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ORIGINS OF THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

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In this paper I attempt a brief overview of all the major pre-analytic origins of the private language arguments (PLAs) in the analytic tradition. It is necessarily a bird's-eye view of a huge panorama. But it is enough to show that there are at least eight major origins, and a crowd of pre-analytic anticipators of the analysts' PLAs. This weakens the analysts' claim that their linguistic turn radically breaks from traditional views. But connecting the analysts' PLAs to some of the biggest themes of traditional thought can only broaden and deepen their already great interest.

Such a survey has been long overdue. Hector-Neri Castañeda, in his 1967 article "The Private Language Problem," cited only *two* anticipators of the later Wittgenstein on private languages: Rudolf Carnap and Julius R. Weinberg.[1] Today there are some excellent literatures on several origins, but they are largely piecemeal.

I discuss the origins in eight sections: verificationism, naturalism-pragmatism, materialism, mathematics, justificationism, realism versus nominalism, the theory that language and thought are identical, and as a second-level overview of all these, "no entity without identity." The first section is long because I discuss the controversy whether the *Tractatus* contains verificationism.

Johannes Herder defined "origin" as meaning cause, source (antecedent), or beginning (first of its kind). It is hard to be so precise here. Historical influences are often speculative, and it is not always clear when antecedents end and things of a kind begin. But everything I de-

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[1] Hector-Neri Castañeda, "Private Language Problem," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and The Free Press, 1967) vol. 6, p. 463.

scribe is surely a source at the very least; and at least my speculations as to causes or beginnings should be clear enough.

My title, "...*the* private language argument," is misleading. Many different arguments aim to show that private languages, in some sense of "private language," are impossible, in some sense of "impossible." It is unacceptable to find only one argument, to find it only in Wittgenstein, and then to look for its origins. Frege gave at least twelve such arguments, Russell seventeen, Wittgenstein eight in *Investigations* alone, and Quine three.[2]

Frege's Black Box PLA sets the stage. A Black Box PLA likens minds to boxes whose contents are unavailable to others. Then the question whether ideas in different minds are the same is "unanswerable."[3] Thus if meanings were ideas, then people could never agree or disagree with each other, since they could not tell if they spoke with the same meaning. Frege used the systematic invertability of meanings of color words and spatial words to dramatize the absurdity of supposing that minds are like closed boxes. It was Locke who held that meanings are ideas; Descartes' dualism provided the framework. Russell's early Act-Object PLAs, that an item intended by two people must be mind-independent,

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[2] For Frege's twelve PLAs see: "The Thought," trans. A. M. Quinton, *Mind* **65** (1956), pp. 299-302 (in Klemke's *Essays on Frege*, pp. 521-23); three in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J. L. Austin (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 35, 36 and 37; two in *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, trans. and ed. Montgomery Furth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 15-23; two in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, trans. Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), pp. 79, 120-21; two in *Posthumous Writings*, trans. Peter Long et al., ed. Hans Hermes et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 133-34, 269-70; *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, trans. Hans Kaal, ed. Gottfried Gabriel et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 80; "On the Scientific Justification of a Conceptual Notation," in *Conceptual Notation and Related Articles*, trans. and ed. Terrell Ward Bynum (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 83-86; *Posthumous Writings*, pp. 269-70. On Russell, see my "Russell's Seventeen Private-Language Arguments," *Russell* **11**/1 (Summer 1991), pp. 11-35.

Any first-year logic student should be able to diagram many different PLAs in Wittgenstein's *Investigations*. Besides Kripke's Justificationist PLA, see #253/#298, #272/#293, #308, #322/#376/#378, #274/#277/#293-#294, #242, #402. As to Quine, see *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), pp. ix, 5-8; "Ontological Relativity," *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 26-27; "Facts of the Matter," in Robert W. Shahan and Chris Swoyer, ed., *Essays on the Philosophy of W. V. Quine* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), pp. 155, 157.

[3] "The Thought."

were a positive complement to Frege's negative *reductio*. They have roots in Meinong, Brentano, and medieval act theory. Russell's later Probability PLAs, in which teaching and learning words require a high probability that teacher and learner "perceive" the same external events, are survivals of the Act-Object PLAs in his later scheme of probable scientific realism.

1. The Verificationist Background

In this section I shall discuss the origin of the verificationism in Wittgenstein's *principal* PLA in *Investigations*. Quine's naturalistic verificationism belongs to the section on naturalism-pragmatism; Frege and Russell were not verificationists.

The first wave of scholars, notably Ayer, held that the principal PLA in *Investigations* is based on verificationism.[4] The second wave, notably Kripke, held that the argument is justificationist, and de-emphasized its epistemic side.[5] As a new third wave, I hold that the argument is a Dance of Two Veils. The first wave reported well the express word of #272. The second wave is right that a more purely semantic argument seems implied in the pre-#202 sections. But the core of both waves is Frege's Black Box PLA; the example of the color red in #272's color inversion example is an homage to Frege (see *Foundations* and "The Thought"). The veils are needless additions of dubious doctrines to the core argument. To claim that Locke's theory is "meaningless" in an Ayerian verificationist or Kripkean justificationist sense is superfluous if the Black Box PLA succeeds and unwarranted if it does not.

