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The Necessity of Private Language: A Conceptual Confusion Latent in Diverse Episodes of the History of Psychology[1]

Potrzeba języka prywatnego: zamieszanie pojęciowe zawarte w różnorodnych wątkach historii psychologii

ABSTRAKT

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest pokazanie wpływu, jaki tzw. argument języka prywatnego (AJP) wywiera na różne teorie psychologiczne. W tym celu rozpoczynamy od opisu poszczególnych linii rozwojowych AJP i wyjaśnienia, dlaczego idea języka prywatnego jest niemożliwa z logicznego punktu widzenia. Następnie pokazujemy, że teoriom psychologicznym Kartezjusza, Locke'a, Husserla, Jamesa, Fodora, Chomsky'ego, zakładającym istnienie języka prywatnego, brakuje wewnętrznej spójności. W końcu wyjaśniamy, dlaczego AJP, zawierając krytykę behawioryzmu, daleki jest od przekształcenia idei Wittgensteina w behawioryzm.

Słowa kluczowe: język prywatny, kartezjanizm, introspekcja, Wittgenstein

INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Wittgenstein's private language argument (henceforth, 'PLA') is without doubt one of the most important philosophical contributions of the twentieth century. To be precise, this argument, or rather this set of remarks, is directed against the idea of the logical or grammatical possibility of a private language, which, in turn, constitutes a necessary assumption for important psychological theories to seemingly maintain their internal coherence. In this paper,

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I aim to make an exposition of the PLA which allows to show how it reveals the logical inconsistency of Cartesianism, after which I will describe the main consequences of PLA for the psychological theories of Locke, Husserl and William James, that is, theories of strong Cartesian influence. Bearing in mind that Harré and Tissaw pointed out that PLA affects the work of some modern psychologists like Fodor and Chomsky, but without clarifying in which way[2], I also intend to remedy this omission. Finally, I will show how PLA affects behaviourism by explaining why Wittgenstein should not be considered as a behaviourist in disguise.

It goes without saying that space limitations allow neither the exposition of the PLA nor the description of its consequences for the above-mentioned psychological theories to be so extensive and detailed as to give them the importance they deserve. Nevertheless, I would be satisfied if I would show the extraordinary repercussion that PLA *should* have in the history of psychology.

WITTGENSTEIN'S PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

Wittgenstein's PLA is, first and foremost, an acute critique of the idea according to which we understand our psychological concepts through introspection, for such an understanding would require something that Wittgenstein considered logically impossible: the mastery of a p r i v a t e l a n g u a g e whose words would "refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations", so that no one else could understand this language[3]. Since every individual only has access to his own sensations (*Empfindungen*), understood in a broad sense as the totality of mental phenomena − feelings, emotions, thoughts, intentions, etc. − no one can teach him to associate every psychological concept with what it stands for. Thus, it is the individual himself who should establish the connection between the name and the sensation through a private ostensive definition. In order to clarify what constitutes a private ostensive definition, I should like to begin by emphasizing that an ostensive definition takes place in this context when the meaning of a term is conveyed through a gesture pointing out an object which serves as an example of that meaning. According to Wittgenstein, we are tempted to think that we learn the meaning of a word once we "know w h a t the word stands for"[4]. However, while the mere verbal definition seems to be vague because the fact that it consists of a set of words does not allow it to d i r e c t l y refer to the relevant object, the ostensive definition really seems to f u l l y achieve that object – for it consists in associating a name to an object by pointing it out −,

[2] R. Harré, M. Tissaw, *Wittgenstein and Psychology: A Practical Guide*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2005.

[3] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1986, § 243. (Henceforth '*PI*').

[4] *PI* §264.

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so that the ostensive definition apparently helps us to make much more progress towards learning the meaning[5]. Indeed, it seems obvious that we can know the meaning of a word through an ostensive definition of the kind 'This is a pencil' by concentrating on the object and associating with it the word used to name it, whilst a private ostensive definition of the kind 'This is X' would require concentrating on the mental or private object – that is, the sensation associated with the term 'X'.

