

# DOWNLOAD PDF NEWELL, R. W. JOHN WISDOM AND THE PROBLEM OF OTHER MINDS.

## Chapter 1 : R. W. Newell, John wisdom and the problem of other minds - PhilPapers

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At least three of the most influential German philosophers—namely, Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, and Martin Heidegger—have also dealt with this problem. The problem of "other minds" becomes a serious and difficult one because the traditional and most obvious solution to it, the argument from analogy, is open to grave objections. At the present time it would seem that a majority of the philosophers who have concerned themselves with the question consider the traditional solution—that our belief in other minds can be adequately justified by an analogical argument—at least inadequate, if not radically and unremediably defective.

**Argument from Analogy** In general terms to argue by analogy is to argue on the principle that if a given phenomenon A has been found to be associated with another phenomenon B, then any phenomenon similar to A is very likely to be associated with a phenomenon similar to B. In the particular case of other minds, it is said, I observe that there is an association between my mental states, on the one hand, and my behavior and the physical state of my body, on the other. I then notice that there are other bodies similar to mine and that they exhibit behavior similar to my own. I am justified, therefore, in concluding by analogy that mental states like the ones I experience are associated with those other bodies in the same way that my mental states are associated with my body. I notice, for example, that when I have a pain in my tooth, it is likely to be decayed and that I am likely to groan, complain, and hold my jaw. Observing another body like my own that has a decayed tooth and behaves as my body behaves when I have a toothache, I conclude that this body, like mine, is the body of a being that has a toothache. The argument, it is said, would be relatively strong if the correlation of the mental and the physical was observed to hold in a large and varied collection of instances before it was concluded that it also held in other similar cases. But this is not so. If I use the argument from analogy, I have only one case, my own, as a basis for my inference. Moreover, the characteristics and behavior of the other bodies vary markedly from my own. How can I be sure that the differences between myself and others are not associated with the presence of mental attributes in my own case and with the absence of them in other cases? Let us elaborate a little on each of these points.

In the case of a normal analogical argument, it makes good sense to suppose that one might check up directly on the conclusion of the argument; in principle one could always dispense with reasoning by analogy, even though this may not be practicable in some cases. Of course, one who says that we know of the existence of other minds by analogy must deny that we can check up on our conclusion in some more direct way, for if we could, the argument by analogy with ourselves could be dispensed with. It also seems that he cannot say that our inability to check up is merely a practical matter. It would have to consist in some other operation that we cannot in fact perform but which we can conceive of ourselves performing; perhaps it would be something like telepathy. But aside from any difficulty in making clear sense of the notion of telepathy, why should telepathy be regarded as a more direct way of checking up than ordinary observation of behavior? Granted, then, that the supporter of the argument from analogy must hold that the impossibility of checking the conclusion more directly is not any variety of empirical impossibility, why is this held to destroy the argument? Perhaps there is a difference here between this argument and other valid analogical arguments, but why does this difference make this argument unacceptable? The answer given is that this difference renders the conclusion of the argument senseless. What can the phrase "He is in pain" mean to me if no conceivable observation I could make would show that it was true or false, if I have no criterion for its truth, and if I have no idea of what would count for or against it? It will not do to say that the sentence means that he has the same as I have when I am in pain, for, again, what counts as being the same here? The other main difficulty in the analogical argument centers, as we have said, on the necessity, implied by that argument, for each of us to learn from his own case alone what it is to have a mental attribute. Two arguments have been advanced to show that this is impossible. According to the first,

