

Transversal: International Journal for the Historiography of Science 2021 (10): 1-12
ISSN 2526-2270
Belo Horizonte – MG / Brazil
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Special Issue – Wittgenstein and the Sciences: History and Philosophy of Science and Science Education

The Epistemology of Psychology from a Perspective of Wittgenstein's Grammatical Analysis

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Abstract:

This article evaluates Wittgenstein's possible contributions to an epistemology of psychology. Although the author admittedly neither proposes an epistemology nor examines specific issues of psychology as a science, we understand that his reflections on the meaning of psychological concepts may contribute to a better understanding of psychology as a science, which involves understanding its object and methods. With that goal in mind and based on the concept of language developed in his second phase, especially in his work *Philosophical Investigations*, we retrace his efforts to obtain a picture of the grammar of psychological concepts, emphasizing two of its aspects: first, the place and role of first-person expressive propositions in the psychological language-game and second, how this understanding of the perspective of the first person implies in refusing to reduce explanations of human behavior to causal explanations in favor of explanations based on reasons.

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Keywords: Language; Psychology; Grammar; Objectivity; Subjectivity

Received: 01 March 2021. Reviewed: 03 May 2021. Accepted: 12 May 2021.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24117/2526-2270.2021.i10.02>



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Introduction

After returning to Cambridge in 1929, Wittgenstein developed a growing interest in questions related to the philosophy of psychology which lasted until he died in 1951. His reflections reached maturity in the mid-1940s and are part of the texts posthumously published as *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology I and II* (1980) and *Last Writings on the Philosophy of psychology I and II* (1982). In addition to these texts, essential observations in the form of lecture notes were later published as *Lectures on Philosophical Psychology 1946-1947* (1988), in addition to notes scattered throughout his vast work. These observations on psychology took place at a time when Wittgenstein had already developed his new concept of linguistic significance, which takes shape in *Philosophical Investigations* published two years after his

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death and opposes in several ways his “old way of thinking” of the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Until recently, Wittgenstein's studies on the philosophy of psychology were overshadowed by his observations on language, but this has changed considerably, and they are now the subject of increasing interest.²

On the other hand, the historical context of Wittgenstein's analyses is a movement that tries to establish psychology as a science and started in the nineteenth century with Wundt's introspectionist psychology. It suggests that the object of psychology is consciousness, including its processes, events and states, which are to be investigated by means of introspectionist methods. According to these, data used in investigations are to be collected from reports by subjects about their own processes, events and states. This kind of investigation focuses on what is seen or perceived by the subject himself, inside himself when he feels a sensation, a conscious state, a thought, which are only indirectly perceived by the researcher/observer by observing the subject's behavior.

In the nineteenth century, a large number of psychologists felt uneasy about the introspectionist method. They deemed it unreliable, subject to many distortions and above all, subjective. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this discontent took shape in Watson's first version of behaviorism, who considered that the introspectionist method lacked objectivity as it depended on individual accounts, unlike the methods of physics and chemistry, which should guide psychology if it intended to become a true science.³ The science of psychology had to abandon consciousness as its object and all associated terms, such as mind, mental states or images, conscious content, etc., as well as the introspectionist method.

The object of psychology was now objectively observable behavior, which would help psychology walk a safe path, just as physics, chemistry or biology, eventually making it a science of behavior. However, according to Wittgenstein: “the confusions and barrenness of psychology are not to be explained by calling it a ‘young science’; its state is not comparable with that of physics, for instance, in its beginnings [...] For in psychology, there are experimental methods and *conceptual confusion*” (PI § 232).⁴

Given this diagnosis, the question is what could be Wittgenstein's contribution to an epistemology of psychology, considering that he repeatedly stated that he, as a philosopher, was not concerned with either epistemology or philosophy of science and, more precisely, was neither interested in the procedures and methods of psychology as such. Wittgenstein's challenge here is the problem science of psychology faces in defining its object and method of investigation, as stated in the quote above, but also in a wide range of other observations, such as in this excerpt from *Lectures and Conversations*:

When we are studying psychology, we may feel there is something unsatisfactory, some difficulty about the whole subject or study – because we are taking physics as our ideal science. We think of formulating laws as in physics. And then we find we

² Examples: Cometti (2004) *Ludwig Wittgenstein et la Philosophie de la Psychologie*; Gil de Pareja (1992) *La Filosofía de la Psicología de Ludwig Wittgenstein*; Harré and Tisaw (2005) *Wittgenstein and Psychology: A Practical Guide*; Hacker (1993) *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind*; Schulte (1993) *Experience and Expression: Wittgenstein Philosophy of Psychology*; Marques (2002) *O interior: Linguagem e Mente em Wittgenstein*; Schroeder (2001) *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*.

³ According to Hacker, “there is no evidence to suggest that he [Wittgenstein] read Watson's book, but he certainly read Russell's *Analysis of mind* in which Watson's ideas are discussed” (Hacker 2001, 105). We will not historically retrace how Wittgenstein came across the problems discussed in this article. Regarding this matter, we suggest reading Hacker's works *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind*, and *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will*.

⁴ In this article, we use the abbreviation PI to refer to *Philosophical Investigations*, followed by the corresponding paragraphs for the first part and the page number for the second part. *Lectures and conversations* will be referred to by the abbreviation LC, followed by the page number.

cannot use the same sort of 'metric', the same ideas of measurement as in physics. [...] And this sort of trouble goes all through the subject. Or suppose you want to speak of causality in the operation of feelings. "Determinism applies to the mind as truly as to physical things." This is obscure, because when we think of causal laws in physical things, we think of experiments. We have nothing like this in connection with feelings and motivation. And yet, psychologists want to say: "There must be some law" – although no law has been found. (LC, 42)

Wittgenstein does not intend to provide answers about what should be the object or method of psychology. He rather aims to clarify the concepts of psychology grammatically so that it may find its object and method by itself. He is only interested in describing the concepts of psychology, i.e., in performing an analysis of its meaning as constituted by our ordinary language, excluding any phenomena, since Philosophy "leaves everything as it is". The kind of investigation Philosophy is in charge of concerns the *possibilities* of the phenomena, i.e., a grammatical investigation: "such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language" (PI § 90).

Wittgenstein's investigation is, therefore, a philosophical investigation, which – in his own terms – is a grammatical investigation of the concepts of psychology. Although he uses concepts of psychology to develop his investigation, this does not mean that he is doing psychology since: "an investigation is possible in connection with mathematics, which is entirely analogous to our investigation of psychology. It is just as little a *mathematical* investigation as the other is a psychological one" (PI § 232). This is an eminently philosophical investigation, as far as he understands, the philosophy and its task as an investigation of the conditions of the possibility of meaning. This investigation is not concerned with phenomena, as philosophy is not meant to investigate them. It rather examines what makes sense and does not make sense to say about phenomena, i.e., "our investigation, however, is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the '*possibilities*' of phenomena" (PI § 90).

If we think about science with its own grammar and the various sciences with their own grammars, we find that the confusion pointed out by Wittgenstein was precisely the attempt of psychology in following the methods of other sciences, especially physics. This distinction shows that Wittgenstein's work is, as it were, prior to scientific procedures, since he is not directly interested in scientific activity, but rather in the conceptual confusions that could prevent science from successfully performing its activity. Regarding psychology, Wittgenstein feels that this approach is urgent because the very language of psychology is confusing, as it uses both descriptive and referential language to deal with the psychological phenomenon, i.e., an undue analogy in different regions of our language. This confusion is caused by a certain image of the mind, the Cartesian image, which results from an analogy between different domains of our language. To solve that confusion, this erroneous image needs to be rectified by revealing the effective use of psychological concepts, which is achieved by analyzing and describing the language game of psychology, referring to the use of these concepts in our ordinary language that is, after all, the place of origin of psychological concepts.

