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ON THE TREATMENT OF SOLIPSISM IN LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S
TRACTATUS LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
April 2010

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For my father

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light upon Wittgenstein's treatment of solipsism in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The present work provides a historically informed interpretation of the *Tractatus* as an ethically-motivated text written in a critical, broadly Kantian spirit; it investigates secondary literature on the topic of solipsism in Wittgenstein's early philosophy; and it argues the early Wittgenstein was a solipsist, but that Tractarian solipsism is of a rather peculiar character. It is maintained that Tractarian solipsism derives its peculiarity from Wittgenstein's notion of the *metaphysical subject* of solipsism. The thesis makes a case for identifying such a subject with "logical space" (when the subject is viewed from the linguistic perspective) and God (when the subject is viewed from an ethical point of view.)

"ON THE TREATMENT OF SOLIPSISM IN LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S
TRACTATUS LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS"

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS USED

TLP – Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank those who motivated and supported me previous to and throughout the execution of this research project:

My thesis supervisor, Michael Hymers, for providing our entire cohort with guidance throughout our MA studies and giving me the opportunity to carry out my research on Wittgenstein under his supervision;

My first reader, Peter Schotch, especially for his support, stimulating discussion, warmth and understanding;

My second reader, Lynette Reid, for her patience and her valuable, thorough comments on the present work;

And the remarkably engaging philosophical communities (and *Tractatus* reading groups) at Dalhousie University and the University of Ottawa.

I am also indebted to my friends, notably:

Stephen Latta, Colin Hirano, and Daniel Kofman, for their companionship and fine philosophical conversation;

Paul Rusnock, for his continuing mentorship and encouragement;

My sounding board for Chapter 4, the discerning Johannes Marti;

Matthew Wampler-Doty, for sketching a mind map for Chapter 4;

And Alessandro Cava, for offering me free thesis lattes at the Hopewell Starbucks in Ottawa.

Lastly, I wish to thank my dear parents, who have unwaveringly supported every one of my endeavours for as long as I remember.

Merci à tous!

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (henceforward *Tractatus*), Ludwig

Wittgenstein explicitly mentions solipsism twice:

This remark¹ provides a key to the question, to what extent solipsism is a truth.

In fact what solipsism *means*, is quite correct, only it cannot be *said*, but shows itself.

That the world is *my* world, shows itself in the fact that the limits of the language (*the* language which I understand) mean the limits of *my* world. (*TLP* 5.62)

Here we see that solipsism strictly carried out coincides with pure realism. The I in solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it. (*TLP* 5.64)

He makes two more solipsistic-sounding claims:

The world and life are one. (*TLP* 5.621)

I am my world. (The microcosm.) (*TLP* 5.631)

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light upon Wittgenstein's treatment of solipsism in the *Tractatus*. In the next chapter, I give a historically informed interpretation of the *Tractatus* as an ethically-motivated text written in a critical, broadly Kantian spirit.

Chapter 3 is devoted to a discussion of secondary literature centred on Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism. In the fourth chapter, I situate my position with respect to the literature covered in Chapter 3 and submit my reading of the *Tractatus*' passages

¹ From the *Tractatus* alone it is not entirely clear whether Wittgenstein is referring to 5.6 or 5.61, but the *Notebooks 1914-1916* suggests he refers to 5.6 (*Notebooks* 49).

concerning solipsism. *Pace* David Pears, I roughly argue that there *is* a sense in which Wittgenstein can be said to be a solipsist, but that Tractarian solipsism is of a rather peculiar character. This solipsism derives its peculiarity from Wittgenstein's notion of the *metaphysical subject* of solipsism, which I introduce in Chapter 2 and return to in Chapter 4. The main contention I defend in Chapter 4 is that early Wittgensteinian solipsism fits with the rest of the Tractarian picture if we identify the metaphysical subject with logical space (when the subject is viewed from the linguistic perspective) and God (when the subject is viewed from an ethical point of view.) Concluding remarks appear in the fifth and final chapter.

CHAPTER 2: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE *TRACTATUS*

Introduction

The present chapter aims at presenting the major themes of the *Tractatus*, focusing especially on those connected to the book's treatment of solipsism. Solipsism is mentioned explicitly in two passages (5.62 and 5.64) appearing within a discussion of logic, language, the world, their limits and their relationships to the "I". As we shall see, Wittgenstein also involves the saying-showing distinction in 5.62 and connects his remarks on solipsism (in the 5.6s) to ethics (in the 6s) via his discussion of mystical (in the late 6s). Consequently, this chapter focuses on the *Tractatus*' treatment of ontology, semantics, logical necessity, ethics, ineffability, the self, and the connections between these topics. However, before I begin, I wish to take note of a few Tractarian peculiarities.

It is worth mentioning that, since the *Tractatus* lends itself to a variety of incompatible readings, every exegetical account of the text is in some way controversial. Recently, Cora Diamond and James Conant have argued in favour of a new reading of the *Tractatus*, which they (and their followers) refer to as the "resolute" reading. A brief critical discussion of their reading appears at the end of this chapter. For now, it suffices to say that the interpretation I am about to offer is at odds with this "resolute" or "New Wittgensteinian" reading of the *Tractatus*.

