at all in recognizing the thought expressed by it, and we do not need to know who has written it there in order to understand it. (Frege 1997a: 234)¹²

It may seem like a stretch to connect these two uses of “expression”, but there are at least some analogies. For instance, to understand a sentence is to grasp the thought expressed by it, just as understanding pain-behaviour required seeing it as an expression of pain. What’s more, the kinds of limitation in understanding that we can imagine here are also analogous. For instance, coming across a sentence of a foreign language, I might say “I know it says something, I just don’t know what”. Obviously my understanding is limited here. Indeed, we can imagine a case in which I *do* know what the sentence says, but not because I can read the original; perhaps there is a parallel translation, or someone has told me the meaning. Here, though I know what the sentence says, I cannot *see* the meaning in the words—that is, I cannot see the thought in the sentence—and as such my understanding is limited.

¹²I have not looked at the German version of this passage. For the point I am making here, all that matters is that “the thought expressed by it” is a perfectly natural English phrase. But for some of the topics I touch on in relation to Frege and Wittgenstein in this section, the specific vocabulary they are using may demand more attention than I give it in this paper.

9. There is also an analogy here in the role that context plays in our grasp of the thought. This can be seen in Frege's discussion of the content of thoughts, particularly in the second of the three principles that guide his investigation in the *Foundations of Arithmetic*: "never to ask the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition" (Frege 1980: x). Frege expands on this principle later in the work:

Only in a proposition have the words really a meaning. It may be that mental pictures float by us all the while, but these need not correspond to the elements in the judgement. It is enough if the proposition taken as a whole has a sense; it is this that confers on the parts also their content.
(Frege 1980: §60)

Frege's claim here is that the sense of the individual words of such a sentence depends on the sense of the whole. Grasping the sense of the individual words *is* seeing the contribution they make to the wholes of which they are part, and in this sense they depend on that whole for their meaning.¹³ Using the language we adopted above, we might say that the individual words are *essentially characterized* by the role they play in the sentence as a whole, and this in turn is *essentially characterized* by the thought it expresses.¹⁴ What's more, we can extend the idea of a context here further than Frege does. This is something we see in Wittgenstein's later work, in passages such as the following:¹⁵

"After he had said this, he left her as he did the day before."—Do I understand this sentence? Do I understand it just as I should if I heard it in the course of a narrative? If it were set down in isolation

¹³On this, see Diamond (1991: 110-113)

¹⁴With this comes the same points about the priority of the expression over its mere matter. Adopting the language of the *Tractatus*, we might consider these signs in abstraction from their roles as symbols expressing a particular thought, and acknowledge that these 'same' shapes could be the expression of a different thought (just as those 'same' facial contortions might be something other than a wince): but my claim (which I have not really argued for) is that this *is* an abstraction, and that the symbol has a certain kind of priority over the sign. As Wittgenstein puts it at 3.32: "A sign is what can be perceived of a symbol"; a sign *is* the visible aspect of a symbol; we do not start with the idea of a sign, and then build the notion of a symbol from it.

¹⁵See also Finkelstein (2003: 103)

I should say, I don't know what it's about. But all the same I should know how this sentence might perhaps be used; I could myself invent a context for it.

(A multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in every direction.)

(Wittgenstein 2001a: §525)

Indeed, the notion of “context” is quite elastic, and might be applied in various ways. The following quote from Rush Rhees brings out other ways in which context might be significant:

These words—‘proposition’ (or ‘sentence’ or ‘remark’), ‘grammar’, ‘rule’, ‘proof’ and so on—have their meanings in particular surroundings or environments. You say you are listening to a remark, or looking at a sentence that has been written here. But if you heard this (what you are listening to) in circumstances in which it could have no connexion, even through history, with the lives of people who speak with one another, you would not call it a remark. (Rhees 1970: 48)¹⁶

So recognizing this as a sentence, and recognizing what the sentence says, depend on our seeing how the sentence hangs together with its context: both internally, with regards to the parts of the sentence, and externally, with regards to the context of utterance (construed as broadly or narrowly as you like).