Kripke is wrong that "semantic skepticism" is more radical than epistemic skepticism. He repeats O. K. Bouwsma's error of long ago. Bouwsma argued that Descartes's evil genius hypothesis is unverifiable. But a genius might be deceiving Bouwsma and Kripke on the soundness

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[4] Alfred Jules Ayer, "Can There Be a Private Language?," in George Pitcher, ed., *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 251-66.

[5] Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

of their respective semantics. Thus both veils seem equally important to theory of meaning.[6]

Was Rudolf Carnap's physicalist verificationism an antecedent of the later Wittgenstein's? Herbert Feigl suggests Carnap as a source of the analysts' private language arguments in general:

> Analytic philosophers, especially those practicing the methods of G. E. Moore and Wittgenstein, have in various ways... argued that the absolute privacy or subjectivity which for some philosophers constitutes the criterion of the mental is an idea begotten with confusions... There are very important passages in Carnap's formulations of 1932 which anticipate in very compact form much of what has been dialectically (and partly independently) elaborated by the British analytic philosophers.[7]

Ayer adds, "And much as Wittgenstein disliked Carnap's methods, there is an echo of physicalism in his dictum that an 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria [#580]."[8] But the Hintikkas say, "To put the main point bluntly, Wittgenstein accused Carnap of using his idea of physicalistic basis language without... proper acknowledgement... Wittgenstein wrote [in a letter to Schlick in 1932]: '...[I]t is false that I have not dealt with the problem of "physicalism" (albeit not under this—horrible—name...'."[9] The Hintikkas suggest that "Carnap never understood what precisely Wittgenstein had in mind" by this accusation.[10] Thus who may have influenced whom is unclear.

My own suggestion is that the origin is in the *Tractatus*. Michael Wrigley argues well that the origin of the Vienna Circle's verificationism can only be in the *Tractatus*.[11] But there has been much dispute over where it might be. L. Susan Stebbing says, "This is Wittgenstein's princi-

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[6] O. K. Bouwsma, "Descartes' Evil Genius," *The Philosophical Review* **58**/2 (March 1949), pp. 141-151. My criticism of Bouwsma must be almost as old.

[7] Herbert Feigl, "Physicalism, Unity of Science and the Foundations of Psychology," in P. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (La Salle, IN: Open Court, 1963), pp. 230-31.

[8] Ayer, "Editor's Introduction" to Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism* (New York: The Free Press, 1959), p. 27.

[9] Merrill B. Hintikka and Jaakko Hintikka, *Investigating Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 145-46.

[10] Ibid., p. 147.

[11] Michael Wrigley, "The Origins of Wittgenstein's Verificationism," *Synthese* **78** (1989), pp. 265-90.

ple of verifiability: the meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification. It seems to me that Wittgenstein may have been suggesting this principle... in the *Tractatus* ...(4.031)."[12] Oswald Hanfling says cautiously that "apparently" Wittgenstein first advanced the "Verification Principle." But Hanfling says that "there is no mention of verification" in the *Tractatus.*[13] Hanfling says that it is first mentioned in the "Theses" Friedrich Waismann set down as Wittgenstein's around 1930 (the *Tractatus* was published nine years earlier). Hanfling says:

> A careless reading of the 'Theses' might encourage such misunderstanding. This is true, for example, of... 'To understand a proposition means to know how things stand if the proposition is true...' This is almost identical with a passage in the *Tractatus* (section 4.024). But whereas in the 'Theses' this remark is expounded in a verificationist sense, it is not so in the *Tractatus.*[14]

Hanfling gives an argument for his view: "[T]his was not how the elementary propositions of the *Tractatus* were conceived. They were defined by their logical properties and not by any connection with verificationism."[15] Perhaps so. But a Tractarian verificationism would not concern the logical form of an "elementary proposition [Elementarsatz]," or even the definition, i.e., the individuation, of an elementary proposition as logically independent of every other elementary proposition. It would concern the "sense [*Sinn*] of a proposition." If it concerned any definition at all, it would concern the definition of that sense. But, secondly, why must a Tractarian verification principle be definitional (analytic)? Could it not be "an important kind of nonsensical" proposition? Thus Hanfling's argument is doubly ill-conceived. But it is Hanfling's merit to have given the only *argument* against verificationism in the *Tractatus.* The only other "ground" for this virtually universal view is that the word "verificationism" is not handed to us on a silver platter there.

Maurice Cornforth's argument for Tractarian verificationism is decisive. Cornforth says the verification principle "lay at the basis of

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[12] See L. Susan Stebbing, "Logical Positivism and Analysis," Annual Philosophy Lecture, Henriette Herz Trust (Haskell House, 1933), p. 16 and p. 16 n. 1.

[13] Oswald Hanfling, Introduction to Hanfling, ed., *Essential Readings in Logical Positivism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 3, 5-6.

[14] Introduction to *Essential Readings*, p. 6.