That said, let us return to our exposition of the PLA. Wittgenstein held that in ordinary language we refer to sensations by associating a name and the natural expressions of the relevant sensation; yet in a private language the connection should necessarily be inner or private, for it would be established independently of the natural expressions of the sensation: since these expressions are publicly observable, any other person might understand this language, so that it would cease to be private[6]. In order to show what the connection between the name and the sensation through a private ostensive definition − i.e., excluding natural expressions of sensation − would consist of, Wittgenstein invites us to imagine a diary in which he would write the sign 'S' every day on which he had a certain sensation: although the sign could not be verbally defined, he might give himself a kind of ostensive definition by concentrating his attention on the sensation as if he were pointing to it inwardly[7]. It has to be taken into consideration that a private language could not be understood by anyone but the language user because the sign 'S' cannot be verbally defined; therefore, the user must be able to understand his language though he cannot explain the meaning of its words to other people. If he intended to use 'S' like the name of a sensation, he should employ 'S' in exactly the same way that people routinely use words that stand for sensations; however, he could not act in that way because such use of the term would be very well-known to other people, so that it would have no place in a private language. Hence, since the sign 'S' cannot be verbally defined, the user might write 'S' while he concentrates on the sensation. The problem is that this process does not generate the practical consequences that could be expected from a definition. Wittgenstein illustrates this problem by remarking that the practical consequences of a donation from his right hand to his left hand would not be those of a donation: for even if the right hand then wrote a deed of gift and the left one a receipt, we could ask: "Well, and what of it?"[8]. The ostensive definition has practical consequences or explains the meaning of a word only *once* it is clear what role that word plays in ordinary language, as in principle most ostensive definitions can be taken in different ways[9]. In this sense, Wittgenstein points out that the fact of impressing on

[5] Zob. L. Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, Harper & Row, New York 1965.
[6] Zob. *PI* § 256.
[7] Zob. *PI* § 258.
[8] *PI* § 268.
[9] Zob. *PI* §§ 28–30.

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oneself the connection between the sign 'S' and the sensation is no more than an idle "ceremony" that will be of no help whatsoever in giving meaning to the term:

> But "I impress it on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion r i g h t in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'[10].

Unlike ordinary language, private language does not contain public and contrastable criteria to distinguish between correct and incorrect uses of words. Such contrastable criteria to use correctly words that refer to sensations are assimilated through many public situations that constitute a practice. In fact, if we reflect on the situations in which children assimilate such criteria, we will realize that in these situations there is no place for private objects. Yet this does not mean that it is impossible to establish any connection with the realm of the mental: far from it, the point is simply that this connection cannot be carried out through introspection. In order for introspection to be effective, we should be able to point inwardly to the private object for which 'S' stands; but it would be a mistake to confuse this kind of inner or private reference with the gesture of pointing the finger at an object of our surroundings. Therefore, it would be wrong to believe that this problem could be resolved by concluding that one has correctly used the sign 'S' if he has experienced S, and falsely if he has not felt S; for the meaning of 'S' would not have been previously established. In other words, the sign 'S' can only be used correctly if one can distinguish between its correct use and the use that simply *seems* to be right without being right. This remark rejects the argument according to which memory constitutes a criterion that legitimates private language: from this point of view, the fact that one evokes the experience of the sensation should be sufficient to establish the meaning of 'S'. Wittgenstein, however, refutes this objection:

> Let us imagine a table (something like a dictionary) that exists only in our imagination. A dictionary can be used to justify the translation of a word X by a word Y. But are we also to call it a justification if such a table is to be looked up only in the imagination? − "Well, yes; then it is a subjective justification." − But justification consists in appealing to something independent. − "But surely I can appeal from one memory to another. For example, I don't know if I have remembered the time of departure of a train right and to check it I call to mind how a page of the time-table looked. Isn't it the same here?"– No; for this process has got to produce a memory which is actually c o r r e c t. If the mental image of the time-table could not itself be *tested* for correctness, how could it confirm the correctness of the first memory? (As if someone were to buy several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.)[11]

The problem is that one can only remember 'S' if he a l r e a d y has that concept: otherwise, he could not even distinguish whether he r e a l l y had remem-

[10] *PI* § 258.
[11] *PI* § 265.