which derives from Ludwig Wittgenstein, the analogical argument requires that one be able to pick out something for example, a pain or a state of anger and thereafter to identify it, when it recurs, as a pain or a state of anger. The trouble is, however, that this account leaves no room for a distinction between a correct and an incorrect identification. Behavioral and other checks are ruled out, leaving no conceivable means of deciding whether a mistake has been made. But a distinction between a correct and a mistaken identification is surely essential to the very notion of identification itself. In this way the analogical argument, which requires that we be able to make correct identifications of our inner states, also deprives the notion of identification of any meaning. The second argument, which has been advanced by P. Strawson, is more complex. According to him, the idea of a predicate involves the idea of a range of individuals to which that predicate can be significantly applied. In the case of mental attributes, this range includes both oneself and others; one cannot have the notion of a mental attribute unless one has a notion of oneself and a notion of another. Since the notion of oneself is the notion of a subject of mental and other attributes, one cannot have the notion of oneself without the notion of some mental attributes. Therefore, one cannot have a notion of oneself without also having the notion of another subject of mental attributes. This notion, however, can be possessed only if one knows how to ascribe mental attributes to such subjects. Hence, until one knows how to do this, one has no notion either of oneself or of another. A person without a notion of his own case could indeed argue analogically. He could find that pain was to be expected when a certain body his own, as we say was branded with a hot iron. He could infer that there would also be a pain when another similar body was similarly affected. But he would soon find out that he was mistaken in this conclusion, for he would detect no pain when the hot iron was applied to any body other than his own. Ayer has been made to defend the argument from analogy against the charges laid against it. To counter the charge of weakness, the following suggestions have been made. Emphasis has been laid upon the special feature of the argument from analogy—that people can speak and that their descriptions of their mental states are very like those I would give of some of my own. This, it is claimed, is something more telling than a mere similarity of behavior. Against this it is pointed out that speech can be regarded as something understood by the speaker only if it is accompanied by the appropriate nonverbal behavior. Another defense is that conclusions drawn analogically from behavioristic similarities are powerfully reinforced by like conclusions drawn by arguments based on similarities in the state of the nervous system. This consideration hardly meets the main complaint—namely, that I base my inference on one case only, my own. According to a rather more convincing attempt to meet this complaint, no more can be asked of any method of inference than that I be able to test its conclusion more directly in some cases and that when I do so, the conclusion usually turns out to be correct. The argument from analogy satisfies this test. I can suppose that there are, as there seem to be, other people besides myself and that these people argue analogically that I have certain thoughts and feelings. I can check on these imagined inferences and find that their conclusions are generally true. Whether these inferences are in fact made is neither here nor there; I can see that the method would work if it were used. Nor need I be worried because I can check only those cases in which the conclusion is about myself. In all or most inferences there will be a restricted class of cases that I can check up on. It is, for instance, logically impossible that I should make a direct check on a change of color that occurred where I could not observe it. But it would be a mistake to argue that any analogical argument that a color change had occurred was weak because it was based upon one sort of case only—the sort that I was able to observe. Why should it make a difference to the strength of the other minds argument that the relevant class of case is my own mental states as opposed to what I myself observe? An argument similar to this one can also be used to rebut the charge that there is no conceivable means of checking up on the conclusion of the argument from analogy. There are in fact some cases in which I can make a check—namely, those cases that concern myself. It is logically impossible, perhaps, that I should be Robinson, but it is not logically impossible that I should now be the man flying a certain aircraft, even though Robinson is in fact that man. Moreover, it is claimed, when I make a statement about Robinson, what is stated is, in effect, that someone who answers to such and such a description has had such and such an experience.