[15] Ibid.. See also Hanfling, *Logical Positivism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 11-12.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*..."[16] Cornforth argues in effect that the Tractarian distinction between factual and necessary truth presupposes the picture thory of meaning, and the picture theory of meaning presupposes the verification principle.[17] Cornforth observes that in the *Tractatus*, statements which are neither verifiable in terms of facts nor tautologously true or false are ipso facto condemned as nonsense.[18] I endorse this powerful argument. Moreover, this distinction among factually verifiable, tautologous, and nonsensical propositions is the basis of the logical positivists' verificationism in their heyday. It seems inescapable that the *Tractatus* is the origin of their verificationism, as well as of that of *Investigations.* Cornforth goes wrong only when he says that when Wittgenstein realized the error of "trying to whistle what you cannot say," he abandoned the Tractarian verification principle and replaced it with the "meaning is use" approach of *Investigations*. Cornforth does not realize that that *is* the new verificationism, expressly stated in *Investigations* #353. It is worth noting that the *Tractatus* already connected its own notions of sense and use.

I suggest that the following *Tractatus* sections collectively imply verificationism:

T 2.221 What a picture represents is its sense (*Sinn*).
T 4.021 A proposition is a picture of reality; for if I understand (*verstehe*) a proposition, I know (*kenne*) the situation that it represents.
T 4.022 A proposition shows its sense (*Sinn*). A proposition shows how things stand if it is true. And it says that they do so stand.
T 4.024 To understand (*verstehen*) a proposition means to know (*wissen*) what is the case if it is true... [This is the section Hanfling cites as not verificationist.]
T 4.03 A proposition communicates a situation to us, and so it must be essentially connected with the situation.
T 4.031 ...Instead of, 'This proposition has such and such a sense' (*Sinn*), we can simply say, 'This proposition represents such and such a situation'. [This is the section Stebbings cites.]
T 5.156 ...We use probability only in default of certainty – if our knowledge (*kennen*) of a fact is not indeed complete, but we do know (*wissen*) something about its form. (A proposition may well be an in-

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16 Maurice Cornforth, *Marxism and the Linguistic Philosophy* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), p. 111.

17 Ibid., pp. 114-116.

18 Ibid., p. 116.

complete picture of a certain situation, but it is always a complete picture of something.)

My argument is simple. What is verificationism? It is a connection between epistemology and meaning such that a statement has meaning if and only if we know how to tell it is true (strong form), or there can be possible evidence that it is true (weak form). Do we find such a connection in the *Tractatus*? Yes, we do. In fact, we find two such connections. We find the strong form, where we fully understand a statement's meaning if and only if we know its truth conditions, in T 4.021 and T 4.024. This concerns the picture theory of meaning. We also find the weak form in T 5.156, where a given statement can be meaningful but only probable because it only partially pictures the situation, S, in which we are interested. Such a statement is meaningful only because it fully pictures some other situation, S*, such that we know the truth conditions for S* and S* is the evidence for S. The weak form presupposes the strong form, just as it should.[19]

I also find a Black Box-Verificationist PLA in the *Tractatus*. Namely: I must understand statements about other minds in terms of the states of affairs which I know; but such states of affairs could only concern the behavior of others.[20] Here other minds are behavioristically viewed, but I alone seem to be the solipsistic viewing "public." Not surprisingly, this PLA is close to Ayer's Verificationist PLA in *Language, Truth and Logic*.[21] Likewise, Carnap's *Aufbau* and its inspiration, Russell's *External World*, explicate other minds in terms of behavioristic appearances of others to oneself, only after first explicating bodies in terms of primitive data. (Russell's *External World* is physicalistic in that its sense-data are mind-independent physical events.)[22] The forerunner of all these is Hume's theory of meanings as ideas which are derived from sense-impressions. All have tendencies toward behaviorist neutral monism.

Raymond Bradley thinks the *Tractatus* is physicalist. I tend to follow the Hintikkas in thinking it was written when Wittgenstein was a phe-

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19 The argument was that without strong verifiability, one would not understand what one was weakly verifying. But Neurath and Carnap denied that any statements about the world were completely verifiable.

20 Apply T 5.5562 and T 5.5563 to "Smith now feels a toothache."

21 Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Second Edition (New York: Dover, 1952), pp. 129-32; see p. 122.

22 See the relevant essays in Russell's *Mysticism and Logic* of the same time.

nomenalist. But officially it takes no sides on what objects are. Even so, in it ordinary talk of bodies surely must be analyzed in terms of objects before ordinary talk of other minds can be, since selves are definitely *not* given as objects, and surely the contents of other minds are not either. This brings the *Tractatus* Black Box-Verificationist PLA closer to that in *Investigations*. If if I am wrong about that, *Investigations'* verificationist physicalism and Carnap's methodological physicalism are little improvement on Wittgenstein's earlier verificationist phenomenalism and Carnap's earlier methodological phenomenalism in explicating other minds as communicators. For there can be as little genuine communication among mere physical behavior patterns as there can be among mere constructions of phenomena. Julius Weinberg noted that about Carnap; Thomas Reid made much the same point about Hume.[23] Carnap and Russell saw the problem and moved to an acceptance of other minds, respectively as explanatory posits and as probably real structures. Wittgenstein and Hume did not. Neither has Quine. Even the 1992 Quine's "irreducibly mental ways of grouping" "neural realities" (Davidsonian anomalous monism) are not communicators. What did his way of grouping neural events tell her way of grouping neural events over the backyard fence yesterday?