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bered ‘S’ instead of ‘T’ or ‘U’. Hence, it is impossible to remember ‘S’ without previously knowing what ‘S’ means: but that is just the point we are trying to sort out. In the private table, every sign would appear next to the relevant private object, so that an introspective glance at the table − that is, memory − should suffice to check whether a sign had been correctly used. Yet this private table can only be employed if one remembers which sensation corresponds to ‘S’, which involves remembering at the same time that this sensation does not correspond to other signs of the table like ‘T’, ‘U,’, etc. Since the connection can only be correct if one knows the meaning of ‘S’ − or which private object corresponds to ‘S’ −, the table would be presupposing what must be confirmed. And if the connection were incorrect, the table might then ‘confirm’ the correctness of every connection, so that, strictly speaking, it would confirm nothing at all. In order to check whether a connection has been rightly remembered, one could appeal to a second memory; but that memory should also be checked. Given that it is a private or imaginary table, one can only check the correctness of the connection by appealing to a memory. Of course, that would be similar to buying several copies of the same paper to assure oneself that what it said was true; after all, the memory of what corresponds to the sign in the private table would be used to confirm that very memory. Taking all this into consideration, we should be careful not to fall into the trap of believing that Wittgenstein denied that words like ‘pain’ are names of sensations:

> Now someone tells me that h e knows what pain is only from his own case! – Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a “beetle”. No one can look into anyone else’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at h i s beetle. – Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. – But suppose the word “beetle” had a use in these people’s language? – If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a s o m e t h i n g : for the box might even be empty. – No, one can ‘divide through’ by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.
>
> That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’ the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant[12].

On the basis that the beetle symbolizes here the private object whilst the box represents our mind, Wittgenstein invites us to imagine a situation where we can distinguish between, on the one hand, the deed performed by an individual when merely looking into his box and saying ‘This is a beetle’, and, on the other, a language-game – or linguistic practice − in which the word ‘beetle’ already has a stable use. Wittgenstein is trying to make us see that there is no link between both things. Indeed, no matter what every individual discovers when he looks into his box: such a ceremony is unnecessary because it is completely independent from the meaning of the word ‘beetle’ in the language-game. It follows that we

[12] *PI* § 293.

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can communicate with each other because the private object drops out of consideration as irrelevant; but if the private object enters the picture, communication turns out impossible. Therefore, Wittgenstein does not deny that sensations can be named, for we use every day public terms to make reference to multiple sensations; what he denies is that sensations can be named in a private language.

As indicated above, the simple act of looking into the own box and saying 'This is a beetle' is not necessary at all for the emergence and further development of language-games in which the word 'beetle' − read every psychological concept − is already in use precisely because a community of speakers has used it in a certain way over time, thus giving rise to a rule or norm. At this point it is worth noting that Wittgenstein and Wilhelm Wundt, often considered as the father of experimental psychology, had similar ideas about the origin of human language. It is well known that Wundt not only did not refer to language-games or public criteria of correction, but also regarded experimentally controlled introspection as a basic tool for psychologists. However, when Wundt points out that "[a]ll phenomena with which mental sciences deal are, indeed, creations of the social community"[13], does no more than stress that those creations, among which we can find language, could not be elaborated by an individual consciousness, for "they presuppose the reciprocal action of many"[14]. According to Wundt, this reciprocity in the use of language generates a *history* whose influence cannot be avoided by the individual consciousness, so that "the child is surrounded by influences inseparable from the processes that arise spontaneously within its own consciousness"[15]. From this follows, I add, that a child cannot learn the word 'pain' through what we might call a pure association with a certain sensation invoked in its consciousness, for we learn a word when we master its complex and collective use that has been consolidated in the Wundtian history or in the Wittgensteinian language-games. With this in mind, it may be concluded that while Wundt's maxim "A language can never be created by an individual"[16] made reference to all natural languages taken together–English, German, Spanish, etc. − it applies in particular to those language-games related to psychological concepts.

