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# The language of physicalism: A conceptual review of physicalist ontology

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In this paper, the author explores the development and influence of the language of physicalism on the understanding of the mind and body problem. Firstly, we will address the early development and, later, the transformation of physicalism from a language methodology to a metaphysical theory, which will receive its final form in the philosophy of mind. The chapter will be concluded with a short review of the identity theory, and consequently, the question about the legitimacy of the identification of philosophical and scientific concepts will arise. Afterwards, in the second chapter, the author will use the so-called *problem picture* in order to provide a conceptual analysis of the language of physicalism. That way, we will demonstrate how the transformation of crucial philosophical notions emerges from a wider linguistic and contextual background. In this case, philosophical concepts, or language, are influenced by the metaphysics of scientism. Finally, instead of a summary, the last chapter will provide a short sketch of the ontogrammatical method, whose task is to shed light upon ontological transformations via conceptual and linguistic analysis.

## Key words:

concept, consciousness, identity theory, language, physicalism, problem picture, metaphysics, ontology, scientism



## 1. A Brief Outlook on the Genesis of Physicalism and Identity Theory

*The ideal, as we think of it, is unshakable. You can never get outside it; you must always turn back. There is no outside; outside you cannot breathe. – Where does this idea come from? It is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off (Wittgenstein, 1986, §103).*

The physicalist understanding of a human being, which generally describes a human being as a complex physical structure, finds its place in the domain of mind

and body problematics within the philosophy of mind. Despite being young<sup>1</sup>, the mentioned problematics is surrounded by the most diverse theories, which gravitate towards the question of the position of a man in the scientific image of the world. The increasingly rapid accumulation of knowledge in the natural sciences, both about the universe and about man, led philosophers—mainly of the analytical school of thought—to assume that science would give the last word on all natural phenomena and, with it, therefore, on man as well. The mentioned belief<sup>2</sup> in philosophy will mature with the development of scientific metaphysics. The purpose of the introductory chapter, therefore, should consist of the presentation of the development and rise of physicalism, which will become the basis of many philosophical reflections concerning consciousness and mentality in general.

### 1.1. *Physicalism as a language*

Scientific metaphysics is a materialistic position whose premise draws its validity from the achievements of science, especially physics. The term physicalism expresses a close, even inextricable, connection of the philosophical position to the methodology of science. In other words, the metaphysics of physicalism is based on the ontological objectification of epistemological content of physics, in which this content is—ontologically—presented as universal extraterrestrial law.<sup>3</sup> In that respect, physicalism became the dominant materialistic position in philosophy in the mid of the XX century. We could say that physicalism had captured an image of the ideal path of scientific progress.

The roots of contemporary physicalism can be traced down to the philosophy of the Vienna Circle, especially in the works of Otto Neurath and Rudolf Carnap, who introduced special philosophical and methodical use of it. Within the framework of logical positivism, the term physicalism did not have a metaphysical feature, as was the case later on, but it primarily referred to the description of general philosophical-methodological and analytical goals in terms of language analysis of propositions. The term *physicalism*, though, was not clearly developed and estab-

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<sup>1</sup> It is true that the problem of mind-body interaction has its roots in the philosophy of Descartes. However, the more recent formulation of a problem (20<sup>th</sup> century) established the Philosophy of Mind as a specific field of philosophy. Namely, in Descartes' philosophy, the problem of mind-body interaction is a part of a broader metaphysical theory, whereas, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became a clearly defined philosophy. Therefore, it is plausible to proclaim such a philosophical position as young, having in mind the difference between its roots and establishment.

<sup>2</sup> The term *belief* is adequately used in this place since philosophy cannot test its claims empirically in order to strengthen its claims on firmer objective grounds (as natural science does). It may occur to some that such an action could downgrade the seriousness of philosophical thought to mere subjective convictions. It is, therefore, worth inserting that philosophical thought, subjective as it is, strengthens itself via argumentation, which in turn should be based on logic if its goal is to reach objective validity.