To this it has been objected that the only interpretation of this claim that yields the desired conclusion is untrue, namely, the interpretation that "Robinson has a pain" means the same thing as some sentence of the form "The so and so has a pain. The man sitting in this chair is angry. Robinson is the man sitting in this chair. Statement 1 cannot be said to be unintelligible to me on the ground that I, not being the man in question, cannot check up directly, for it is conceivable that I might have been sitting in the chair; statement 2 can also be checked on by me; statement 3 follows from 1 and 2. It is surely quite implausible to hold that statement 3 is unintelligible to me, whereas statements 1 and 2 are not. There is, however, another possible difficulty in the argument from analogy that is usually not at all clearly distinguished from the one just considered—namely, that it is in principle impossible for more than one person to check directly on the conclusion. It is often said that publicity is the essential requirement. But does this mean that it must be logically possible for each person to make the check, or is it the more stringent requirement that it be possible for everyone, or at least more than one, to do so? If the latter, then the difficulty has not been overcome. Equally it has not been shown clearly why publicity should be required in the more, rather than in the less, stringent form. One of these reasons, as we have seen, is that there is no sense in the idea of an identification that is subject to no check, where there is no criterion of correctness. This view has been questioned on two grounds. Strawson has argued that a criterion of correctness is not needed in all cases of identification, and according to Ayer, an identification of a sensation can be satisfactorily checked, without recourse to anything publicly observable, by means of other private sensations. Other Solutions to the Problem behaviorism Assuming that the argument from analogy is unacceptable, the most obvious alternative is to adopt some form of that variety of behaviorism according to which all psychological expressions can be fully understood in terms of behavior. If behaviorism is correct, there is clearly no room or need for the argument from analogy. In ascribing a pain to someone, for example, one is asserting something that is in principle subject to a public check—something about the way the individual is behaving, about how he would behave in certain circumstances, about what the circumstances in fact are, or the like. There is no need to make any inference from the publicly observable to something radically different. This is not the place for a general discussion of behaviorism. Any objection to a given form of behaviorism will, of course, be an objection to that form of behaviorism as a solution to the problem of other minds. There is, however, one difficulty that has given rise to a number of closely related attempts to deal with the problem—namely, that it is implausible to give a behavioristic account of some first-person psychological statements. When, for example, I say that I have a terrible pain, I do not say this on the basis of observation of my own behavior and the circumstances in which I am placed. Nor am I speculating about how I would behave in other, hypothetical circumstances. This difficulty has become of central importance for many philosophers who are impressed by some or all of the arguments that purport to refute the argument from analogy. They regard such arguments as showing, not only that this argument fails, but, more positively, that the connection between mental states, on the one hand, and behavior and circumstances, on the other, is logical or conceptual, not contingent. What is needed to remove the difficulty about our knowledge of other minds, it is thought, is to clear away the obstacles that prevent us from seeing clearly that this connection is a conceptual one. The primary obstacle in this instance is the peculiar nature of first-person psychological statements. It is this obstacle that prevents us from wholeheartedly accepting the true view and that makes us always hark back to the picture of mental states as objects to which the owner has privileged access. There are at least two points involved here. First, if my own statements about my mental states are not about private happenings to which only I have access and if they are not about my behavior either, then what account is to be given of them? Second, the statement "I am in pain," made by me, contradicts the statement "He is not in pain," made about me by someone else. If one admits that the former is not about my behavior, how can one avoid the conclusion that the latter also is not about my behavior? But if the latter is not about my behavior, how can it be maintained that the connection between my pain and my behavior is a logical one? This suggestion, which is not elaborated much by Wittgenstein, has sometimes been treated as an attempt to deal with the first point stated above and has had certain merits ascribed to it—for example, by Norman Malcolm.

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It explains how the utterance of a first-person psychological statement can have importance for us; such an utterance has the importance that natural expressions of sensation and emotion have.

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*"This Is Visual Sensation."*--Gunderson, K. *the Texture of Mentality*Newell, R.W. *John Wisdom and the Problem of Other Minds*Lyon, A. *the Relevance of Wisdom's Work for the Philosophy of Science*Morris, H. *Shared Guilt*Bambrough, R. *Literature and Philosophy*Chronological List of Published Writings of John Wisdom, (P. []).

Twelve Essays by Renford Bambrough Review by: Kennick The Philosophical Review, Vol. JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. But there is no Aristotelian category accident, nor is there a "metacategory" accident under which all the categories other than substance may be subsumed. Accident applies to nine of the categories just as a predicable; that is, nine of the categories may be thought of as instances of the predicable accident. In addition, accident is an Aristotelian as well as a Porphyrian predicable. It is defined and discussed, for example, in Topics b4ff. If this book is taken as a scholarly work consisting mostly in descriptions and source analysis of the philosophical views under consideration, it is a sound, useful study of medieval Jewish philosophy, though not without faults. Taken as a philosophical study, however, it falls far short of the standards generally set for work in medieval Latin philosophy. Totowa, New Jersey, Rowman and Littlefield, The title is ambiguous. This is not a collection of twelve essays on the subject of wisdom. It is, rather, a dodecapartite tribute to John Wisdom, Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge University from to But since Wisdom is a fine philosopher, it does have something to do with wisdom after all. But that is just as well. For, as Nietzsche remarks, "Man vergilt einem Lehrer schlecht wenn man immer nur der Schuler bleibt. To view philosophy in this way, it seems to me, requires a posture with respect to it quite different from that of a philosopher who says in all seriousness that matter does not exist, an approach to it somewhat resembling that of the psychiatrist to the words of his patient. For here too, as Wisdom himself has put it and everything turns on this, "In order to learn what a man means we cannot rely on the form of words he uses, or even on what he says he means. But Dilman does not deal with this important issue. Nor does Renford Bambrough in his gnomic essay "Literature and Philosophy," where we are invited to view philosophy and literature as provinces of the same Republic of Letters, as modes of writing that share a unity of method as well as a unity of theme; which means that the Wisdomian approach to a Berkeley, say, is now rather like that of the literary critic to a poem. But is it not the case that to approach a work of philosophy in a literary critical way is to refuse to take it at its word and therefore in one way to refuse to take it seriously? There may be a justification for such a refusal, and therefore for the literary critical approach to philosophy, but if there is it has not been spelled out here; and one surmises that such a justification would have to be such that, were all philosophers to accept it, one could no longer do philosophy with a straight face. Literary criticism does not rest on assumptions which, if taken seriously by all writers, would preclude literature. But the literary critical approach to philosophy would at least appear to preclude further philosophy were it to be taken seriously by all philosophers. Can one sincerely pray and at the same time say to himself that prayer is not at all what it appears to be? In Wisdom delivered a series of lectures, under the title "Proof and Explanation," at the University of Virginia, These lectures have not been published. Just how is it that this deduction is, or comes to no more than, a case-by-case procedure? Yalden-Thomson does not tell us. Now to the others. But is this not, to quote Wisdom v. It is safe to predict that behaviorists will not be convinced. He leans heavily on a single example: Of this he says p. There is one notion employed by Morris, however, that I simply do not understand, that of degrees of guilt. Morris holds that "other things being equal, a murderer is more guilty than a thief" p. In any case, here is a piece of directly This content downloaded from In addition to the essays mentioned, this book contains a chronological list of the published writings of John Wisdom from to , compiled by John Linnell; and, as frontispiece, a charming photographic portrait of Wisdom taken by Judith Jarvis Thomson. New York, Humanities Press, I shall limit myself here to discussing some