THE LATENCY OF PLA IN THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

PLA is intended to reveal and dissolve the confusion that constitutes our having developed our picture of the *mental* by taking as a reference the physical. For in the realm of the mental, it has been applied the model of designation

[13] W. Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology. Outlines of a Psychological History of the Development of Mankind*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1921, s. 2.

[14] *Ibidem*, s. 3.

[15] *Ibidem*, s. 4.

[16] *Ibidem*, s. 3.

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object-name according to which "the individual words in language name objects", so that the meaning of the word "is the object for which the word stands"[17]. This confusion is due in large measure to the great attractiveness for many philosophers of regarding our mind as an inner and closed realm that only oneself can access, and in such a way that each one's knowledge of his sensations is immediate and infallible. It is on this basis that the application of the model of designation object-name seems completely normal: once it is accepted that one can immediately and infallibly recognize a sensation perceived at a given moment, it seems obvious that nothing should prevent him from giving the relevant sensation a name – for example, 'S' –, so that he could point out when he perceives S again in the future. It seems indisputable that, once the epistemological primacy of the mind's eye is unconditionally accepted, it follows from this, without any problems, the possibility of applying the model of designation object-name in the realm of the mental. In fact, this consequence seems to be so obvious that it has gone unnoticed for the greatest thinkers of the last centuries until Wittgenstein was aware of it. Up to that point, it seemed evident that if one's knowledge of his sensations is infallible, he could not make a wrong identification of a sensation that had been previously perceived and named. Yet, as Kenny rightly remarked, Wittgenstein was interested in the question of meaning rather than in the problem of verification[18]. Once the epistemological primacy of the mind's eye is accepted, it seems clear that everyone knows the meaning of the name chosen to denominate the sensation. From this point of view, meaning is generated in the mind. As seen above, however, Wittgenstein holds that a name is understood not because of having immediate contact with the object it refers to, but when the use of that name in a public language is mastered. For it is only then, once we can distinguish between correct and incorrect uses, that a psychological concept can acquire meaning.

After having exposed the confusion Wittgenstein intends to dissolve, I will show how it has come to play a fundamental role in the internal structure of diverse psychological theories. To begin with, Descartes states in his Second Meditation that thought is the only attribute that cannot be detached from him, what brings him to conclude that he is "only a thing that thinks; that is, a mind, or soul, or intellect, or reason" and not "that connection of members which is called the human body"[19]. As a consequence of Descartes' radical distinction between a *res cogitans* and a *res extensa*, the individual remained enclosed in his own mind. If we add to this that Descartes considered mind and body as realities that can exist autonomously and independently from each other, it becomes evident that the

[17] *PI* § 1.

[18] A. Kenny, *The Verification Principle and the Private Language Argument* [w:] *The Private Language Argument*, ed. O.R. Jones, Macmillan, London 1971, s. 204−228.

[19] R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Hackett Publishing Co., Indianapolis and Cambridge 1979, s. 19.

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individual remains definitely associated with the *res cogitans*, the realm of his mind which is presented as a kind of inner theater whose access is banned for every other person's minds. This confinement of the individual in the mind entails that other people's minds become a great enigma − to the extent that their very existence can be questioned − while contents and states of the own mind are infallibly known. From this standpoint, it is to be concluded that one would learn to denominate contents and states of the mind with the only help of the experience he has of his access to his own mind; in other words, one would learn to denominate contents and states of the mind by associating a word with a private object, so that the object will give meaning to the concept through this ceremony. Hence, our knowledge would derive from every one's private experiences which, just because of their inaccessibility to other people, should be expressed in a language that could be only understood by its user: after all, the words of this language would acquire meaning from the contents of the own mind. In view of the above, it is evident that Descartes' theory of mind involves the existence of a private language which, in turn, would serve as a basis for our public or ordinary language.