Psychology as a science is in charge of making true statements about psychological phenomena, which can only achieve if it clearly defines its own object. This is where philosophy can help, since achieving that clarity depends on clarifying the concepts of psychology. On the other hand, such an undertaking may provide important epistemological contributions for the development of psychology since it involves issues like the objectivity of explanations in psychology, which in turn influence the validity and truth of theories.

This article analyzes an aspect that Wittgenstein apparently emphasized, i.e., the language of psychology cannot do without the first-person perspective; otherwise, psychology runs the risk of losing its own object. In terms of a psychological phenomenon, the first-person perspective allows reconsidering the explanations of these phenomena, which cannot be reduced to causal explanations but need to contain the motives and reasons that allow understanding the meaning of these phenomena. The reasons cannot be conveyed without a first-person perspective and this was precisely the kind of perspective that was considered non-objective by the first criticisms of introspectionism, which demanded its removal. However, that criticism went so far that, according to Wittgenstein, it risked eliminating the very object of psychology. The proposal precisely aims to emphasize that the use of the first person is indispensable to constitute the object of psychology. The question is: how shall one proceed without lending oneself to the subjectivism of mentalist and introspectionist conceptions?

The Grammar of Psychology

According to Wittgenstein, one of the fundamental issues for establishing the object of psychology, especially of behaviorism, was the idea that its objectivity should be achieved by an investigation of human behavior that would dismiss looking to the interior and would base such an investigation exclusively on observing behavior. In such an investigation, every first-person account is considered tainted with subjectivity and should be discarded. However, Wittgenstein insists that the analysis of the psychological language game reveals that the elimination of first-person reports causes the loss of the very object of psychology since those reports are part of the very constitution of the meaning of what we call human behavior. However, as the argument of private language⁵ shows, the way out of confusion is to understand that these reports do not describe private and subjective objects and events according to mentalism and introspectionism.

The analysis of psychological concepts is based on Wittgenstein's reflections on language developed in his work *Philosophical Investigations*,⁶ which he uses to start his investigation of the "conceptual confusion" he believes is present in psychology of his time and which needs to be solved so that psychology may develop as a science. Thus, his investigation starts with an attempt to understand the language game of psychological terms and concepts and then clarifies the confusions that psychologists are prone to if they do not consider that use in their own activities. Careful consideration of the uses of psychological concepts in our ordinary language may thus help us to clarify the very object of psychology as a science. According to the understanding that grammatical analysis "leaves everything as it is", Wittgenstein's goal is not the kind of investigation that implies any kind of interference in psychology itself. Rather, he aims to clarify the linguistic origins of problems and confusions that hamper the development of the science of psychology. Similarly, he does not analyze every single psychological term since what matters is to reveal the common origin of difficulties.⁷

The conception of language in *Philosophical Investigations*, anchored in the conception that the meaning of words depends on how they are used in different language games,

⁵ Excerpt of *Philosophical Investigations* (paragraph 243 to 315), commonly referred to as the private language argument, in which Wittgenstein demonstrates the incoherence of privatist conceptions of the meaning of psychological concepts.

⁶ This means that the changes in perspective made by Wittgenstein during the period of return to Philosophy will not be taken into account.

⁷ Although a large part of his writings on psychology try to clarify specific terms and even contain a proposal for the elaboration of a "genealogy of psychological concepts", Wittgenstein understands that it is quite an impossible undertaking, considering the enormous plurality and multiplicity of meanings and uses of psychological concepts.

implies that meaning cannot be generalized, and this attempt is based on a referentialist⁸ conception of language, which reduces the meaning of a word to its relationship to objects they refer to. In dealing with the concepts of psychology, or with any concepts of any other language game, Wittgenstein shows that since they are connected to their use, they are intricately connected with human practice in the world. If we consider that the understanding of the meaning of a particular word or expression requires to understand the practices and activities interconnected with language, then it is also essential to reveal, in psychology, the background of the practices with which that language is intertwined. One of the misconceptions of psychology, according to Wittgenstein, is precisely to lose sight of this aspect of psychological language, trying to treat the phenomenon in an isolated and one-sided way. In practice, this resulted in attempts to explain psychology through descriptions of its own objects and facts, which were isolated and investigated by means of methods that allowed to define its features and properties, the result of which Wittgenstein considered a misleading parallel, as he stated that: "psychology treats of processes in the psychical sphere, as does physics in the physical" (PI § 571).