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epistemological problems especially concerning Peirce and James which are raised in the book. Peirce set out a theory of knowledge which might be called "epistemological Darwinism": To show this, Peirce needs to delineate a the factors that tend to create doubt and undermine belief, and b the features of scientific method that tend to eliminate these sources of doubt. Two such sources of doubt emerge in his discussion of unsatisfactory methods of inquiry. Beliefs are doubted when we discover that they are not universally shared or that they were "determined" accidentally as, for example, when I realize that I believe what I do only because I was raised in one family and not another. A truly effective method of attaining belief must therefore guard against these hazards by insuring public acceptance of the beliefs it produces and by generating those beliefs in an uncapricious way. This science accomplishes by its insistence that There are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular laws

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## Chapter 3 : Objectivity, Empiricism and Truth : R. W. Newell :

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JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. If it means that perception gives us certain knowledge of the existence and nature of objects then, provided the import of that is left fairly vague, I tend to think that perhaps he does, but it has now become a belief about the product of the perceptual process, not about the details of its nature. And as to what the connection may be between the nature of the product and the nature of the process, it is most unlikely that the plain man has any view at all. For this purpose our main requirement is to know something about what those beliefs are not-a rather easier question, and one which Tipton has well under control. Were this review to end on a note of criticism, however mild, its reader might be left with the wrong impression. All those with a serious interest in that topic should proceed to their booksellers. One of the twelve papers in it is a reprint: The rest are new. The only misprint that matters is on page Three of the essays are mainly expository: A reviewer without space to comment on all the essays must be selective. The subject of a subjective statement is in a unique position with respect to its verification. And this expresses the principle that statements about mind have an asymmetrical logic. Should this principle be accepted? Wittgenstein said in his I lectures, subsequently published as The Blue and Brown Books, that there is no sharp line between the natural and the linguistic expression of emotion. This leads to two insights. The first is that, as Wittgenstein said in his I This content downloaded from Happily, this is recognized by some of the contributors to Wisdom: Oxford University Press, I The writing is crisp-perhaps a little flip in places -and the lines of argument are, for the most part, clear and to the point. The commentary proceeds in sixteen short chapters:

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*A notable exception was John Wisdom (), who spent most of his career at Trinity College, Cambridge, and became Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge University. In his article , "The Meanings of the Questions of Life," Wisdom asks why some people think the question of the meaning of life is senseless.*

### Chapter 9 : Download PDF: Objectivity, Empiricism and Truth by R. W. Newell Free Book PDF

*Philosophical Review Wisdom: Twelve Essays by Renford Bambrough Review by: W. E. Kennick The Philosophical Review, Vol. 85, No. 3 (Jul., ), pp. Published.*