This criticism of the presuppositions of Cartesian philosophy can also be extended to British empiricism, for this philosophical current assumed the Cartesian assumption according to which we know our environment through private experiences. It goes without saying that the empiricist philosopher most directly concerned by PLA was John Locke, who compared a newborn child's mind with a blank sheet of paper upon which i d e a s – understood as every content perceived by the mind − are imprinted through experience. Based on Descartes' work, Locke held that no knowledge can be surer than our direct knowledge of these ideas. Once the mind is furnished with ideas, human language can be developed by associating words with ideas. Noteworthy is the extent to which Locke's theory fits in with the main characteristics of Wittgenstein's private language. After emphasizing the private nature of ideas by remarking that men use words "to bring out their *Ideas*, and lay them before the view of others", Locke adds: "Words in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the *Ideas* in the *Mind* of him that uses them"[20]. However, when Locke explains how people can communicate with each other although every one of them only has access to his own ideas, he does not mention public and objective criteria of meaning, but a mere s u p p o s i t i o n that does not allow us to distinguish between correct and incorrect uses of language: for Locke states that men simply "suppose" that the words they use are marks of the ideas of those men, with whom they communicate[21]. Indeed, Locke goes so far as to say that words will not serve well for communication, "when any Word does not excite in the Hearer, the same *Idea* which it stands for in the Mind of the

[20] J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991, s. 405.

[21] *Ibidem*, s. 406.

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Speaker"[22], thus assuming that the basic issue would be, retaking Wittgenstein's famous comparation, to check whether he as well as his interlocutor have a beetle in their respective boxes: yet this ultimately is unverifiable because Locke himself accepts the impossibility of accessing to other people's minds.

The influence of Cartesian philosophy on Edmund Husserl's work is also patent. For although Husserl showed large discrepancies with Descartes – among other things, by carrying out a phenomenological purification of consciousness −, he admitted remarkable coincidences with Descartes too. Indeed, Husserl expressly recognized his aim of developing a science that should be founded with radical authenticity, which required to suspend all those convictions − and all our sciences − we considered as sound to date[23]. Husserl focused this new science, phenomenology, on consciousness because he regarded it as the unquestionable foundation of every experience and every knowledge. Phenomenology takes as its starting point Husserl's distinction between the mere n a t u r a l a t t i t u d e we usually show when we pay attention to our environment and the p h e n o m e n o l o g i c a l a t t i t u d e, which requires the correct practice of *epokhé* or phenomenological reduction to attain a pure experience, whose noetic and noematic elements will be the focus of study of the phenomenological research of pure consciousness. The lack of assumptions that should characterize phenomenological research involves, according to Husserl[24], the rigorous exclusion of every statement whose formulation does not fully meet the phenomenological exigencies. But bearing in mind that phenomenology deals with private phenomena – or objects − inasmuch as they are accessible only to every one's consciousness, it seems evident that phenomenology presupposes the existence of a private language. After all, Husserl himself places strong emphasis on the need for phenomenology to remain completely independent of the use that the phenomenologist can make of the ordinary or public language to contact with the public – as was the case with Husserl, when he wrote his voluminous work −, for ordinary language is a mere question of fact, while phenomenological analysis maintains its epistemological value regardless of whether there are languages which serve human relationships, and independently of whether there are human beings and nature[25].

William James, for his part, yearned to develop a purely subjective language which had no connection with the objective world. When he described the main sources of error in psychology, he missed "a special vocabulary for subjective facts" that allows to denominate the subjective states every individual can perceive through introspection[26]. Assuming that the essence of those states and processes

[22] *Ibidem*, s. 477.