<sup>3</sup> By this, it is expressed that laws of physics are applied on a universal scale beyond specific planetary (earthly) boundaries. Smart will argue that only physics and chemistry are capable of defining laws of nature in a strict sense of a word, while biology, for example, doesn't describe any laws but generalizations (Smart, 1967, p. 53).

lished, which led to mutual disagreements on the definition of this term between the members of the Vienna Circle. According to Carnap, physicalism represents the universal language that encompasses the content of all other scientific languages and in which every statement of the natural language can be translated. In other words, it was a syntax of the objective scientific methodology (Karnap, 1999, pp. 62–66). However, as it is mentioned by Daniel Stoljar, Carnap's conception of the physical language (as well as the contrast between physical and phenomenological languages) can become subject to a different interpretation. On the one hand, Carnap is introducing the physical language as the language of physics, while, on the other hand, this language is designated as a language that provides objective propositions about the world<sup>4</sup> (Stoljar, 2010, p. 22). Neurath's understanding of physicalism is similar to that of Carnap. The criticism addressed to Carnap consists of the position that the aforementioned division or deduction (between phenomenal and intersubjective language) cannot be carried out consistently and that, instead, one should deal exclusively with physical (objective) language from the beginning (Neurath, 1983, p. 54).

What is attributed to Neurath and Carnap is a linguistic thesis that claims that every statement (if it is meaningful, that is, empirical) is equivalent to a corresponding physical statement. In the early stages of development, physicalism was not simply a form of materialism, that is, it was not envisioned that way. On the contrary, physicalism is directly opposed to materialism as a metaphysical position (whose fate is to be eliminated via language analysis). The physical language is a corresponding, intersubjective language applicable to the world as it is; its legitimacy is derived from science. It is a language purged of subjective implementations and unverifiable content that is commonly present in philosophy. Attitude towards such analysis was different among philosophers at the time; as Stoljar noticed, some philosophers accepted this linguistic doctrine, while others criticized it (Schlick) or considered it terrible (Wittgenstein) (Stoljar, 2010, p. 23). The physical language, therefore, was conceived as a “meta-language”, i.e., as a kind of meta-philosophy that should eliminate propositions that turn out to be nonsensical.

### *1.2. Physicalism as metaphysics in the philosophy of mind*

One of the more important reasons for the transformation of physicalism into metaphysics becomes transparent in emphasizing the importance of the universality of physical laws and the scientific methodology in general, which is ultimately

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<sup>4</sup> It could be noticed that the mentioned ambiguity of Carnap's definition of physicalism, Stoljar argues, is marginal; because, here, Carnap is claiming that the language of physics is the most fundamental one, which is in accordance with the definition of physicalism as a language that reports about (scientific) objectivity. An objective proposition about the world is assumed by the thesis on the Unity of Science, i.e., the unity of the scientific procedure where methodical regularity is established. Physics would, therefore, represent a *model* of this general methodology (as the most fundamental science), and not something that portrays a separate syntactic structure that would differ categorically from the physical language (more: Karnap, 1999, pp. 68–69).

based on objectivity and verificationism. This change became more visible in the middle of the twentieth century. As Stoljar notes, physicalism became a metaphysical doctrine in Quine's philosophy.

In particular, for Quine, as for more contemporary philosophers, physicalism is a very general thesis about what the world is and what it is like, rather than a thesis in semantics or epistemology. For Quine, in short, it was a piece of metaphysics (Stoljar, 2001, p. 24).

The second turnabout towards the metaphysics of physicalism, and then its popularization, comes from Australia, whose prominent representatives are Armstrong and Smart. The distinctiveness of this new metaphysics (and subsequently its appeal) is based on the philosophical premise of the supremacy of scientific explanation and methodology. While the philosophers of the Vienna Circle were mostly concerned with semantics and linguistic analysis, the ontological paradigm in the philosophy of mind is evoked by the belief that what exists must be physical. Of course, physical as it is communicated by science.

Physicalism thus becomes the ontological basis for deliberation of the relationship between physical and mental phenomena within the philosophy of mind, where the latter are seen as equivalents of the former. The aforementioned paradigm was built gradually, partly due to the availability of new discoveries that arrived from the domain of sciences (neurology, biology, chemistry) and partly due to the departure from (logical) behaviorism that is often attributed to Ryle.<sup>5</sup> The theory of identity, as the original offshoot of physicalist metaphysics, had mostly risen from these conditions. Originally, this theory was developed by Place (Place, 1956) together with Feigl (Feigl, 1958) and Smart (Smart, 1963; 1970); while Armstrong further developed the theory under the name "The Central State Theory" (Armstrong, 1968).