Cornforth's decisive argument tends to equate the origins of Tractarian verificationism with the origins of the picture theory of meaning: Plato's *Theaetetus* 201-2, and behind it, Parmenides.

2. The Naturalist/Pragmatist Background

Quine calls himself a naturalistic verificationist and a pragmatist. Admitting a heritage from Peirce, Quine cites Dewey and Wittgenstein as anticipating his PLAs, and also cites a British heritage.[24] Quine might

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[23] Julius R. Weinberg, *An Examination of Logical Positivism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1936), pp. 215, 224. Thomas Reid notes that Berkeley, and by extension Hume, face much the same problem. See Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 179, 199.

[24] "Ontological Relativity," pp. 26-27; "Facts of the Matter," pp. 155, 157; *Theories and Things* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 192. See also "Comment on Parsons," in Robert B. Barrett and Roger F. Gibson, eds., *Perspectives on Quine* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 292. On Peirce, see Quine, "The Pragmatists' Place in Empiricism," in Robert J. Mulvaney and Philip M. Zeltner, eds., *Pragmatism: Its Sources and Prospects* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981), pp. 23-37.

have mentioned also the pragmatic side of Carnap's methodological physicalism, and Jeremy Bentham's theory that words are tools. Quine does cite Bentham's contextualism, and also John Horne Tooke's methodological replacement of ideas with words.

The pragmatic side of Wittgenstein is well-known.[25] Wittgenstein may have learned from the pragmatism in Frank Ramsey's later works.[26] Pragmatic aspects of Piero Sraffa's Marxism may have been an influence. But I agree with H. S. Thayer that since Wittgenstein's conversations with Ramsey and Sraffa were unrecorded, any evidence of pragmatic influence in the text of *Investigations* must remain circumstantial.[27] William James's *Psychology* was for a time the only book Wittgenstein had in his rooms.[28] While Peirce and pragmatism are not listed in its index, its philosophy of mind is largely instrumentalist.[29] It may never be clear how much its instrumentalism influenced Wittgenstein.

The 1927-59 Russell's theory of knowledge is largely naturalistic; this affects his Social Language and Probability PLAs.[30] This seems to be Russell's accommodation of what he deemed valuable in pragmatism after he rejected the pragmatic theory of truth.

While Frege intended his formal notation to have great utility in the way of rigorous proof, such an intention cannot be tied to classic pragmatic philosophers. Still, rigor's demand for public confirmability does link Fregean "pragmatism" to public notations.

See John P. Murphy, *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), pp. 91-92, quoting Quine.

25 See e.g. K. T. Fann, *Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 46-47, 84-85; P. M. S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 123-24, 259; Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), chapter 6.

26 H. S. Thayer, *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), pp. 305, 309-13.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 313, citing G. H. Von Wright's "Bibliographical Sketch" in Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein*, p. 15.

29 George A. Miller, Introduction to William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,1983), p. xvii.

30 See Ned Garvin, "Russell's Naturalistic Turn," *Russell* **11**/1 (Summer 1991), pp. 36-51, and "Russell's Seventeen Private-Language Arguments," pp. 25-29.

Carnap attributed his methodological physicalism to Neurath, whom he said was influenced by Büchner and Haeckel.[31] But Neurath praised Marx for his behavioristic approach.[32] Neurath's background also included Marx's pragmatic theory of truth. Neurath's own theory of truth is pragmatic and behavioristic. It is concerned with how well sentences cohere into a theory, and theories for Neurath are physical markings concerning the behavior of the physical world.

Peirce's theory of meaning emphasized the social and the objective. James was concerned mainly with truth. But James's views were much closer to Peirce's than James's more bombastic slogans suggested. Dewey had no systematic theory of meaning, but his very Peircean remarks on meaning strongly support Quine's program. The pragmatists made many claims about their own views' origins, which I cannot mention here.[33] James's neutral monism was the main influence on Russell's neutral monism in 1921.

The strong interplay between social action and linguistic meaning in Marx and Engels derives from Hegel. Hegel was a pragmatist in that he combined both practical and theoretical considerations into his dialectic.[34] Hegel strongly influenced the early Dewey and so, indirectly, Quine.[35]

3. The Materialist Background

Quine follows Carnap in advocating methodological physicalism. But most 19th-century materialists were already methodological materialists, according to the great 19th century historian of materialism, Frederick

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31 See Rudolf Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography," in *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, pp. 24, 51.

32 Otto Neurath, "Sociology and Physicalism," in *Logical Positivism*, pp. 306, 309-10, 315.

33 *Meaning and Action*, p. 5; see pp. 314-21.

34 Ivan Soll, *An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 6-7; see pp. 9, 28, 30, 39, 43-45.

35 Walter Kaufmann, Foreword to *An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics*, p. x. Soll, pp. 76-77, compares Hegel on epistemolology to Neurath, "Protokollsätze," in *Erkenntnis* **3**, p. 206 (Soll's trans.) and to Quine, *Word and Object*; *Enc.*, sect. 41, Z1. See also *Meaning and Action*, pp. 165-67, 173-74, 184-85, 422, 442, 461-63, 521.