[23] Zob. E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1973.

[24] Zob. *idem*, *Logical Investigations*, Vol. 1, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1970.

[25] *Ibidem*.

[26] W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Ma.) and London 1983, s. 194.

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denominated by our psychological expressions are known through introspection, James thinks that a purely psychological language would not only be completely free of every objective reference, but would also make possible that words were directly associated with what we discover through introspection. In this respect, James regrets not only that language has been made by people who were not psychologists, but also that men still use almost exclusively the vocabulary of outward things. But most of all, he warned that our psychological language leads us to overlook psychological phenomena because it lacks the words to denominate them. In addition, our language imposes a peculiar order and structure to these phenomena, so that "[t]he continuous flow of the mental stream is sacrificed" by common speech[27]. However, if we pay attention to the last two problems denounced by James, we will realize that both give another turn of the screw to the questions we are analyzing: for just as the solution to the first problem would consist in developing a private vocabulary of unknown psychological phenomena, it is also true that the solution of the second problem would require the creation of a private language whose structure should be completely arbitrary for everybody except for that individual who had developed this alleged language.

Noam Chomsky is also characterized for being a thinker with a strong influence of Cartesian philosophy. As is well known, one of his main contributions was the notion of "universal grammar", which, according to Chomsky constitutes "an element of the genotype"[28]. Hence, even a child who had little contact with his native language could be able to infer bit by bit the rules of such language, for universal grammar would contain the innate principles that are general to all natural languages, whose rules would be unconsciously followed by their users. Chomsky's mentalism was shared by Jerry Fodor, who held that a natural language – including the mother tongue − cannot be learnt without already having "a system capable of representing the predicates in that language and their extensions"[29]. Bearing in mind that the system in question cannot be the very language that is being learnt – for in this case we would fall into a vicious circle −, Fodor refers to an innate system of linguistic universals he calls 'language of thought', which would be comparable to machine language of computers inasmuch as this is not only previous to programming languages, but also necessary for the existence of such languages. At first, it can be argued that Chomsky's and Fodor's mentalism proposes what we might call a private linguistic structure, so that language would be acquired by following and interpreting a private pattern. In relation to Chomsky's 'universal grammar, it cannot be understood how rules could be followed without being known. If they were public or shared by a community, there would be a *practice* that gives meaning to language; yet Chomsky proposes to follow

[27] *Ibidem*, s. 195.
[28] N. Chomsky, *Rules and Representations*, Columbia University Press, New York 1980, s. 65.
[29] J. Fodor, *The Language of Thought*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Ma.) 1979, s. 64.

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rules that, although unknown to every one of its alleged users, can be identified as belonging to the relevant natural language by attending to the state and processes of the own mind. However, if those rules are represented in the mind similarly to the way in which information is codified in a computer − i.e., without their having to exist independently of the representation −, everyone should attend his own mental representations of linguistic rules to know the rules of his own language: but, in such a case, it is not clear at all how mental representations could play such a role, for they would be linked from the beginning to the very questions they should clarify. Even when those representations could be attended, rule following would depend on something as arbitrary as every one's interpretation of it. Likewise, Fodor's language of thought requires, albeit implicitly, that the child already has the innate capacity not only to match each word with the relevant private meaning of the language of thought, but also to interpret correctly every meaning − that is, to interpret how every word must be used. It can thus be questioned if both abilities might in turn require that other abilities are previously implemented, which would leave the door open to the possibility of a never-ending chain of abilities that, because of their private nature, would not allow to settle once and for all the process of interpretation. For, as Wittgenstein showed, if a rule were privately followed, "thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same as obeying it"[30].

WAS WITTGENSTEIN A BEHAVIOURIST IN DISGUISE?