### *1.3. Identity theory*

The most prominent expression of physicalism in the philosophy of mind certainly belongs to the identity theory, whose founders were Smart and Place. The task of identity theory is to find a way to incorporate mental processes, and therefore consciousness, into a physicalist picture of the world. Mental states are being interpreted as identical to physical states of a body (in the narrower sense—the nervous system, that is, the brain), which arises from the metaphysical background of physicalism, which implies that any mental state A can be identified with a physical state of the brain B. In this sense, identification does not mean implication, where a physical state would produce a mental event, but a physical state is identical to a mental event. In a word, that event is a physical state. Broadly speaking, this means that consciousness is localized in the brain, where it identifies

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<sup>5</sup> The misleading labeling of Ryle's philosophy as logical behaviorism is pointed out by Peter Hacker (Hacker, 2007, p. 26).

with a certain physical process.<sup>6</sup>

The identity theory is based on two sets of events that both refer to one and the same physical entity. In this case, the emphasis is placed on the description of the event, which is formalized through the contingent identity. This type of identity implies logical independence of propositions that does not (necessarily) include ontological independence of entities.<sup>7</sup> The mentioned statements are grouped into two categories, objective-scientific and the category related to psychological reports, usually labeled as topic-neutral (Smart, 1963, p. 95). According to this division (from the view of scientism), a higher degree of reality belongs to statements that are objective and scientific, while, from an axiological point of view, subject-neutral statements are neither used in the scientific methodology (of physics, chemistry, biology) nor welcomed in philosophy as well. This means that first-person reports are treated as subsequent expressions of neurological-brain processes, that is, objectively.

Physicalism, therefore, opens up the possibility of two discourses about the mental. The first refers to the mental as physical, while the second possibility refers to the mental as phenomenological.<sup>8</sup> The Cartesian dualism that was supposed to be defeated by the new theory about the relationship between the physical and the mental is actually being reincarnated in a different, more subtle, conceptual form. Both discourses are essentially contrary to each other, i.e., they dwell on the opposite sides of the mind-body relationship spectrum, and such circumstances incline one to lean towards physicalism or phenomenism in a more or less radical form.<sup>9</sup> The problem that physicalism persistently encounters seems to be the assumption that the concepts of science are compatible with philosophical concepts, i.e., that, in Aristotelian terms, they are in the same category of being. Phenomena of this kind become transparent whenever mental concepts are identified as physical in order to find their place in the objective picture of the world.

## 2. Conceptual Analysis of the Physicalist Use of Language

In this chapter, our attention will be directed to the use of physicalist language as it relates to the mind-body problem. We believe that the mind-body problem (and solution) within the physicalist theory is founded on conceptual ambiguity that

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<sup>6</sup> The fact that mental processes are identified with physical processes in this way will give rise to the “hard” problem of consciousness in the philosophy of mind, which addresses the first-person ontology of the subject. It is interesting to note how a new ontology (phenomenal or first-person ontology) is established only when a logical-linguistic barrier appears that inhibits the explication of the concept of consciousness (first-person wise) in its totality in physicalism.

<sup>7</sup> For the explanation of contingent identity, see: Place, 1970, pp. 42–51; Smart, 1970, pp. 52–66.

<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to draw attention to the fact that from the phenomenological discourse about the mental (that is, the one that concerns the first person of the subject and its experiences), new theories in the philosophy of mind will emerge. The ontological basis for this type of theories is subjectivity, whose noticeable characteristic is intentionality.

<sup>9</sup> About the overcoming of aporeticism, which emerges due to the confrontation of the mentioned metaphysical positions, the author said a few words in Janković, 2020, pp. 217–228.

impacts our understanding of the problem and the given solution. Such conceptual maneuvers unnecessarily contribute to further misconceptions about the issue. A misconception of this kind is the result of misused language, and we believe that it should be clarified in language. Conceptual analysis, which will be chosen as a method of dismantling the problem, aims to examine the ways in which philosophical concepts contribute to the development of the wider conceptual background, which we will call *problem picture*. Once established, our problem picture functions as a given framework, a theoretical cage, which further limits our possibilities of tackling the problem from different angles. Limiting the issue of the relationship between mind and body to the phenomenological and physicalist approach necessarily points to the danger of language-conceptual misuse that results from insufficient reflection on the place of creation and the use of the concepts.