Lange.[36] Maurice Cornforth and Keith Campbell find the middle-to-later Wittgenstein congenial to materialism.[37] Merrill B. and Jaakko Hintikka deem him a physicalist in some fairly nondescript sense hard to discern from mere nonmentalism.[38]

Wittgenstein and Carnap may have been inspired by Marx's materialistic behaviorism. Wittgenstein may have learned about Marx from Sraffa.[39] Wittgenstein also read some Marx. He read some of *Das Kapital*, in which Marx says language is a "social product."[40] We can also go from Carnap through Neurath to Marx. Marx held that language and consciousness are essentially social.[41] This view is easily traced from Marx and Engels through Feuerbach[42] to Hegel's *Phenomenology*.[43] The Marx-Hegel society-language-consciousness nexus has deep roots in Hobbes[44] and Plato.[45]

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[36] Frederick Lange, *The History of Materialism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1925), Book 1 Continued (repaginated), p. 161; see pp. 223, 297, 312, 332, 337-39, and Russell's Introduction, p. xix.

[37] *Marxism and the Linguistic Philosophy*, p. 172; Keith Campbell, "Materialism," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 5, p. 184.

[38] *Investigating Wittgenstein*, p. 165.

[39] Susan Easton, *Humanist Marxism and Wittgensteinian Social Philosophy* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 131, 133.

[40] Ibid., p. 139, citing J. Moran, "Wittgenstein and Russia," *New Left Review* (1972), pp. 85-96; see Karl Marx, *Capital*, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 79.

[41] Marx, *The German Ideology*: Part I, trans. and ed. S. Ryazanskaya, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), pp. 158-59; Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 85-93; Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 163, 490; Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, English ed. of 1888, ed. Engels, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 489; Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, trans. and ed. C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1940), pp. 279-85.

[42] Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, ed. C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1941), pp. 24-25; Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 121-22.

[43] On Marx's Hegelianism, see John Plamenatz, *Karl Marx's Conception of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 70-73. On Feuerbach's early Hegelianism, see Marx Wartofsky, *Feuerbach* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 233-34; see also pp. 182-83, 239.

[44] Martin A. Bertman favorably compares Hobbes with Wittgenstein on the social nature of language, "Semantics and Political Theory in Hobbes," *Hobbes Studies* **1** (1988), pp. 141-42.

[45] I quote some Plato in section 7.

In French materialism, Bonald resembles Hegel in emphasizing the organic social-linguistic nature of all human thought.[46] Marx and Engels praise French materialism as the progenitor of socialism and communism. They cite Lamettrie, specifically *Man Machine*, as part of this tradition.[47] There, as Lange notes, Lamettrie cites the early church father Arnobius's Social Language PLA (thinking and meaning are impossible to one without a public language) from ca. 300 A.D.:

> Let us then imagine a place dug out in the earth, fit for dwelling in... To this let there not come any sound or cry whatever, of bird, of beast, of storm, of man... Now,... let us receive some one born to dwell there, where there is nothing but an empty void... Let us... provide a nurse also..., ever silent, uttering not a word... Let us suppose, then, that he grows up, reared in a secluded, lonely spot, spending as many years as you choose, twenty or thirty... Will he not, then, stand, with less wit and sense than any beast, block, stone? Will he not, when brought into contact with strange and previously unknown things, be above all ignorant of himself?... Is this the learned [Platonic] soul which you describe, immortal, perfect,... endowed with the loftiest powers of reason[?][48]

The theology of Arnobius is that *pace* Plato, human reason, and even the human soul, are far too weak to exist apart from communal language-teaching.[49] Thanks to Marx's and Engels' specific praise of *Man Machine*, it would seem that they not only would have wholly approved of Arnobius's Social Language PLA, but actually knew of it. Arnobius

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[46] George Boas, *French Philosophies of the Romantic Period* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), pp. 72-74, 74, 76-77, 80, 83.

[47] Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Critique*, trans. R. Dixon (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), pp. 169, 175-76.

[48] Arnobius of Sicca Veneria (Africa), *The Seven Books of Arnobius Adversus Gentes*, trans. Hamilton Bryce and Hugh Campbell, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol. 19 (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. and T. Clark, 1871), pp. 86-90 (Book 2, para. 20-23); Ermin F. Micka, *The Problem of Divine Anger in Arnobius and Lactantius* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1943), p. 49. See: Julien Offray de la Mettrie (Lamettrie) (1709-51), *Man a Machine*, trans. various (Chicago: Open Court, 1912), p. 113; see pp. 103-4, 103-14; *The History of Materialism*, Book 1 Continued (repaginated), p. 62.

[49] *Adversus Gentes*, pp. 83-86; *The Problem of Divine Anger*, p. 167. Despite their immense differences on the nature of the soul, Plato and Arnobius seem to share the "no thinking without language" thesis, at least for living humans. Platonic antenatal reason might conflict with the thesis.

knew Lucretius and Epicureanism better than he knew the Gospels.[50] Marx wrote his doctoral dissertation on Epicurus and Democritus. All this must not be confused with Marx's invective against "Robinsonaden," stories in which a lone Crusoe thrives. Such stories, in Ricardo and others, are illustrations only of economic theory. Our present concern is Marx's metaphysical theory of materialism, on which language and consciousness are literally communal properties. To be sure, Marx would not have wished to cite a Christian theologian as providing the original argument for it.