However, psychological concepts do not acquire their meaning through a process of recognition from a rigid and fixed referent which establishes it in an entirely determined way, as introspectionism proposed, on the one hand, taking consciousness and its processes as a referent and, on the other hand, as behaviorism proposed, whose referent is based on observable external behavior. According to Wittgenstein, psychological concepts are immersed in the vast complexity of human practices and this implies that the use of these concepts is related to a plurality of phenomena that are part of these practices, which makes it impossible to isolate something within this complexity, such as that ultimate referent that would ensure the meaning of a concept. It is precisely the diversity and plurality of human experiences and practices in the world that constitute the meaning in the language game of psychology and making attempts to overcome diversity and plurality is an unnecessary, useless, and misleading attitude.

Wittgenstein's argument of private language dismantled the privatist and subjectivist assumptions of mentalist conceptions, which led many to place him in the ranks of behaviorism. However, Wittgenstein also refuses the behaviorist attempt that tries to explain the psychological phenomenon through a mere description of observable behavior. His refusal is based on the understanding that psychological language has a feature that is not shared by sciences such as physics or chemistry. Psychological language involves taking into account a psychological subject who expresses himself by using the first person of that language. This use has to do with the fact that psychological phenomena involve the manifestation/expression of subjective states in the form of first-person propositions, such as "I feel pain". That does not mean that these manifestations express something that lies beyond behavior or accompanies it. The proposition is not something external that allows us to infer what takes place internally, it is rather a constituent part of what we call the "interior" or, to avoid this term, of subjective experience. The relationship is internal, i.e., it is part of the meaning of "pain", for example, its possibility of expression in behavior, in an intrinsic connection between the internal and the external. Learning this language is also learning how to express one's subjective experiences in an expressive language by using first-person sentences.

Thus, expressing does not mean taking something from the inside to the outside; expressing is a way of acting. When I use the proposition "I feel pain", I am expressing my pain, what I do is expressing my pain. Thus, the subject or the first-person perspective cannot be eliminated because if we do so, no one else may act in my place, no one else may express

⁸ This conception is generally referred to as the Augustinian vision of language, but Wittgenstein aims to criticize a certain image that he believes has always been present in Philosophy and even in common sense. His book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* represents that image of language.

my pain for me. However, in a description, that exchange takes place in a normal way. It makes no difference who describes it because the descriptive proposition lacks this privileged first-person perspective.⁹ It is always the relation of the proposition to something else, in the present case a fact, and any language user may perform this relation without losing any of its meaning. This is why:

Seeing, hearing, thinking, feeling, willing, are not the subject of psychology *in the same sense* as that in which the movements of bodies, the phenomena of electricity etc., are the subjects of physics. You can see this from the fact that the physicists see, hear, think about, and inform us of these phenomena and the psychologists observes the *external reactions* (the behavior) of the subject. (PI § 571)

External reactions, including first-person accounts, constitute what we call human behavior, in a sense that does not take place with physical phenomena. This does not eliminate the interior, but it is reconfigured based on language. Expressiveness is an ability that human beings develop to exteriorize their subjective experience. What is called into question is the concept of interior and its role in the psychological language game, since we have a certain image of the interior that we use to interact daily. There is nothing wrong with the common image of the interior, it does not need to be corrected. The problem is the image of the interior made by Philosophy, which confuses us and does not allow us to understand the place it occupies in our lives.¹⁰

Clarifying the concept of interior, Wittgenstein shows that it organizes the language game of psychology, it is the rule for the functioning of this particular language game, just as time¹¹ and the physical object are the rules for the functioning of other language games. Propositions that contain those terms are not descriptions of facts, since those expressions are not names of supposed objects, but rather rules for the functioning of the language game. The word "interior" does not designate a region of reality, a world populated by objects and processes that are accessible exclusively to the subject himself, it is rather a rule for the functioning of psychological language. If behaviorism was right in denying that the interior could be accessed and described by means of introspectionist methods, it was wrong to dismiss any role for subjective experience in the explanation of human behavior because if the sensation is not Something, it is neither a Nothing (PI § 304), it has a place in our lives and experiences and as such, it plays a role in explaining human behavior.