### 2.1. *Problem picture*

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein claims that theoretical one-sidedness in philosophy comes from the state of being captivated by a certain framework, picture, or ideal (Wittgenstein, 1986, §103, §115, §593). The term *picture* is used here to emphasize and describe the *habitus* that became assimilated into language. The habit of using a certain set of concepts (or words) in a philosophical context means accepting one form of the rules of its use. However, as we will see later on, some elements of a particular language game can be tracked and found in another language game, which further compromises its meaning.

Thinking gets used to an established set of rules that shaped the course of its flow through the spontaneity of the context. It could be said that *thought* and *context* (semantically established) are complementary (meaningless thought or proposition cannot exist), and the place of the *picture* in this triad of terms is of particular importance because it sets a boundary of context and thought. The problem picture here functions as a paradigm and, therefore, resembles the *modus operandi* of concept development and usage in philosophy, especially in metaphysics. Accordingly, our notion of a picture is similar to that of Wittgenstein's: A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably (Wittgenstein, 1986, §115).

The picture imprisonment that Wittgenstein speaks about applies to physicalists and phenomenologists alike. Within these metaphysical cell bars, a philosopher is conditioned to fabricate certain types of concepts while the opposite ones are usually discredited. In other words, the usage of (philosophical) language is deeply intertwined with the *picture* in the form of a language game where certain rules are applied. In order to break this cycle, one must be able to change the game by observing the rules.

Accordingly, the solution to the problem—if we can assume something like that—remains in the same picture from which the question had originated. If the setting and resolution of a problem are within the framework of the given

linguistic picture (e.g., scientific), then it can be assumed that the solution is not possible as an external factor that would arise from the given premises; if this is not the case, then one cannot even speak of an authentic solution. Naturally, another language game can arise as an antithesis of a previous one, where one can take a stance while shedding a critical light upon it (e.g., the phenomenologist concept of intentionality).

Scientism has its counterparts in the history of ideas and, as such, does not represent a revolutionary paradigm. Namely, materialism (of which scientism is a mode), as a metaphysical position, bases its belief on the assumption that matter is a principle of all that exists. However, matter as a given actuality is the subject of science (with its verifiable properties), while as a concept, it is the subject of philosophical pondering. There are two different contexts or language games in which the phenomenon of matter is observed—as a physical *actuality* or as a *concept*. Mixing these two, so to speak, language games in philosophy leads to the establishment of different metaphysical systems whose explanatory tendency is universal.<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to the subject of matter, we can conclude that philosophers and scientists are not thinking the same when they utter the word *matter*; those are two different language games with different sets of rules. While in philosophy matter is designated as a metaphysical principle, i.e., conceptually, the language of science views the concept of matter in terms of its verifiable physical properties, as a given actual *thing*. Given the close connection between philosophy and science, it is not surprising that, when talking about matter, materialists are eager to follow the scientific discourse. This is understandable since the scientific concept of matter has explanatory power (which consists of predictions, verification, as well as the construction of further hypotheses that would lead to further results, be they positive or negative), while philosophy can conceptually follow this development. As a contemporary form of materialism, physicalism relies entirely on science, i.e., its methodology as well as results. However, it is precisely in this connection with science that a philosophical attempt becomes transparent to include the consideration of philosophical concepts whose content will be supplemented within the framework of the given metaphysics. In other words, it means nothing more than a postulation of matter as a philosophical principle that goes beyond the discourse of scientific methodology. However, this conceptual framework (or

<sup>10</sup> This paradigm also reflects the way of approaching the human being; so, for example, in the very introduction of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes about man and the life of the body, comparing both concepts to machines and mechanical movement. By reducing life to mechanical movement, he is indulged in the picture where machines can also be attributed, by analogy, some kind of life (Hobbs, 1961). La Mettrie will later discuss the concept of Man-Machine (Lametri, 1955), and d'Holbach will completely remove the concept of soul from the definition of human being, which will sharpen the image of man as a physical mechanism (Holbach, 1950, pp. 59, 69, 126). None of these endeavors would have been possible without an image (mechanisms) that established a new context in which man as an eternal riddle of nature would be considered. We will see that the present-day, modern situation is not much different in this matter either.

picture) remains an ontological imitation. The final product of such indulgence is scientific dogmatism in philosophy, i.e., scientism.