While it is true that behaviourism arose as reaction to introspective psychology, the origin of this psychological paradigm can also be regarded as a critical positioning against Cartesian dualism. Indeed, Watson concluded that there is no objective evidence of the existence of c o n s c i o u s n e s s, so that behavioural psychologists should remove this term from their vocabulary and pay attention o n l y to what can be observed, that is, behaviour[31]: therefore, only when psychologists propose explanations and make predictions using observable data, will psychology reach the status of natural science. Wittgenstein was aware that an inappropriate interpretation of his work might lead some people to confuse him with a behaviourist. That is why he established this imaginary dialogue with himself:

> "Are you not really a behaviourist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human behaviour is a fiction?" − If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a g r a m m a t i c a l fiction[32].

[30] *PI* § 202.
[31] Zob. J.B. Watson, *Behaviorism*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick (NJ) 2009.
[32] *PI* § 307.

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What Wittgenstein means is that mental processes do not constitute any fiction or confusion: far from denying the existence of mental processes, he explicitly recognizes their existence[33]. Hence, the fiction he refers to is not ontological but grammatical: to be precise, it is the confusion generated when assuming that a private object corresponds to each psychological term. In relation to this, Wittgenstein admits there is a clear difference in pain-behaviour depending on whether it is accompanied by pain, which seemingly means that the sensation is "a nothing"; however, he replies: "It is not a something, but not a nothing either!"[34]. This means that the word "sensation" – or "pain", etc. − does not refer to a "something" such as a private object; but it has a certain use, so that it has a meaning too. It goes without saying that this is a grammatical remark; it is not for nothing that Wittgenstein adds that he rejects "the grammar which tries to force itself on us here"[35]. This is just the grammar that Wittgenstein criticizes time and again: it is the model of designation object-name that often leads to assume that private objects exist. Behaviourism seems to fall prey to this assumption by accepting the model of designation object-name and concluding that if objects of consciousness remain inaccessible to other people, the most appropriate is to analyze observable behaviour. But as Cook rightly pointed out, if the idea that private objects exist is to be rejected, then it no longer makes sense to distinguish, in the Cartesian way, between a mind and a body, so that the idea of a body completely independent of mental faculties is also misplaced[36]. After all, we do not say that a certain body eats, dances or climbs a mountain at a given time; yet we do not say either that a mind thinks, fears or remembers: furthermore, we do not say that a body or a mind is in pain. All these predicates are always attributed to a person, to a "human being"[37]. It is true that behaviour constitutes a criterion to attribute mental states and processes; yet we are not referring here to the body movements behaviourism deals with, but to human behaviours. Moreover, Wittgenstein goes on to say that "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"[38]. That is, states of consciousness can only be attributed to those beings who show human behaviours, for the concept of 'consciousness' is derived from the concept of 'human being', and not the other way around. These grammatical remarks, whose importance suffices, in my view, to give Wittgenstein a place in the history of psychology, culminate in the contem-

[33] Zob. *PI* § 308.
[34] *PI* § 304.
[35] *Ibidem*.
[36] Zob. Cook J., *Human Beings* [w:] *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. P. Winch, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1969, s. 117–151.
[37] *PI* §§ 283, 360.
[38] *PI* § 281.

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plation of the human body as "the best picture of the human soul"[39], for the mean of expression of the mind – i.e., the soul − is none other than human behaviour.

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SUMMARY

The present paper aims to show how Wittgenstein's so-called 'private language argument' (PLA) affects diverse psychological theories. To this end, it starts by describing the main lines of the PLA and explaining why the idea of a private language constitutes a logical impossibility. Then, it is shown that the psychological theories of Descartes, Locke, Husserl, James, Fodor and Chomsky presuppose the existence of a private language, so that these theories lack internal consistency. Lastly, it is clarified why PLA, far from turning Wittgenstein into a behaviourist, involves a critique of behaviourism.

Keywords: private language, Cartesianism, introspection, Wittgenstein

[39] *PI*, s. 178.