In what follows, I present the Tractarian topics roughly in the same order in which they are addressed in the original text. In my experience, most introductions to the *Tractatus* present the topics in this way, regardless of differences in interpretation.² There is, however, a danger to presenting the topics in this order. Such a presentation should not suggest that there is a sort of *progression* or *deduction* taking place in the text. By this, I mean that the book's later remarks should not be thought of as *following from* the earlier ones.³ One may, for example, think that this is the case because the *Tractatus*, *ex facie*, is a lot like Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics*.⁴ In the *Ethics*, Spinoza makes use of the geometrical method: his book opens with metaphysical "axioms" which ground his later remarks concerning the nature of God and ethics. Wittgenstein's book also opens with ontological remarks, only turning to ethics, God and mysticism toward its close. Furthermore, much like the *Ethics*' propositions, Wittgenstein's propositions are also numbered, which may tempt a reader into thinking of his first remarks as more fundamental than the others. Some readings⁵ of the *Tractatus* take this to be the case, but there is no reason to think this is the only way of reading the text. Thus one should not

² See Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*; G.E.M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Robert J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*; Martin Stokhof, *World and Life as One*; Michael Hymers, *Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy*.

³ I follow Anscombe in thinking the *Tractatus* "is not presented in an order of demonstration from premises; if we want to find the grounds for its contentions, we must [not] look . . . at the beginning"(Anscombe 18).

⁴ The *Ethics*' and *Tractatus*' similar structure, ethical motivation and identification of God with Nature may have inspired G.E. Moore's suggestion of the "Spinozan" title given to the *Tractatus*, which Wittgenstein originally considered entitling "Der Satz" ("The Proposition"). See *Letters to C.K. Ogden with Comments on the English Translation of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973).

⁵ In *The False Prison*, David Pears characterizes Wittgenstein as committed to an "uncritical realism"(11) by which the *Tractatus*' linguistic doctrines follow from (and, thus, are straightforwardly dependent on) its ontology. In p. 10-18 of this thesis I give reasons for thinking Pears' reading is problematic.

take the ordering in my presentation of the *Tractatus*' themes to discount the possibility of the book's later remarks lending support to the earlier remarks (and vice versa.)

Finally, I should mention my interpretive tendencies. I hope to justify these tendencies while (and by) making sense of the *Tractatus*. My reading is largely supported by textual evidence from the *Tractatus* itself, but I also draw from Wittgenstein's wartime *Notebooks 1914-1916*, his *Prototractatus*, the 1929 "Lecture on Ethics" and 1930 "Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein" when these texts prove illuminating. I also find Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin's philosophical-historical book, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, essential to properly understanding the context in which Wittgenstein wrote the *Tractatus*.⁶ In light of this I am inclined to characterize my reading of the *Tractatus* as properly historical. I also think it is important to read the *Tractatus* with Wittgenstein's own thoughts about the text in mind. It was not so long ago that the *Tractatus* was thought by many only to present the results of an inquiry into the nature of logic and language, despite Wittgenstein's claim that "the sense of the book is an ethical one"(Engelmann 143). The once influential Vienna Circle's reading of the text, for instance, took Wittgenstein's remarks concerning ethics, aesthetics, God, mysticism, solipsism and the metaphysical subject to be no more than curious remarks

⁶ I follow Janik and Toulmin in thinking that, "when it comes to understanding the problems which gave those arguments and beliefs their significance for [Wittgenstein], we can no longer make so clean a separation between his ideas, on the one hand, and the historic-cultural context of their exposition, on the other"(*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 32).

which were only important to Wittgenstein, not to his logical-linguistic theory.⁷ This will not be my reading of the text; I take Wittgenstein's claim seriously and aim at understanding the book as ethically motivated. Finally, we turn to the question of realism and anti-realism in the *Tractatus*. Some philosophers such as David Pears argue that the *Tractatus* is a realist work and that Wittgenstein's later book, the *Philosophical Investigations*, is anti-realist. While I believe attempts to classify Wittgenstein's philosophy in terms of these categories are somewhat Procrustean, a defence of this claim falls beyond the scope of this thesis. I will, however, give the *Tractatus* a much less robustly realist reading than some others do.⁸ The reading I present is largely motivated by the preface of the *Tractatus*, in which Wittgenstein claims that his project aims at delimiting the expression of thoughts from within a linguistic perspective (*TLP* 27).⁹ Because of this, I follow Martin Stokhof in taking the *Tractatus*' ontological remarks to

⁷ The Circle's reading of the *Tractatus* took Wittgenstein's text to be a straightforwardly anti-metaphysical extension of Mach's philosophy of science (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 145). Wittgenstein attended a small number of meetings held by the Circle. At these meetings, it became clear to Carnap that the members of the Circle had misinterpreted the *Tractatus*. In his *Intellectual Autobiography*, Carnap notes that he "had erroneously believed that [Wittgenstein's] attitude toward metaphysics was similar to [that of the Circle]. [Carnap] had not paid sufficient attention to the statements in [Wittgenstein's] book about the mystical" (Nieli 68). This was not the first time Wittgenstein's book was misinterpreted; Wittgenstein was also weary of publishing the *Tractatus* with Bertrand Russell's Introduction because Russell apparently misunderstood the text. From the Introduction, it seems Russell thought the *Tractatus* intended to explain the nature of logical propositions (and, thus, to provide a theory of logic.) However, in a 1919 letter to Russell, Wittgenstein wrote: "Now I'm afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention to which the whole business of logical propositions is only corollary. The main point is the theory of what can be expressed by propositions . . . and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown; which I believe is the cardinal problem of philosophy" (*Cambridge Letters* 124).