## 2.2. *Concept Development in the Metaphysics of Physicalism*

One such example that has been attracting the attention of the philosophical public since the middle of the last century is the ontological status of the mental (in the narrower sense — consciousness) and its relationship to the physical. The reason for considering the concept of consciousness and mental life is found in the redefinition of the relationship between mind and body, which Descartes had established. This problem was famously addressed by Ryle. Ryle aims to eliminate the so-called category-mistake of the *ghost in the machine* dogma, which rests on linguistic-categorical confusion (Ryle, 2009, pp. 5–8). The dogmatism that Ryle criticizes postulates the mind as a kind of separate substance that represents a separate reality from the corporeal mode of existence.<sup>11</sup> Ryle solves the problem of metaphysical dualism using semantic analysis, and his result (which we mentioned earlier) will be characterized as behaviorist. Philosophers of mind, who came after Ryle, have developed a new method that should deliver a more coherent view of inner mental life. This way, the category of the mental re-enters the philosophical language, but this time as part of the physically based ontology. The old mistake will occur again since the representatives of physicalism have bypassed Ryle's semantic criticism, which could be used against them respectively.

The novelty of describing mental phenomena is that they are not understood as a substance. The world of the mind is not separated or self-sufficient from the physical world, nor can it be metaphysically independent. It represents a physical thing in one of its modalities of being. The term *identity* is used to close the gap between mental life and the brain. The notion of identity in physicalism refers to *contingent identity*, which can be expressed as  $A = B$ . Contingent identity expresses the possibility that knowing one side of this equation does not mean we possess *a priori* knowledge of the other side (Smart, 1963, p. 93). In short, if that were the case, the identity would be proclaimed as the *logical* one. Thus, for example, emotional pain was often associated with the heart, which does not mean that the heart is the actual center of processing this condition. Therefore, a person might be aware of his/her pain (A) but not informed about the factual or objective state of the body or brain (B). However, in this way, the scientific hypothesis on account of the connection between feelings and the brain can be rejected as well, but as Smart points out, contingent identity is supported by factuality, whose pivot is scientific objectivity (Smart, 1963, p. 93). Contingent identity allows the statements of the subject of experience to be *semantically* different from the objective views of facticity (scientific) but, at the same time, points to the *ontological* identity of those processes.

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<sup>11</sup> The details of Ryle's solution to the problem of metaphysical dualism will not be discussed here since the rich content of the analysis would necessarily go beyond the scope of the author's intention. Instead, the author refers to Ryle, 2009, sections I (1–14) and VI (136–179).

This kind of thinking entails the brain is being identified as the bearer of mental properties (since they are identical to physical properties) because the thesis of physicalism (or, more closely, the identity theory) draws an ontological border at this point, while the semantic difference, which is established by contingent identity, is given a trivial character.<sup>12</sup> However, the semantic difference is of the greatest importance because it is an important indicator when it comes to the problem of the relationship between the mental and the physical. The significance of the semantic difference is all the greater because the contingent identity evokes subtle dualism, which, this time, is characterized by linguistic character. It seems that an inherited problem is, at the same time, the inherited conceptual framework that became transparent in language.

According to physicalism, what unquestionably exists is physical, i.e., verifiable or measurable reality. Given the adopted notion of matter from science, physicalists do not perform a conceptual analysis of it (which should be a higher philosophical task). They will not raise the logical or grammatical inquiry of the concepts which they already use. Instead, by introducing a new term, *identity*, philosophers hope to solve the problem, whereas ontological identification of the mental and physical is falling apart on the conceptual test. The concept of identity will fail the test simply because the physical comes first and the mental last. If we look more deeply, the idea of identity can be interpreted as a relation of subordination. Given the adopted notion of matter, physicalists do not perform a conceptual analysis of it (which should be a higher philosophical priority) but, instead, are introducing a new auxiliary term *identity* in order to justify the conceptual identification of mental and physical. Such conduct will not solve the problem; just the opposite will happen. New terms strive to reconcile that which is, in the philosophical tradition, considered substantially different. In our case, we stand before the treetop of a problem of the mind and body relationship, and what we are seeking is its roots. It seems that the task of a philosopher is neither to create new concepts nor to ontologically reduce the content of scientific research or its methodology. On the contrary, the first task should include doubt and critical analysis of what stands before in the conceptual-linguistic form. The question that should be asked here relates to the justification of this identification on *conceptual* grounds. Namely, is the summarization of phenomena under the ontological unity of physicalism legitimate if we are aware of the diverse aspects of mental life?

