

A REPLY TO CHERYL CHEN'S COMMENTS

JUAN RODRÍGUEZ LARRETA

In order to limit the length of my reply, I will have to leave unanswered some of Cheryl Chen's acute and stimulating critical points.

1. Cheryl thinks that my argument doesn't go through unless we have already accepted Kripke's objection. She grounds this point as follows. The most important conceptual extension goes from *felt* pain to *unfelt* pain and this conceptual jump is already involved when we go from our own *present* pain to our own *past* pain. But then, if we don't accept Kripke's thesis according to which this conceptual extension poses no special problem, we could not be able to account for this first step (from present pain to past pain) which constitutes a necessary condition for advancing to the second step (which goes from our present and past pain to other people's pain).

I grant that if we do not accept Kripke's point regarding the first step and believe that we cannot go from felt pain to unfelt pain, then we cannot accept the second step's *conclusion* which presupposes the first step. However we could accept an argument, like the one I offered, which has a *conditional form* and states that *if* we can conceive our past (unfelt) pains *then* we can also conceive other people's pains. Now, it seems that according to the External Argument our *own* pains include also our *past* ones. So the above mentioned conditional is implicitly denied by the External Argument, for, according to it, supposing that we could conceive our own pains we could not conceive other people's pains. Thus, contrary to Cheryl's opinion expressed in another part of her comments, in order to confront the External Argument (and not its *conclusion*), I don't need to prove that we can understand unfelt (past) pain on the basis of felt (present) pain.

2. Cheryl says: "If we allow that it is permissible to extend our concept of pain to include unfelt pain, as Kripke suggests, then the problem of ascribing pain to other people does not even arise. There is no need to appeal to any parallels between other people and past selves". In other words, Cheryl believes that if we accept Kripke's point, as I do in my paper, then my argument becomes superfluous.

I think Cheryl is right. For if the property of being felt (by me) is as contingent to the concept of pain as the property of being located at a certain place is contingent to the concept of a certain kind of physical object, then a pain could be conceived as existing unfelt by me now or

unfelt by me at any moment (because it belongs to other people). Now the fact that Kripke's simple analogy can have such strong consequences made me change my mind regarding his point. I now believe that in such difficult matters as those concerning our most basic conceptual processes, it is wrong both to deny without a positive argument that some conceptual extension is possible (as Wittgenstein, Malcolm, Bilgrami, Dancy, and others do), and also to affirm without a positive argument the very same possibility (as Kripke does). Now I tend to believe that in such matters we must provide a positive account, as the one I offered, explaining how a certain conceptual "extension can be made. So, after all, my argument may not be superfluous!

3. Finally I will indulge in a short digression in order to address the conceptual extension which both Cheryl and I believe is the most problematic for traditional epistemology and thus the most interesting, to wit, the one which goes from felt (present) pain to unfelt (past) pain. In a paper on the problem of "going beyond the given" (1993, pp. 288-96) I address this conceptual problem. There I make an attempt at showing how a mind confined to what is strictly given (which I take to be the present phenomenal field) and for which *to exist* and *to be given* are *coextensive* and thus presumably *indistinguishable*, could frame a concept of something which exists but is non given ("unfelt" in Cheryl's words). As in my approach to the External Argument, the strategy I used in this tentative argument consisted in finding "degrees". Based on the phenomenology of attention, I argued that *givenness has degrees*. But then, I argued further, if givenness has degrees, the mind would be able to extrapolate and jump into" a concept of something (whether a *sensibilia* or a past phenomenal field) which exists but is not given at all. Grounded on this tentative argument, I am inclined to believe that this most basic conceptual extension which goes from what is immediately felt to what is unfelt, which is crucial for traditional epistemology, can be legitimized... but this is another story.

References

- Rodriguez Larreta, J. (1993), "Can we justify our beliefs which go beyond the given?", in *Naturalism and Normativity*, Atascadero, California: Ridgeview Publishing Company, Ed. Enrique Villanueva, *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 4.