4. The Mathematical Background

The first PLA given by an analytic philosopher was Frege's argument in 1884 that rational beings with very different spatial intuitions would agree on which theorems in geometry are true.[51] The argument is based on projective geometry's famous principle of duality. In his own 1897 geometry book, Russell notes Lotze, Helmholtz, Land, Newcomb, and Abbott as discussing the notion of rational beings with different spatial intuitions.[52] One may add Clifford.[53] Quine cites Poincaré's spherical world in which everything shrinks as it moves outwards from center; since yardsticks shrink too, no measurement can reveal the shrinkage. Quine classifies this as a case of empirically equivalent theories, not

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[50] Introduction to *Adversus Gentes*, p. xvi; *The Problem of Divine Anger*, pp. 1-2, 13-17, 76-77, 157, 158-59.

[51] *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, pp. 35-36.

[52] Russell, *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry* (New York: Dover, 1956), pp. 40, 72-74, 93, 101, 104-5. Abbott wrote the famous *Flatland*. Russell agrees with Land against Helmholtz, in their exchange in *Mind* vols. 1-3, that we cannot understand sensible intuitions other than our own. But while Russell therefore disparages "romances about Flatland and Sphereland," he nonetheless manages to contribute his own "liquid geometer in a liquid world." Russell does allow "conceptions" of various sorts of space. See *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry*, pp. 72-73, 80, 101. Nicholas Griffin gives a fine account of the early Russell's work in geometry in *Russell's Idealist Apprenticeship* (Oxford, England: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 100-90. But in discussing Hermann von Helmholtz's works, Griffin overlooks Helmholtz's 1870 "On the Origin and Significance of Geometrical Axioms," in James R. Newman, *The World of Mathematics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), pp. 647-68.

[53] William Kingdon Clifford, "The Postulates of the Science of Space," in *The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences*, a set of lectures to the Royal Institution (Great Britain) in 1873. In *The World of Mathematics*, pp. 562-63.

translational indeterminacy or referential inscrutability, since there is nothing in actual space corresponding to the spherical world's center point.[54] Quine misses that the sphere-dwellers' home *theory* about their space would not mention such a point any more than our home *theory* about our space does. Thus translational indeterminacy and referential inscrutability occur here after all.

Helmholtz was led to geometry by his study of optics.[55] The inversion of all images on the retina was already much-discussed.[56] Projective geometry originated with the Renaissance painters' desire to paint more realistically. Thus the Geometric PLA was associated with naive scientific realism from the beginning, though as Russell notes, projective geometry had three philosophical phases.[57] Russell's aim was to improve Kant's objective idealist theory of space by replacing Euclidian geometry with projective geometry as the universal and necessary precondition of all possible perceptions of a pluralist external world of things. But Russell soon moved to the extreme realism of *Principles.*

Hans Sluga's interpretation of Frege's *Foundations* as embracing a Lotzean objective idealism spices up the question of the implications of the Geometric PLA for realism.[58] Or should I say the Geometric PLA spices up Sluga? Certainly Russell assigned a neo-Kantian logical role to projective geometry.[59] But Sluga overlooks that in *Foundations*, Frege connects objectivity "not with the ideas of planets, but with the planets themselves."[60] Sluga's interpretation founders on that rock, not to say planet, of Frege interpretation.

The Geometric PLA merged with argumentation for physicalist objectivity in the early twentieth century. In relativity theory, the projective

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[54] Quine, "Reply to J. J. C. Smart," in L. E. Hahn and P. A. Schilpp, eds., *The Philosophy of W. V. Quine* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1987), p. 518; "Three Indeterminacies," in *Perspectives on Quine*, p. 13.

[55] *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry*, p. 25; Newman, "Commentary on Hermann von Helmholtz," *The World of Mathematics*, p. 644.

[56] *The History of Materialism*, Book 2 Continued (new pagination), pp. 207-8, quoting Johannes Müller, *Handbook of Physiology* (1840).

[57] See *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry*, chapter 1.

[58] Hans Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 120; see pp. 54-55, 94-95, 123-24, 133-34, 182.

[59] See Morris Kline, Foreword to *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry*, p. ii; *Essay*, pp. 1-6, 179-82.

[60] *Foundations*, p. 37.

geometers' notion of invariance under transformation blossomed into the tensor calculus, which allowed the latest scientific laws to remain invariant across observers in different spatiotemporal coordinate systems.[61] Such argumentation plays a key role in Russell's theory of physical structure in *The Analysis of Matter*, and meshes with Quine's physicalist theory of objectivity based on intersubjective checking.

I suggest that the basic idea of projective geometry is triangulation, commonly attributed to Thales. The father of philosophy is said to have used it to determine the height of a pyramid and the distance of a ship at sea. Today the Geometric PLA would be a more general Topological PLA. Someday an even greater mathematical generalization may be achieved. But a greater logico-semantic generalization already has been achieved. To it I now turn.