The philosophical setup which arises from the contingent identity *a priori* provides, in advance, the answer to the question, *what is the nature of consciousness?* Namely, it is ontologically located within the brain's gray mass, which leads to further characterization of consciousness as some kind of physical entity. However, this assumption rests on the conceptual misconception that is sedimented by metaphysical premises based on scientism. It is not surprising, then, that a concept such as consciousness is ontologically postulated and physically understood in

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<sup>12</sup> Which is the consequence of the scientific understanding of identity.

identity with the brain or some part of it. In this way, the nonsensical claims that the brain is “conscious”, that it “thinks” or “hopes” and “believes”, come to the surface, just as it would be wrong to claim that legs walk or that mouths speak (Hacker, 2007, p. 306).

The appeal of attributing certain properties that are specific to the human being as a whole to one of its parts (Hacker, 2013, p. 287) rests on the mistaken conceptual assumption that the brain and mentality are one and the same thing. What is persistently avoided is the request to approach the concept of mental and then consciousness with more caution. Namely, it is not about dissecting the mental endlessly in order to find a place for it in our system of knowledge, but about paying attention to how these concepts behave in certain frameworks<sup>13</sup> and to what extent these frameworks influence a change in these concepts. What is needed here is an analysis of the usage of the words such as consciousness, intentionality, mental, physical, material, and substance. With this endeavor, a conceptual modification will follow, and therefore, a new context of understanding could emerge while the picture which had captured us will begin to crack.

### *2.3. The search for essentials and language analysis*

In the previous chapters, we presented a criticism of understanding mentalistic concepts that are indispensable in the philosophy of mind. We have seen how the physicalist language treats the reality of mental life and how it establishes a methodological platform for examining it. Conceptual ambiguities are not evident as such because their function is formed through methodological spontaneity and the use of language within a given metaphysical picture. This means that diverse conclusions seem legitimate within the contextual framework. However, this kind of setup violently reduces the importance of the wider picture when it comes to the explanation of mental phenomena. On account of what is being said, it is not odd that some peculiar premises and conclusions arise (which carries a certain amount of curiosity): *man is a physical mechanism, consciousness is the same as the brain, or consciousness is software, and the brain is like hardware*. Each of these and other possible and similar premises or conclusions rest on a metaphysical foundation that dictates the development of the conceptual apparatus that it uses.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> One such thing is an observation of intelligence as a mode of the mental in the context of computer science. Computer research has shed light on the mental from a different angle, which has staggered the identity theory and, at the same time, cleared the path (picture!) for functionalists to propose their theory of mind. The new analogy, following a different ideal or picture, is introduced—the one between the hardware and software on the one side and the mind and body on the other.

<sup>14</sup> Although it is not the subject of this paper, these examples do not exclude the theories or viewpoints advocated by anti-reductionists, functionalists, or panpsychists. The reason, again, lies in the problem picture, which is shaped as a reaction to physicalism. Mentalistic concepts are not treated with ontological neutrality but in deflection of reductionism. Their foundation or problem picture is established as antithesis, where mental phenomena stem from the autonomous source. For example, due to the non-reductive nature of consciousness, alluding here to a special modus

However, due to the plasticity of the terms themselves, it is natural that the essence (or definition) takes shape with regard to the soil from which it springs. Namely, philosophical concepts are often contextual, as their meaning is often modified by the environment where they take place.

The evident problem here is the *search for essentials* which reflects in an *a priori* dogma that there can be only one static, unchangeable definition of being. It is a self-defeating process since every attempt to grasp the complex phenomena as mentality or consciousness will necessarily *leave something behind*. In other cases, the definition will exclude certain aspects which can be proven as important to the phenomenon in question. This kind of thinking reminds one of the Platonic or Parmenidean traditions, where concepts are truly something that is equivalent to the truth. In other words, there is only one way, one definition of knowing a thing.