Hence, expressiveness is a function of language that is associated with the natural expressiveness of human behavior; expressiveness concerns man as a whole and his actions in the world. Thus, the meaning of these sentences has no relation to supposed objects or internal events, it is rather the result of the actual practices of man. By defining expressiveness in this manner, Wittgenstein eliminates the distinction between the inside and the outside as two different regions of reality that have their own ontology. Subjective experience contains the totality of the individual, which implies to say that there is only an interior if it can be expressed on the exterior: expressiveness is constitutive and inseparable from subjective experience. Thus, in this expressive function, the role of first-person

⁹ The authority of the first person is not related to a privileged perspective of access to its own alleged internal processes, but rather to that use where the subject cannot be replaced by any other.

¹⁰ The analogy of sensations introduced by the beetle in the box presented in paragraph 293 of the *Philosophical Investigations* reveals that confusion.

¹¹ According to Arley Moreno: "As Agostinho would say, we know intimately what time is. Wittgenstein would add that we have an empirical conception of its nature based on the image of water flowing in a single direction with no return. Based on that, we build instruments to measure it and the results define, or don't, our conception of its essence, which will then become public and operational; the interest that these results arouse in us will define the essence of time" (Moreno 2001, 13).

sentences that manifest subjective experiences is fundamental, because the first person cannot be replaced by third-person propositions. Attempts to eliminate the interior through a descriptive language of behavior in the third person inevitably lead to the elimination of the subject and of an unwanted (private) subjectivity. However, something fundamental for the very understanding of man as such is removed as well: his humanity is lost if the fundamental part of his way of acting in the world is removed.

This subject, which we call a unit, is a living human being “in the flow of life” rather than a being composed of a body and a soul, of an interior and an exterior whose relationship would require an explanation. This is precisely what we deduce from the paragraph in which Wittgenstein deals with his attitude towards the soul:¹² this particular being is a living being, an inseparable unity between body and soul, between the internal and the external. Thus, we become aware of the fact that all these terms become unnecessary if we use the term “living human being” and that those distinctions do not occur in common situations of interaction and communication. In these situations, there is no question about what belongs to the body or the soul, to the interior or the exterior. When we talk about the experience of a subject, we do not question whether this experience belongs to either the body or the soul, or whether it concerns an interior we cannot access, because we speak of a *human being*, not of his body or soul.

The subject uses the first person to express his beliefs, desires, and feelings, but that does not mean that this kind of use depends on a relationship of the subject with his own beliefs, desires or feelings as mental states that are referred to by expressions. This kind of use does not depend on the relationship of expressions with any type of entity, it is rather the result of learning common and everyday practices in which it is involved since birth. Similarly, attributing a belief, desire, or feeling to someone else is not a statement about something that is going on in that person's mind, which would be the result of observing that person's behavior from which a corresponding mental state is inferred. The use in first and third persons are places in the psychological language game and their learning does not depend on a relationship with supposed mental states, but exclusively with the rules that establish these uses in this language game. Learning them involves developing the ability to occupy the distinct places of the first and third person, which are interchangeable in the psychological language game.

The first person seems to have a privileged place, as it is the result of direct access to the private and so-called “inner world” and its objects and, in particular, to the one that is referred to by the expression “I”, which has led to a picture of the interior in which subjectivity becomes a kind of substantiality, as in Cartesian philosophy, promoting an investigation into what is, after all, that entity this word refers to. In Wittgenstein's perspective, however, the subjective, the internal, has no substantiality, it is not a dimension of reality, but rather a place in the language game that regulates a special possibility of organizing human experience in the world, including its expression in first-person propositions. Introspection does not play any role in the constitution of the meaning of these expressions, because the meaning is not given by something that is “seen” either internally or externally, but rather by the rules of the language game.