5. The Justificationist Background

The Kripkean Justificationist PLA is a generalization of the Geometric PLA and arguments like it. Here there is a general problem of logically multiple interpretation of the meaning or reference of any expression. This problem is typically solved by positing a holistic language-game or home language. Kripke notes how close Wittgenstein and Quine are on this. Here the conservative Quine upholds a linguistic communalism.[62] The later Russell allowed the systematic inversion of sensible qualities; he also allowed indefinitely many empirically indistinguishable metaphysical interpretations of experience. However, he classified these as problems of knowledge, not as problems of meaning, and was led to a holistic, pragmatic theory of knowledge. I do not know whether Frege intended his geometric and color inversions to illustrate a general thesis about meaning. But that would help make sense of his remarks in *Foundations* that "everyone recognizes the same geometrical axioms, if only by his behaviour," and that "[e]ven a colour-blind man can speak of red and green" by following the lead of others or by following science. Such remarks suggest a latent holism, as does the very notion of systematic inversions of meaning.

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[61] Foreword to *Essay*, p. v; Kline, "Projective Geometry," in *The World of Mathematics*, vol. 1, pp. 640-41.

[62] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, pp. 54-58.

J. N. Findlay has found an anticipation of this sort of PLA in Hegel's *Phenomenology*.[63] Hegel argues that the meaning of ethical language is in its public, objective structure, using a systematic-inversion-of-morality example which is historically bracketed by Shakespeare's "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" and by Nietzsche's transvaluation of all values. The context suggests that Hegel is making a very general point about meaning, using ethics only as an illustration.

6. The Realist/Nominalist Background

Here we find a clash of opposing backgrounds. Historically, materialists have favored nominalism, while the Geometric and Justificationist PLAs seem to favor a notion of real structure as common to many. Among naturalists, Peirce and Dewey reject nominalism while James and Quine favor it. Quine appears as a trebly ambiguous figure. First, he admits both "extensional universals" and an inclination to reduce them to classes.[64] Second, he cites both Dewey and the British empiricist-nominalist tradition as anticipating his own antipathy to private languages, seemingly unaware that Dewey is much closer to Peirce's scholastic realism.[65] Third, Quine cites Wittgenstein, who is even more of an ambiguous figure. Wittgenstein rejects traditional nominalism and realism alike for treating words as names at all. He is nominalistic in that for him "most" meanings devolve to word uses. But he is universalistic in that these very word uses are games or structures which are, and indeed must be, common to many. Russell and Frege are both realists. Frege's concept-names do not change reference across singular statements. Thus his concept *round square* must be a universal *ante rem*.

There is one nominalistic lineage from Wittgenstein to Mauthner, Mach, and Hume, and another, more materialist line to Hobbes and Francis Bacon. Both have roots in William of Ockham. But there is also a

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[63] J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination* (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 92; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 203-6.

[64] Quine, "On the Individuation of Attributes," in *Theories and Things*; see "Logic and the Reification of Universals" in *From a Logical Point of View*, Second Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

[65] See note 24; *Meaning and Action*, pp. 90n., 94-95, 117-19, 121-22, 139-40, 285, 327n., 372; see p. 477 on John Dewey; Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958), pp. 184-85, 187.

universalist lineage permeating Marx, Feuerbach and Hegel, with roots in Plato's theory of forms. Marx and Feuerbach hold that human consciousness is consciousness of our species-being, which they derive from Hegel's view that self-awareness is mirroring ourselves in another. For Hegel, every word is a universal, and to think is to name. And to name and think truly is also to state the essence of a thing. Thus Hegel has holistically collapsed the nominalist-realist-conceptualist distinctions.[66]

For Plato, forms are common to many, objective, and real; particulars are relativistic, privatistic, and evanescent. Behind this is the Heraclitean two-tiered world of law and fire. There are echoes of such views in Quine's Slippage PLA (intersubjective checking prevents word slippage), in the publicity and stability Russell's constructions and structures, as opposed to his momentary sense-data, provide, and in Frege's view that mental ideas comprise an unstable flux needing words to stabilize it.[67]

7. The Language = Thought Background

In all his major works, Max Müller has held that language and thought are, with appropriate qualifications, identical. In "My Predecessors," Müller cites many anticipators of this view: Hegel and Schelling; Taine, Bonald, Maistre, and Condillac; Hobbes and Bacon; and Plato.[68] In Plato he cites: "[T]he soul when thinking appears to me to be just talking..." (*Theaetetus* 190); "Are not thought and speech the same, with this exception, that what is called thought is the unuttered conversation of the soul with herself?" (*Sophist* 263). Müller notes that the old Greek ordinary notion of *logos* already connoted the identity of thought with language. Müller oddly overlooks that Schopenhauer endorsed Cicero's identification of *ratio* with *oratio*. Schopenhauer is well-known for having influenced both Mauthner and Wittgenstein; Mauthner, who

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[66] On Marx, Feuerbach, and Hegel, see: *Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man*, pp. 70-71; *Feuerbach*, pp. 26, 162-63; *An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics*, pp. 15, 18, 21 n.37 on self-consciousness as mirroring others; chapter 3 on universals and objectivity; *Hegel: A Re-examination*, pp. 23, 308-10.

[67] "Facts of the Matter," p. 155; Frege, "On the Scientific Justification of a Conceptual Notation," in *Conceptual Notation and Related Articles*, pp. 83-84, and "Logic," in *Posthumous Writings*, p. 135.