10. The sentence, if it expresses a thought, expresses a judgeable content that might be true or false. This is a way of bringing out the particular unity that characterizes the

¹⁶The continuation of this passage is also relevant to Frege's claim about the sentence “ $2 + 3 = 5$ ”:

In a calculation we pass from certain symbolic expressions to others, and there are regularities in the ways in which we do this: we say we are guided by what the constituent signs allow. In the established practice or technique of mathematics we call this calculation. Otherwise—if there were no mathematics, or if you had no idea that there was—I could not say that I had illustrated ‘calculation’ for you. You would not grasp what I meant by ‘regularities’ when I tried to point them out to you. I cannot begin explaining with: look, *this* is a calculation’, even if I know you will pay close attention.

thought, and also the unity of the sentence that expresses it: both have the unity of a judgement. I will not explore this point here, but it is worth noting that the unity in question might then seem to be the unity of a psychological act. Frege, of course, would deny this, in keeping with his understanding of the first of the three principles from the *Foundations of Arithmetic*: “always to separate sharply the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective” (Frege 1980: x). The psychological act of judgement is something distinct from, and external to, the thought itself:

Both grasping a thought and making a judgement are acts of a knowing subject, and are to be assigned to psychology. But both acts involve something that does not belong to psychology, namely the thought. (Frege 1997b: 362-3)

For Frege, eliding this difference amounts to identifying thoughts with ideas in the minds of particular individuals, a move which leaves us without the resources we need to make sense of the fact that thoughts can be true, that we can agree or disagree in them, and that we can communicate them to one another. This is why, in the second of the two quotes that opened this section, Frege reminds us that grasping the content of the sentence $2 + 3 = 5$ does not require that we know anything about the person who wrote it there, least of all about their psychology. The thought is, in an important sense, independent of the mind that thinks it, and so should not be identified with an act of that mind.¹⁷

11. For my purposes today, the analogies I’ve pointed to, and the use of “expression” that accompanies them, need be taken as nothing more than an interesting aside. But,

¹⁷One might think of Wittgenstein as putting a certain kind of pressure on this claim in the *Philosophical Investigations*. It is not that he denies the independence that Frege is concerned with here. But he is concerned to show that there are *other* dimensions to our understanding of this content, dimensions in which recognizing the thought expressed *does* depend on recognizing further particular acts of judgement. This is because recognizing this sentence as an expression of the thought “ $2 + 3 = 5$ ” means seeing it as part of a practice of elementary arithmetic. If we were unable to see it as part of such a practice, we would lose our grip on the idea that it expresses the particular mathematical judgement we recognize. But we recognize a practice through the acts of its bearers: to see this as belonging to a practice we can recognize as elementary arithmetic, we need to pay attention to what life with that practice looks like; we need, for instance, to see what people participating in the practice count as agreement or disagreement (cf. “Mathematicians do not in general quarrel over the correct result of a calculation” (Wittgenstein 2001a: 225); see also §240-3). And that *does* demand attention to particular acts of judgement.

with Frege’s warnings in mind, there does seem to be at least one way in which we can connect the idea that a particular sentence expresses a thought back to phenomena we started with. For the sentence written on the wall could be an expression of a particular person’s belief, and *part* of understanding it might involve recognizing it *as* an expression of that person’s belief. Perhaps if we are only interested in the content of the thought, we don’t need to trouble ourselves with this further dimension of intelligibility—but if we are also interested in the person whose thought it expresses, things are different.

I am suggesting that we think of the expression of belief and the expression of pain as in some ways comparable. The parallel I’m drawing is one that can mislead, as Wittgenstein himself warns us:

Misleading parallel: the expression of pain is a cry—the expression of thought, a proposition.

As if the purpose of the proposition were to convey to one person how it is with another: only, so to speak, in his thinking part and not in his stomach. (Wittgenstein 2001a: §317)

But while it is true that the purpose of my utterance needn’t be to convey how it is with me, it *does* do this along with its other work, whatever that might be. Wittgenstein acknowledges this elsewhere, particular in Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

“I believe...” throws light on my state. Conclusions about my conduct can be drawn from this expression. So there is a *similarity* here to expressions of emotion, of mood, etc.