When Wittgenstein refers to the interior, he insists that we have an image of the interior and that this image is the basis of the functioning of psychological language. He aims to clarify this image, which is present in common everyday language and has been distorted by Cartesianism and its ramifications, including behaviorism, which intended to be critical of this current, but which ended up making the same mistakes. This image, if correctly

¹² According to Wittgenstein, for a soul, this attitude is the result of a certainty found in our image of the world, which does not require any kind of proof or explanation, since it is part of a set of propositions that we accept without question: “My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul” (PI II 178).

understood, rehabilitates the concept of the interior. Thus, "interior" is a concept that appears in grammatical propositions that form a certain image and allow this language game to function. This is how a subject and subjectivity are revealed in language. They are concepts that have an expressive role, when one is expressing his or her own inner states.

Explanations Based on Reasons and the Problem of Objectivity

The notes on the mistakes of trying to reduce psychological language to the referentialist conception of meaning has impacts and consequences for the consideration of psychology as a science, since, as we have seen, Wittgenstein thinks that it is also trapped in this one-sided view of language, which affects the very possibility of psychology to adequately think its object. In addition, reducing psychological language to the referential conception of meaning implies reducing psychology to the methods of natural sciences, assuming that explanations of human behavior should be established through causal laws of behavior. The problem arises as behaviorism refused the methodology of introspectionism, which led to a general refusal of resorting to subjectivity to promote scientificity of psychology. That effort aimed to eradicate any trait from the psychological discourse that would bring back the subject, even if surreptitiously, to the investigation. Thus, it became a priority to eliminate any first-person account from the search for objectivity of the discourse and from psychological investigation, since it would certainly be contaminated with subjectivity. What Wittgenstein shows is that we have other procedures to ensure the objectivity of these reports, other than those offered by introspectionism, which he also rejects. The objectivity of these reports is associated with the objectivity of reasons, as we will see.

An important consequence of the unavoidable first-person perspective in the grammar of psychology is its place in the explanations of human behavior. Wittgenstein refers directly to this question in the above-mentioned paragraph of *Lectures and conversations* in which he describes the difficulties of psychology in finding an adequate method that would result from the attempt to reduce the methods of psychology to the methods of physics and thus establish causal laws for human behavior, such as in physics, where causal laws explain physical phenomena. Wittgenstein emphasizes that no such laws apply to human behavior and rejects methodological reductionism found, e.g., in proposals as diverse as behaviorism and Freud's psychoanalysis.

In this paragraph, Wittgenstein focuses on showing what a mistake it would be to look for causal laws of human behavior: "there are no such laws", and therefore, such an undertaking on the part of psychology is doomed to failure. Human behavior cannot be subjected to observations and experiments like objects of physics, chemistry, or biology. Psychological phenomena are not phenomena *in the same sense* as physical or chemical phenomena.

Attempts to reduce psychology to a natural science root in the notion that to be considered a science, psychology has to eliminate any trace of subjectivity from its object. To achieve that, psychology considers instead observable external behavior as its object, which needs to be observed and described using a kind of language that does not involve subjective aspects. Explanations of a given phenomenon need to occur from a perspective of the causal processes that produce it, observed and described in the third person, which would allow their generalization in the form of laws. However, as we have seen, Wittgenstein questions if this is still what we consider human behavior, if it is, e.g., a sensation or motivation.

The answer is no because by eliminating the first person's perspective, we eliminate a relevant part of the very constitution of the sense of sensation or motivation. As such, the first-person perspective is part of the explanation of what it is. In other words, to understand what a sensation is, one necessarily has to consider the role that such concepts play in psychological language, which reveals what the analyzed phenomenon is.