The search for the essence of a phenomenon in philosophy is determined by its concept or definition, while the foundations of the very concept, in this case, are *a priori* given in the framework or picture. This means that, even before we begin to explore the concept, philosophical assumptions are already set as the framework in which this concept is developed. They are, so to speak, pre-philosophically or philosophically there. Such is the case with the phenomenon of consciousness (and mental life in general in philosophical works), which appears in different places in different conceptual relationships. It is an unavoidable concept, and it can be inclined to any form of metaphysics.<sup>15</sup> Transfiguration and plasticity of the concept of consciousness are specific, which is due to its ontological field that often changes.

Furthermore, polarization is made possible by the fact that it is primarily a philosophical and colloquial term and not a scientific one.<sup>16</sup> However, precisely for the reasons mentioned, its essence is modifiable, which allows philosophers to fill the content of the concept with what is deemed suitable, and in this case, it is the content of scientific research and methodology. Paradoxically, it seems that part of the ontology is already present in philosophical thinking even before it begins to develop.

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of mental life—the first person or “I”, that is directly related to experience, was taken as an ontological center of mental life (biological naturalism); or in another case, mentality is understood as a property of matter itself (panpsychism). Although functionalists deny a specific ontological framework (whether consciousness is physical or non-physical, for example), their starting point is essentially objectivist, as they categorize mental phenomena according to their function, leaving the personhood and intentionality behind.

<sup>15</sup> On the one hand, consciousness or mental life is marked or identified as a physical reality (reductive physicalism) or as an autonomous ontological property of reality that rests on the physical (non-reductive physicalism); in some places, consciousness is marked as *sive natura* (panpsychism), while there are extreme positions in which it is marked as non-existent (eliminative reductionism). In any case, in addition to the incidentally mentioned routes, there are also sub-routes that we will leave aside. The purpose here is to outline how the “essence” of consciousness is captured in the aforementioned metaphysical narratives and what kind of relations is built through the postulation of its essence.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, even scientific concepts are not absolute and set once and for all, but their modification, unlike traditional-philosophical concepts, primarily depends on empirical data.

The physicalist's question about mental life and consciousness is formed on the basis of scientific discourse, which leads them to ask how scientists would formulate this problem so that it would be solvable. What kind of grounds must be established?<sup>17</sup> Here, we can spot something peculiar—that even the questions begin to formulate within the *picture*. When Wittgenstein speaks about generalization in language, that is, the philosophical need to search for similarities when generalizing, he claims that philosophical thinking often strives to resemble scientific reasoning. In the Blue Book, he says:

Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness. I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything. Philosophy really is “purely descriptive”. (Think of such questions as “Are there sense data?” And ask: What method is there of determining this? Introspection?) (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 18).

By mixing scientific nomenclature, methodology, and philosophical concepts, it seems that we gain nothing because propositions made that way only contribute to further confusion, not to the desired resolution. Which path should be taken to avoid further misconception? If we are aware of how it is committed, by language being attached to the picture, then only the usage of conceptual-linguistic analysis as a critical method can break through the picture while shedding light upon the circumstances which led to it.

### 3. Ontological Transformations—A Sketch of the Ontogrammatical Method

Determining what something *is* gives meaning to philosophy. It is a task as old as the philosophy itself. However, this “is” can be interpreted in many different ways, such as Socrates' attempt to dialectically discover the truth lying hidden as the essence of being, or on the other hand, Wittgenstein's interests in similarities and differences that are present in language.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the question of *what something is* should not require a one-dimensional answer in advance but can be interpreted in a grammatical way as well, where language will transparently show itself as part of the method. In this sense, we can talk about the *ontogrammatical method*, where language, with its semantics and vivid fluidity, is filtering through ontology, in which the scope and content of a concept tend to stabilize. Stabilization, in fact, cannot be carried out to the end precisely because of the language dynamism and complexity; and, on the

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<sup>17</sup> Usually, it starts with an objectivistic approach and a scientific-like methodology.