If, however, “I believe it is so” throws light on my state, then so does the assertion “It is so”. For the sign “I believe” can’t do it, can at most hint at it. (Wittgenstein 2001a: 191)

12. The following passage from a paper by Peter Winch exemplifies the point:

Suppose you hear the words “This lecture is going to last too long”. It is only if this incident takes place in a certain very familiar kind of context that you will *hear them* as the expression of a belief: not, for instance, if the sounds emanates from a tape recorder on which an English lesson is being played. If, on the other hand, the sound has been produced by a worried-looking human being who you know to be called Winch and who you know plans to give a lecture directly, you will normally hear it as saying that the lecture that is about to take place will be excessively long. Your interest in this may be of two sorts. You may thereupon resolve not to go to the lecture, since it will probably keep you from a more attractive engagement later in the evening. In that case you are simply interested in *p*. On the other hand you may be interested in reassuring me, fearing that my nervousness over the coming lecture’s length will prevent me from delivering it intelligibly. Now you are interested, not so much in the proposition that the utterance ‘*p*’ expresses, as in the fact that what it expresses is my belief. You will now give emphasis to quite different element in the circumstances of the utterance than in the first case. (Winch 1996: 12)

I cannot here go into all the details of Winch’s discussion: at the heart of it is a comparison between, on the one hand, Wittgenstein’s comments about belief ascriptions in 5.54-5.5422 of the *Tractatus* and the following comment about the Necker cube at 5.5423; and on the other, Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s paradox in Part II Section x of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and the subsequent discussion of seeing an aspect in II.xi. Winch’s purpose in this section of his paper is to argue for a liberal reading of 5.542, where Wittgenstein claims that “‘*A* believes that *p*’, ‘*A* has the thought that *p*, and ‘*A* says that *p*’, are [all] of the form ‘“*p*” says that *p*’ ”.

Winch’s suggestion is that the formula “ ‘*p*’ says that *p*” can be so understood that the first occurrence of “ ‘*p*’ ” is taken to include any non-linguistic facts that go into our recognizing the utterance “*p*” as expressive of this particular belief. So it will include not just the words that Winch says, but also the other facts about the situation described above: his nervous pacing, the fact that he is about to give a lecture, and so on. Though my purpose is not to defend Winch’s reading, I will quote him in full:

The second half of 5.542 says of the ‘analyzed’ form “ ‘*p*’ says that *p* ”:

...here we have no co-ordination of a fact and an object, but a co-ordination of facts by means of a co-ordination of their objects.

In the third person case, “*A* says that *p*”, the two facts in question are the fact stated by the expression “*p*” and the expression “*p*” itself. (It is important to remember 3.14 “... The propositional sign is a fact”). The ‘objects’ of which the propositional sign is composed are the ‘names’ which stand for / mean / represent the objects of which the fact stated is composed. We can now interpret them in the liberal way I have just been suggesting. The fact of *A*’s saying that *p* is composed of / consists of the objects which enter into that fact—everything that makes *A*’s utterance the expression that it is. We can concentrate our attention on that fact—if you like, on *A*’s linguistic and other expressive behaviour (together with the surroundings essential to their being so expressive). In doing so we are not excluding from consideration altogether the proposition we read this behaviour as expressing: otherwise we do not understand the behaviour for what it is—the expression of a certain belief. It is because the objects / ‘names’ constituting *A*’s expressive behaviour are correlated with the objects constituting the fact that *A* states / thinks / believes that we can see the aspect of saying / thinking / believing in it. We do not grasp what *A*’s behavior *is* without grasping the fact that it expresses, and *in* grasping that fact we grasp correlations between its ‘names’ and the ‘objects’ comprising the fact stated / thought / believed. (Winch 1996: 12-3)

As I said, I am not concerned here with the plausibility of Winch’s reading of the relevant sections of the *Tractatus*, so we needn’t get too caught up on the details of this quote.¹⁸ What I want to take from Winch is the idea that understanding behaviour expressive of a belief means seeing the behaviour in terms of the content of that belief. As Winch puts it, “[w]e do not grasp what *A*’s behaviour *is* without grasping the fact that it expresses”: we understand his words, and his behaviour more generally, in terms of this fact.

The way I want to put this point is as follows. The behaviour in question has a particular unity because it is expressive of this belief—it hangs-together in a particular way in light

¹⁸For instance, I for one don’t understand how the elements of the context he points to can be made out to be “objects” in the way he wants them to be.

of it. But because the belief is a state with propositional content, understanding this behaviour is not *just* a matter of seeing that it hangs together as an expression of *some* belief, but rather seeing it in terms of the content of this particular belief. Understanding Winch's words, but also understanding his behaviour in general, requires that we see this unity: that we see his nervous pacing, worried expression, etc. as hanging together with the fact that he is about to give a lecture, and that we see all of this in terms of the thought "this lecture will go on too long". Finally, I want to suggest that *seeing* this unity is, in part at least, a matter of seeing the particular content of the belief expressed in what Winch does.