However, an explanation that contains a first-person perspective is not a causal explanation, but rather an explanation based on reasons. The difference between explanations of human behavior and explanations of natural events is that the latter try to discover a general law that applies to these events, while the former seek to understand the meaning of human behavior in relation to the whole of human life. To achieve that, explanations provided by the subject play a fundamental role. However, reasons do not work in the same way in explanations if they explain in such a way as to provide generalizations. Reasons always depend on the way the subject himself justifies his action before others. They function as a criterion to judge the correctness or incorrectness of actions, to evaluate if actions are acceptable or not.

The fact that reasons are justifications presented by the subject and thus provide his behavior with meaning is not the result of observation through experiments, but simply the result of observation and description of how the language game functions, of what man actually says and does. We do not need any further explanation than the one that explains the very functioning of the language game, neither anything in addition to the practices involved, nor something else that explains why man acts the way he does. The explanation involves asking him why he acts the way he does and the answer we receive in the form of reasons for his acting is the justification, i.e., the explanation, which makes the need for any additional explanations obsolete.

These explanations seem insufficient and require complementation, as if something outside the language game should provide this explanation, since we feel that the reasons provided by the subject cannot be the "true causes" of what he does. As these reasons are provided by an acting subject, they may differ among subjects. Identical reasons may cause different behavior in distinct subjects, which seems to make reasons less efficient to explain behavior.

Apparently, an adequate explanation of behavior can only be given by a description of a fact produced by some kind of observation and experiment, which cannot be provided by reasons, since these, in a wrong analogy, are considered descriptions of internal events. This is not accepted as an explanation due to their private and inaccessible nature, because that which they would have to describe would be so-called subjective experiences, which would be their meaning. Considering that only descriptions can be true or false and that only true propositions can explain something, only propositions describing observable external behavior can be accepted as explanations for behavior. However, this clearly shows how a false analogy may lead to misleading issues and confusions, since propositions do not all have the same criteria of meaning. These criteria are the rules that establish the correctness of the use of language in its different contexts. The rules are not causal explanations of that use, but reasons which are presented by the subject who uses the language. It is a movement within the language game that does not depend on a relationship with something external so that it may be accepted as a criterion.

However, what allows us to accept reasons as explanations of behavior is that the expression of experience is a feature of certain sentences regarding their use in a language game, from which we conclude that they must follow public rules of meaning, just like any other word or sentence of our language. In other words, for a reason to become a justification of an action, it has to meet the criteria that have been established for their use in a specific language game. It is not a relationship between what the subject says and what – actually – takes place inside him, but the relationship between what he says and the totality of the situation in which he is inserted, such as the relationship between what he says and the way he behaves subsequently.

Accepting first-person propositions as a criterion for the attribution of a subjective experience does not mean accepting them as external evidence of what takes place internally, but rather as part of the subjective experience of man. The subjective human experience is related to language, especially to first-person propositions through which it is

expressed on the one hand, and which, on the other hand, allows to give them a meaning and even to develop new possibilities, since certain experiences depend on a linguistic articulation so that they may exist.¹³ Psychological concepts do not refer to a specific property or feature, they are an articulation of many aspects of human life and experience.

At this point, the following objection could come up: if psychology, in its practice, needs to take into account forms of explanation that differ from those provided by causal laws, how can we still consider that these explanations are objective? Was not behaviorism's revolt against introspectionism precisely caused by the fact that resorting to the inner state and its description lacked objectivity? Do reasons have some kind of objectivity in explaining human behavior?

From Wittgenstein's perspective, the answer is once again based on considerations on the foundations of linguistic significance, which influence the understanding of the very possibility of objective knowledge. The difficulty of accepting that reasons can be objective explanations of human behavior is consistent with the notion that explanations need to be given on the basis of ultimate foundations that ensure the truth of the propositions that result from these explanations. These foundations need to be universal, i.e., they have to be valid regardless of time or place. In psychology, all actions and behaviors should be explained uniformly and based on general laws of human behavior to provide propositions that constitute true knowledge about human behavior.