<sup>18</sup> It is an interesting fact that Socrates and Plato both preferred dialogue as a method and tool of philosophical expression. The pursuit of the elusive essence (idea) in Plato's dialogues (especially early ones) is somewhat being destabilized by language. Filtering through diverse examples, the definition seems to move one step away from the final designation. This desire for generality is something Wittgenstein criticizes as he is using the opposing method focused on particular cases, differences, and similarities in language.

other hand, unrealistic desire for absolute uniformity of definitions (where many particularities tend to be left out of the scope). Namely, in philosophy, definitions become unstable while trying to fulfill the generality imperative; it is an old habit of encompassing everything *that is*.

With the ontogrammatical method, we can actually affirm that language shapes the way a concept is created by influencing its content and scope. We can see how certain concepts are being transformed or taken from the other type of discourses and how they are going through ontological transformations by widening the scope while the content is shrieking.<sup>19</sup> The ontogrammatical method, therefore, follows the development of linguistic reality; it does not strive for generality or definitions; it simply observes the usage of words and the flux of concepts. This method is used, to some extent, by Aristotle in Book V of *Metaphysics*, in which he lists different ways of speaking about one kind of thing. Aristotle affirmed diverse ways of speeches about things without ontology being neglected. The ontogrammatical method should be thought of in a similar way, where one should focus on the way concepts appear in the language.<sup>20</sup>

Physicalism, scientism, and other kinds of *isms* overlook the concrete cases where mental life appears as they rush towards the generality of meaning. Ascribing one sort of meaning to every case where the *mental* appears means dismissing many particular cases. As we have seen in physicalism, the mental is reduced to brain states. However, even if the brain is the center of mental life, then certain aspects of mentality as artificial intelligence must fall out of the full description of it. Nevertheless, there are other problems, such as those related to language and first-person experience and reports, which are quite complex but left out as trivial. In Blue Book, Wittgenstein criticized such attempts with utter precision:

The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications, has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term (Wittgenstein, 2008, pp. 19–20).

In conclusion, the very basis of physicalism and its language carry the weight of the traditional philosophical matrix, which is striving for the utmost extensive generality. It seemed, probably, to philosophers that physics would be able to provide such foundations on which every phenomenon could derive its meaningful essence, which led their thoughts to rely heavily on what they deemed to be sci-

<sup>19</sup> The author believes this case is symptomatic of the ontological kind of thinking since ontological concepts are reaching for the essences while discarding qualities of secondary importance. The radical result of such persuasion, therefore, can be demonstrated in the traditional concept of “being”, which is defined as something that simply *is*.

<sup>20</sup> However, unlike Aristotle’s approach, this method does not introduce hypotheses, nor does it aim to establish a concept and even less some kind of ontology; on the contrary, this method only affirms ontology as a specific expression of philosophical thought that should be seen in language.

entific precision and credibility. This model of thinking rests on problem picture, an ideal hidden in the language they had used.

Using the ontogrammatical method as a form of meta-position, we are able to spot how, in this case, physicalism is operating with its concepts while developing a philosophical theory. Namely, it should be acknowledged that significant parts which are being left out of the general definitions (e.g., being proclaimed as trivial) are relevant clues that, foremost, bring clarity. On the other hand, theoretical leftovers do have another effect—they inform us of the dangers of metaphysical deviations.

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## Језик физикализма: концептуални преглед физикалистичке онтологије

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У овом раду аутор истражује развој и утицај језика физикализма на разумевање проблема ума и тела. Прво ћемо се позабавити раним развојем и каснијом трансформацијом физикализма из језичке методологије у метафизичку теорију, која ће свој коначни облик добити у филозофији ума. Поглавље ће бити закључено кратким освртом на теорију идентитета, а тиме ће се поставити и питање легитимности идентификације филозофских и научних концепата. Након тога, у другом поглављу, аутор ће користити такозвану проблемску слику како би пружио концептуалну анализу језика физикализма. На тај начин ћемо показати како трансформација кључних филозофских појмова настаје из шире лингвистичке и контекстуалне позадине. У овом случају, филозофски концепти, или језик, су под утицајем метафизике сцијентизма. Коначно, уместо резимеа, последње поглавље ће дати кратку скицу онтограматичког метода чији је задатак да осветли онтолошке трансформације путем концептуалне и лингвистичке анализе.

### Кључне речи:

концепт, свест, теорија идентитета, језик, физикализам, слика проблема, метафизика, онтологија, сцијентизам

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