The two notions of expression come together here. On the one hand, we have behaviour that hangs together in a particular way because it is an expression of a psychological state: here, belief that the lecture will go on too long, and related nervousness etc. On the other, we have a particular thought, a judgeable content representative of some fact, that we might also say is expressed in the behaviour. Winch concludes by stating that:

It is not *simply* that we perceive two facts [i.e. the fact of the person's utterance and the relevant context, and the fact that the lecture will go on too long], but rather that we *perceive the one in the other*.
(Winch 1996: 13)

This echoes the passage I quoted earlier from Part II.v of the *Philosophical Investigations*: a report can be on both a person's behaviour *and* his state of mind; "not one via the other, but both side by side". In Winch's language, we perceive the one fact *in* the other: his pain in his groan, say. But in the current case, where the state of mind has a propositional content, what we perceive in the behaviour is not just the fact that the person has some psychological state, but also the content of that state. Or to put it another way, we perceive not just the fact that the person is expressing a particular belief, but also the fact that this lecture will go on too long. The relation of expression has two directions. One points us inwards, into the mind of the person in question; another points outwards, to the fact(s)

that the thought is about. Understanding the behaviour in question requires that we see both.

13. Winch's example is of a person uttering a particular sentence, and one might think that this is the only reason it makes sense to say that there is content expressed in what he does: his *utterance* is an expression of his belief. But I want to extend the notion of expression to his non-linguistic behaviour as well. Winch himself considers the possibility of "cases where the "expression" we are dealing with is not the actual uttering of a sentence" (Winch 1996: 12). For instance, if you knew Winch well enough, you might be able to say, based on his behaviour alone, "Winch thinks that this lecture is going to go on too long". Asked how you know this, you might point at the way that he rifles through his notes, his nervous pacing, etc. You understand this behaviour, in a way that someone else might not, because you see it in terms of this belief. That, I want to claim, is recognizing it as an expression of the belief.¹⁹

Or, for another example think again of the man described in §67 of *Zettel*. He is expecting an explosion, and it is upon discovering this that his behaviour becomes intelligible to us. At the center of everything is a particular belief: there will be an explosion here at 10 o'clock. We come to understand his behaviour not just by seeing that he is expecting *something*, but by learning what it is that he expects. Once we know this, we will be able to make sense of certain features of his behaviour: for instance, his increased agitation as it gets closer to 10, or his puzzlement and relief after that time passes and there is no explosion. The behaviour makes sense in light of what the man expects, and you understand it when you recognize it as an expression of that expectation. This just is to see the expectation itself:

¹⁹Of course, your ability to see this might depend on knowing a great deal about Winch, and even then someone else who knew him just as well might be less perceptive here. Wittgenstein makes comments related to these points about judgements concerning the genuineness of expressions of feeling towards the end of Wittgenstein (2001a: II.xi)

I want to say: “If someone could see the mental process of expectation, he would necessarily be seeing what was being expected.”—But that is the case: if you see the expression of an expectation, you see what is being expected. And in what other way, in what other sense would it be possible to see it? (Wittgenstein 2001a: §452)

14. Someone might object to this idea along the following lines:

There is a difference between seeing a particular stretch of behaviour *in terms of* a judgeable content, and seeing that content *expressed in* that behaviour. The latter only makes sense when there is a linguistic item—an utterance, or at any rate something very much like one—in which the content is expressed. We can say that this item expresses this content because it is itself truth-evaluable, which is something we cannot say of behaviour in general. If Winch said nothing, and later denied that he has the belief we attributed to him, we cannot accuse him of lying based on his behaviour alone: he has not expressed the belief in question, and so has not here at least made himself answerable to its truth or falsity. Saying that non-linguistic behaviour can express a thought completely elides this distinction.²⁰ Indeed, you can see that Winch only has this more limited notion in mind from the way he emphasizes the representational aspects of the behaviour, i.e. the correlation of objects.

Obviously I do not want to disagree with the claim at the heart of this objection: there *is* a difference between an utterance of a belief, and the non-linguistic behaviour that (I want to say) is expressive of the belief. Perhaps we should use different words here to mark the difference, and that would be fine with me, as long as it doesn't in turn prevent us from seeing the similarities that I am emphasizing. But perhaps there is more to the objection. In the next few sections, I will try to provide further support for my claim using another example from Wittgenstein. After presenting it, I will return to this worry at the end of the paper.