Now, explanations based on reasons do not feel objective because they relate to the subject who expresses them. Therefore, they are particular and diverse explanations and cannot be used to create actual knowledge, which, on the contrary, would require uniformity of behavior and explanation. Once reasons have been admitted as a possibility of justifying knowledge, to what degree can they be objective? Would objective knowledge not become impossible, due to the lack of the objective safety of causal laws? This question dissolves when we look at the way Wittgenstein repositions the foundations of the recognition of our "common way of acting": what lies at the end of the chain of reasons is our acting. Reasons have a goal, but this goal is not an ultimate foundation in the form of an absolutely true proposition, but our way of acting. When we no longer have any reasons to provide, what we can show is the way we act, which appears as a "bedrock where the spade is turned".¹⁴ It is the end of the chain of reasons and the place where our questions stop.

It is part of that common way of acting that, as we act, we provide reasons for the way we act. This way of explaining our actions to each other through reasons plays a decisive role in our interactions. It is part of our common way of acting that we think about why we act the way we do, that we ask each other why, and that we provide those reasons to others when asked to. According to the reasons that arise intersubjectively in these practices of providing and receiving reasons, we create a sense for our actions, and this sense can only be understood from a wider perspective of human action in the world, which involves the totality of the context in which those actions take place.

The reasons for behavior are objective as they arise from common and public practices. These are shared intersubjectively and therefore provide public criteria for understanding behavior. These criteria are being established like a grammar that guides practice either at the level of human actions in the world or of scientists who aim to understand and explain them.

¹³ The perception of aspects, as presented by Wittgenstein in the second part of his *Philosophical Investigations*, is an example of such an experience. However, it can only take place if we relate the experience of seeing to language, which results in a new experience.

¹⁴ "If I have exhausted the justification, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'this is simply what I do'" (PI § 217).

Final Considerations

Wittgenstein's considerations on psychology are thus reflections on the meaning of psychological terms and concepts, which implies investigating how these terms and concepts are used in the psychological language game. This means that Wittgenstein was not directly interested in the problems and questions of psychology as a science, but rather in the correct understanding of the functioning of this particular language game. Although his research does not concern psychological phenomena directly, it is of extreme importance for psychology as it helps it define its object and methods by itself. It is exceedingly difficult for psychology to progress as a science without an adequate understanding of psychological concepts.

The findings of the analysis of psychological concepts made Wittgenstein refuse to reduce the explanation of human behavior to causal relations presented in the form of general causal laws. Psychology cannot be reduced to the methods of natural sciences, to the molds of physics, without losing the significance of its own object. The psychological phenomenon involves aspects that need other models of explanation, such as explanations based on reasons in which the role of first-person propositions – which express the mind – play a leading role.

Behaviorism tried to eliminate any remnants of subjectivity from its explanations, which was typical of introspectionism, and it thereby eliminated the first-person perspective from its methods. However, according to Wittgenstein, this eliminates the very object of psychology, i.e., *human* behavior, which can only be adequately understood in a totality that also involves expressive first-person propositions. Specifically, human behavior cannot be disconnected from language, which is what provides it with its meaning. Language magnifies human experience in infinite ways. It provides a wide range of experiences that beings without language would not be able to develop.

If Psychology deals with human behavior, this qualifier, *human*, cannot be understood without the language man uses to constitute his experience in the world, making it impossible to reduce it to purely physical and biological aspects. Human behavior is shaped by language, which in turn is part of human experience in the world, thus constituting its nature. Any attempts at reductionism, especially those that try to eliminate the concepts related to the subjective experience of investigations on human behavior, would thus be doomed to failure, because by doing so, they would eliminate the object of the investigation itself.

Hence, we could conclude by stating that Wittgenstein does not simply reject causal explanations of human behavior. However, he does not admit that they are all one has to say about human behavior. Human behavior is complex. It consists of a multitude of aspects that may not be reduced to a single type of explanation.

If psychology intends to be a Science of human behavior, it needs to consider that this knowledge also implies global knowledge about the human subject, about man, rather than a partial one. Psychological terms do not allow breaking up man into parts, as they would lose their meaning. Since psychological language is deeply rooted in human practices and experiences in the world, a psychological investigation needs to consider the totality of human language, experience and action in the flow of life.

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