[68] Müller, "My Predecessors," in *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1895). See also *The Science of Thought* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), vol. 1, pp. 30-45.

came after Müller, also influenced Wittgenstein.[69] Even Kant says, "Thinking is speaking to ourselves."[70] In this, Müller seems part of the Hamann-Herder-Humboldt anti-private-language philological tradition, which in turn is part of the "conservative, holistic and collectivist" German romantic movement, in which a people is identified "by its culture and its language" and persons "are constituted by the sociolinguistic environment that they inhabit."[71]

Müller belongs to the naturalistic background. Charles Darwin briefly discussed Müller on language in *The Descent of Man*. The later Frege says all thinking is garbed in language; Russell says most of it is. The early Wittgenstein equates the limits of thought with the limits of language; the later Wittgenstein looks to uses of the word "thinking." Quine, following Tooke, methodologically replaces ideas with words.[72]

It is not enough for the Social Language PLA that thoughts merely be inseparable from words. The words must be public. Müller believed he followed Hobbes in deeming individual uses of words primary and 'communal' uses secondary.[73] This makes room for private names, at least prior to the full development of language. But most of Müller's predecessors and successors have clothed thinking in public languages, including Hobbes, who says, "The Greeks have but one word *logos*, for

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[69] See Gershon Weiler, *Mauthner's Critique of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 3, acknowledges Schopenhauer's influence on Mauthner. Yet Weiler identifies only Humboldt as Mauthner's predecessor on the language-thought identity thesis, saying, "That it is impossible to identify thought and language independently of each other was clearly seen by Humboldt" (p. 46; see pp. 23-24.) Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin recognize Schopenhauer as the root of this thesis in Mauthner, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 123-24. See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974), p. 163. As Janik and Toulmin note, Schopenhauer attributes the view to Cicero's identification of *ratio* and *oratio*, *De Oficiis* I 6. See also *Fourfold Root*, pp. 79, 148, 149, 153, 154, 164, 167, 171.

[70] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Academy Edition, VII 192, as translated by Robert E. Butts, "The Grammar of Reason: Hamann's Challenge to Kant," *Synthese* **75**/2 (1988), p. 278 n.10.

[71] Ian Hacking, "Locke, Leibniz, Language and Hans Aarsleff," *Synthese* **75**/2 (1988), p. 150.

[72] See Frege, "On the Scientific Justification of a Conceptual Notation," pp. 83-84, 86; *Posthumous Writings*, pp. 269, 270; Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933), p. 152; Quine, "The Pragmatists' Place in Empiricism," p. 24 and "Facts of the Matter," p. 155.

[73] On Hobbes's distinction between *notae* and *signa* see *The Science of Thought*, vol. 1, p. 35, citing Thomas Hobbes, *Works*, vol. ii. 4. See note 44.

both *Speech* and *Reason*; not that they thought there was no Speech without Reason; but no Reasoning without Speech..."[74] This is only natural. Müller reports that people asked him not whether he thought in a public language or a private one, but whether he thought in German or English.

8. The "No Entity Without Identity" Background

On the ontological level of "no entity without identity," Panayot Butchvarov traces the origin of private language arguments back to Plato:

> The reason for accepting the proposition that whatever exists is identifiable is implicit in Plato's argument that there can be no knowledge or even language about things in a flux, in Frege's argument that if something is to be accepted as an object it must be capable of being recognized, in Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of a private language, and in Price's argument for the primacy of recognition in conceptual cognition. It consists in the recognition of the intimate relation between the notion of existence or reality, on one hand, and the notions of knowledge, understanding, judgment, and concept, on the other... In a world without... identity nothing is recognizable, nothing can be classified, nothing can be perceived or referred to twice, no linguistic expressions could be used twice with the same sense or the same reference, no piece of language, or of knowledge, or of thought could last beyond the specious present. We would be in the Heraclitean flux, with its consequences for knowledge and language that Plato so eloquently described in the *Theaetetus*.[75]

All the origins discussed concern public identity conditions. Insofar as the verificationists identified the cognitive meanings of statements with methods of public verification, and insofar as the pragmatists identified the cognitive meanings of statements with expected or possible practical public consequences, they gave such cognitive meanings public identity conditions. The broad naturalistic society-language-consciousness nexus

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[74] George MacDonald Ross, "Hobbes and Descartes on the Relation Between Language and Consciousness," *Synthese* **75**/2 (1988), p. 227, citing texts in *Leviathan*, chapters 3 and 4

[75] Panayot Butchvarov, *Being Qua Being: A Theory of Identity, Existence, and Predication* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 42.

concerns what remains the same through stages of public growth and development. The nexus has roots in early Greek naturalism, in which the stuff of the world is what remains the same through change, and in the Sophists' later question of what remains ethically the same across people and cultures. These roots develop into a Hegelian tree whose branches include Marx and Dewey and whose fruits include Neurath, Carnap, Wittgenstein, and Quine. Physicalism identifies or replaces thoughts with physical patterns. Isomorphic structures and universals concern what is the same across different persons. The theory that language and 'thought 'are identical is an expansion of the nominalistic identification of concepts with public predicates.

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