²⁰Note that this is the opposite objection to the one usually made of expressivist accounts: typically the worry is that Wittgenstein makes linguistic behaviour too much like non-linguistic behaviour, and in doing so denies that linguistic expressions of e.g. pain are truth-evaluable. Here the worry is reversed: saying that non-linguistic behaviour is expressive of content makes it too much like linguistic behaviour.

15. Wittgenstein describes the scenario I have in mind in the following passage from *Zettel*:

Let us imagine someone doing work that involves comparison, trial, choice. Say he is constructing an appliance out of various bits of stuff with a given set of tools. Every now and then there is the problem "Should I use this bit?"—The bit is rejected, another is tried. Bits are tentatively put together, then dismantled; he looks for one that fits etc., etc.. I now imagine that this whole procedure is filmed. The worker perhaps also produces sound-effects like "hm" or "ha!" As it were sounds of hesitation, sudden finding, decision, satisfaction, dissatisfaction. But he does not utter a single word. Those sound-effects may be included in the film. I have the film shewn me, and now I invent a soliloquy for the worker, things that fit his manner of work, its rhythm, his play of expression, his gestures and spontaneous noises; they correspond to all this. So I sometimes make him say "No, that bit is too long, perhaps another'll fit better." Or "What am I to do now?" "Got it!"— Or "That's not bad" etc.

If the worker can talk—would it be a falsification of what actually goes on if he were to describe that precisely and were to say e.g. "Then I thought: no, that won't do, I must try it another way" and so on—although he had neither spoken during the work nor imagined these words?

I want to say: May he not later give his wordless thoughts in words? And in such a fashion that we, who might see the work in progress, could accept this account?—And all the more, if we had often watched the man working, not just once? (Wittgenstein 1967: §100)

The kinds of thing that might figure in our soliloquy would include the worker's reasons for acting, but also exclamations, curses, speculations, etc. As we watch the film, we see what he is doing, and why he is doing it; but also when he is frustrated or angry, when he is distracted, when he is absorbed, when he is happy or excited. Assuming his mind stays on his task throughout, we understand all of this when we see how it hangs together with his work, with what he is doing.

Wittgenstein says that the words of our soliloquy correspond to his manner of work etc. They are an attempt to make sense of this behaviour, and this is something we can do a

better or worse job of, depending perhaps on how well we know the man, or how well we understand his task. There is such a thing as getting things *right* here. But the criterion for our doing so is not that the soliloquy matches anything the man said, either out loud or to himself as he worked.

When we have something linguistic—a particular utterance or a written sentence—we are answerable to it in a more rigid way than we are answerable to a stretch of behaviour. Of course, even here there is some leeway, especially when we are concerned with the utterance as an expression of someone’s belief, rather than as a linguistic item in its own right. If I am taking a translation exam, giving the general gist of a particular sentence will not get me full marks. But if someone says something in a language I do not understand and I ask you what was said, giving me the gist rather than an accurate translation might be a perfectly adequate response. Likewise if I mumble something and you ask me to repeat myself—saying something along the same lines is not refusing your request.²¹ My response is adequate if it gives the sense of what I said.

I am suggesting that *something like* this kind of relationship holds between the worker’s actions and the soliloquy we provide for them: the soliloquy, if accurate, makes sense of what the worker did. It does so by giving linguistic form to content that *corresponds* to the content of the worker’s psychological states on the one hand, and to aspects of his situation on the other. These aspects come together in what the worker does, and this is why we can read our soliloquy into his behaviour. In doing this, we are not guessing at what ran through the worker’s head; we are making sense of what he did.

²¹Winch offers an example along these lines in his paper:

Suppose, then, one of you in the audience recognizes the *words* I am using but does not understand what it is that I am saying, what it is I believe or think. You ask the lady sitting next to you: “What is Winch saying?” She replies: “Winch is saying that the words ‘I believe’ are redundant in the sense that they do not transform into an expression of belief an utterance that previously was not one”. Her reply relates, and is understood by you to relate, to the words you heard me utter. The situation is parallel to that in which your neighbour asks you to explain a passage in the written text of the lecture. “What is he saying here?” is roughly equivalent to “What does this passage mean?”. (Winch 1996: 11)

16. We can imagine a slightly different version of the same scenario in connection with some comments made by Anscombe in *Intention*. She envisages someone who is struck by our ability to simply describe what another person is doing: ‘Description of a human action is something enormously complicated, if one were to say what is really involved in it—and yet a child can make such a report!’. Anscombe comments on this that:

Aristotle’s ‘practical reasoning’ or my order of questions ‘Why?’ can be looked at as a device which reveals the order that there is in this chaos. (Anscombe 2000: §43)

We might apply this idea to the imagined commentary made for the film of the worker’s actions. Rather than coming up with a soliloquy, we could instruct a person to formulate practical syllogisms to represent the order that is there in the worker’s actions.²² If we follow Anscombe’s advice,²³ and include a specification of the end in the syllogism, then we will have something that corresponds to the worker’s desire (in the sense Anscombe outlines in §36 of *Intention*). The premises will correspond to things that the worker believes, and accurate syllogisms would reveal “an order which is there whenever actions are done with intentions” (Anscombe 2000: §42). Understanding the action is a matter of seeing what it is the worker is trying to achieve, and how the things he does contribute towards it; in other words, seeing how the various things the worker does hang-together as steps taken in pursuit of his end.

So recognizing the beliefs and desires expressed here, and thus recognizing what it is that the worker is doing, will be a matter of seeing the unity represented in the practical

²²I think there are interesting differences between the two scenarios. Some of the premises of the practical syllogism would fit quite naturally into the soliloquy, but others—perhaps the more general ones—would seem a little wooden or forced. Perhaps this is because the soliloquy captures what the man is thinking, whereas the syllogism captures what he believes. These are related by distinct concepts. Cf:

A proposition, and hence in another sense a thought, can be the ‘expression’ of belief, hope, expectation, etc. But believing is not thinking. (A grammatical remark.) The concepts of believing, expecting, hoping are less distantly related to one another than they are to the concept of thinking. Wittgenstein (2001a: 574)

²³Anscombe (2005: 117)

syllogism. Here we see a fairly close analogy with Frege's context principle: the worker's particular acts of ϕ -ing, ψ -ing, etc., belong together in some such whole, and get their sense from the part they play in it. Someone else might ψ not in order to ψ , but in order to χ : in such a case, his action is in an important sense different from the worker's, even if there is another sense in which they are doing the same thing. Understanding each particular act will depend on seeing their part in the actions considered as wholes (or at any rate, considered beyond these isolated acts).

Part of what is involved in getting things right here is seeing how what the worker does hangs together "internally", as it were, and also how it hangs together with the situation in which he acts. If the man seems angry, we will look for what he has to be angry about, or look to see when his anger increases or dissipates, etc.; if frustrated, we will look to see how the task at hand is going, what satisfies him, what makes things worse; and so on. This fits with what Wittgenstein said of the man expecting an explosion: that such an expectation arises in a situation in which an explosion is *to be expected*. Understanding this man's behaviour requires seeing this aspect of the situation, or at least seeing how the situation could strike him in this way. The same could be said of the practical syllogism: it reveals to us why the man took a particular action as *to be done*. Our understanding the man depends on our being able to see this aspect of what he does.

We get a sense of the kind of dependence in question if we imagine cases where our understanding breaks down. Suppose that, instead of coming up with the soliloquy ourselves, the worker has provided us with his own version. But as we watch the film we cannot see how the words on the page correspond to the action on the screen. The script contains curses where the worker seems placid and calm, descriptions of actions that seem to bear no relation to what the worker is actually doing, reasons for action that seem bizarre and irrelevant. Supposing this *were* an accurate rendering of his thoughts, the way the worker might persuade us of this would be by describing a broader context, so that we could see

how his thoughts hung together with *that*. For instance, he might tell us “I know I look calm here, but I was furious—my boss was walking past, and I despise the man”. Or perhaps something more radical: “No no no—you don’t understand at all. I wasn’t really at work, this was part of a play”.

17. I have been focusing on examples where the state(s) in question can be seen as having a quite specific propositional content. For instance, in the example from *Zettel* §67 we have a belief that there will be an explosion at ten o’clock, and a range of further attitudes that are to be understood in terms of it: expectation, nervousness, concern, etc.²⁴ But I think the same points apply to states that can be said to have content in a looser sense. Suppose, for instance, that my work is going poorly, and in a fit of frustration and anger I slam my laptop shut and storm out of the house. You understand my behaviour when you realize that my work is going poorly, and that I am frustrated about that. But frustration and anger are often apt to receive further articulation than a simple specification of their object. In explaining my frustration to you, I might make all manner of further connections beyond the fact that my work was going poorly at that particular point: I might mention concern about my ability to complete this particular piece of work, or my ability in general; or frustration at myself for leaving it to the last moment; etc. All of this is an articulation of my anger, and can in this sense be seen as part of the content of my anger. You understand my behaviour in seeing how it hangs together with the other facts I mention, and perhaps the more we talk (or the better you know me) the deeper your understanding becomes.²⁵

²⁴Its important that we could also describe a man who displayed none of this as “expecting an explosion”:

We say “I am expecting him”, when we believe that he will come, though his coming does not occupy our thoughts. (Here “I am expecting him” would mean “I should be surprised if he didn’t come” and that will not be called the description of a state of mind.) But we also say “I am expecting him” when it is supposed to mean: I am eagerly awaiting him. We could imagine a language in which different verbs were consistently used in these cases. And similarly more than one verb where we speak of ‘believing’, ‘hoping’ and so on. Perhaps the concepts of such a language would be more suitable for understanding psychology than the concepts of our language. (Wittgenstein 2001a: §577)

²⁵Given world enough and time, we might end up seeing how my anger and frustration about writing connects to memories of my childhood, or attitudes towards my parents, or who knows what else.

This is certainly a looser sense of “content” than we found in the case of belief. The “content” of an emotion or mood will be brought out in the agent’s articulation of that state, and may range widely over a number of beliefs and other attitudes. Understanding the mood, and so understanding the behaviour that is expressive of it, will be a matter of relating it to all of this. But all of this seems to me to fit with what I’ve said about expression so far. If some behaviour is genuinely expressive of this state, it will have a dimension of intelligibility that relates it to this state, and will hang together with other behaviour expressive of the same state. The more we come to appreciate the “content” of this state, the deeper our understanding of the behaviour in question becomes: we will see connections and unities that were not immediately apparent, but also see a *sense* in this behaviour that another person might miss.

This also brings out why I said earlier that while pain-behaviour is perhaps the most intuitive example of expression, it is in some ways a limit-case. We might see the pain as itself the “content” expressed in pain-behaviour. But in this case, the “content” expressed is internal to the state itself: it is not internally related to any fact that is independent of the pain. As a result, it does not have the double-sidedness that characterizes expressions of states with propositional content etc. The expressive character of pain-behaviour directs us into the subject, but not out to the world.²⁶

18. The point of focusing on this scenario was to bring out how linguistic representations can correspond to the worker’s behaviour, and to emphasize the extent to which this is a matter of corresponding to what he does, rather than merely to what he thinks. Someone might insist that it is nevertheless the psychological states themselves that have representational content, and not the behaviour we attend to; so in this sense, it remains misleading

²⁶At least, this is true of physical pain. But not all pain is (merely) physical. The pain felt by Freud’s patients was also caught up in networks of meaning that pointed out from the subject (See Bäckström (2013)). And there is also the pain associated with other psychological states, e.g. the pain of a broken heart. Perhaps when sensations are the “characteristic accompaniments” of emotional states, they *should* be seen as caught up in the expressive relations that characterize those states.

to talk about the behaviour as expressive of content. But it also remains true that we are not hazarding guesses about these states based on what the man does; they are there in his acts, and seeing these acts for what they are depends on seeing them in terms of these states.

So, in summary: I have said that behaviour that is expressive of a psychological state is internally related to that state; and in particular, that the content that essentially characterizes the state also essentially characterizes the behaviour. I have also said that recognizing the content expressed in some behaviour—and so recognizing the behaviour for what it is—requires seeing how it fits a broader context. In first instance, this will be a question of how it hangs together with other behaviour that is also expressive of this state. But beyond that, it will be a question of how it fits his situation, and the other things he is doing. What I haven't said is anything about the *point* of thinking about all of this in terms of expression, and because of this it can be hard to see what hangs on some of these particular claims. In the introduction I mentioned that I want to apply all of this to discussions of the kind of understanding involved in making sense of human behaviour, and in particular to accounts of the explanation of human behaviour, and the role appeals to psychological states play in them. Seeing how behaviour is expressive of these states will, I hope, provide resources for rejecting a picture on which states stand in external and “merely” causal relations to our behaviour.

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