⁸ See Norman Malcolm, *Nothing Is Hidden: Wittgenstein's criticism of his earlier thought*; David Pears, *The False Prison*.

⁹ All *Tractatus* citations are from the C.K. Ogden translation unless stated otherwise. Like most other interpreters, unless I am citing the Preface (27-8), Russell's Introduction (7-23) or the footnote to remark 1 on page 31, I cite the number of the cited remark (e.g., 4.014) instead of the number of the page on which it appears.

concern the world as an object of the thoughts expressed through language. To argue that Wittgenstein pronounces on the nature of an extra-linguistic reality — that is, of a world *unconditioned* by language — shows, I think, an insensitivity to the critical (that is, Kantian) aspect of Wittgenstein's project.¹⁰ My reading avoids this mistake by taking Wittgenstein to give the Tractarian metaphysics from a linguistic point of view. Thus my interpretation is *historical* and takes the text to be *linguistically critical* and *ethically motivated*.

I mentioned that Wittgenstein claimed the point of the *Tractatus* was an ethical one. It seems strange, then, that the preface mentions that the book deals with the problems of philosophy by "draw[ing] a limit . . . to the expression of thoughts"(27). The connection between such a project and ethics surely is not so obvious. Moreover, at first glance, it is unclear why the *Tractatus*, as a book concerning logic and language, opens with what appear to be ontological claims. We find ourselves inclined to ask: What is the relevance of the nature of the world to language? What bearing does language have on ethics? And finally, what is the relationship between ethics and the world? Wittgenstein's answers to these questions sit at the core of the Tractarian view. In the first seven sections, I aim to connect Wittgenstein's remarks about the world and its structure to his remarks about language. In the eighth section, I will examine the connection between the linguistic/ontological remarks and ethics.

¹⁰ Whereas Kant's first *Critique* concerns itself with the limits of theoretical knowledge, the *Tractatus* looks into the limits of language.

Fact and World

In the preceding section, I mentioned that the *Tractatus* opens with ontological remarks concerning the nature of the world. The first of these remark is this: "The world is everything that is the case"(1). Wittgenstein provides the following elucidation¹¹ of 1: "The world is the totality of facts, not of things"(1.1). *Tractatus* interpreters have given various reasons for which Wittgenstein takes the world to comprise a collection of facts as opposed to things. Max Black, for instance, argues that a catalogue of all of the world's objects provides an insufficient account of the world. In order to have a complete account, Black claims one would not only have to list all of the objects in the world, but also indicate that the list of worldly objects is complete (Black 29-30).¹² But this does not seem to be what Wittgenstein is saying. If we allow ourselves to think of Wittgenstein's facts as we would ordinary ones (such as the fact that Barack Obama won the American election or that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris) and think of his objects as commonsense things (such as some cat, some tree, some park bench), it certainly does not seem as though the list of all objects in the world is a list of everything *that is the*

¹¹ The remarks of the *Tractatus* are numbered in accordance with what Wittgenstein calls their "logical importance"(31n). The idea here is that 1.1, for instance, is a comment on or elucidation of remark 1; 2.0231 and 2.0232, elucidations of 2.023; and so on. Wittgenstein notes that the *decimal numbers* indicate logical importance, so there is no reason to think (for example) that the first remark (1) is more important than the last (7).

¹² Black's view seems to blend Wittgenstein's claim that "[o]nly facts can express a sense, a class of names [of objects] cannot"(3.142) with Bertrand Russell's note (in his introduction to the *Tractatus*) that "[t]he world is fully described if all . . . facts are known, together with the fact that these are all of [the facts]"(Russell 12). (There is something not entirely right about Russell's claim here, since (as we shall see later on) Wittgenstein does not consider the "fact" that, e.g., fact a + fact b + fact c + . . . is the totality of facts is, itself, a fact at all.)

case. For the list of objects (including Barack Obama, the Eiffel Tower, etc.) is entirely unlike the list comprising the facts that Obama won the American election, the Eiffel Tower is in Paris and so on. The first of these lists tells us nothing about the relations its objects bear to one another — the facts in which they figure. And despite there being a number of differences between our commonsense notions of fact and object and Wittgenstein's technical definitions of these terms, the differences are not so extreme that one may, for instance, say of a Tractarian object that it is or is not the case. Thus Black's explanation of 1.1 should strike us as deeply problematic.

Let us then take Wittgenstein to mean something along these lines: that the world is the totality of facts such as that Obama won the election, that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris and so on. We now ask: what would the motivation be for subscribing to such a worldview? In *World and Life as One*, Martin Stokhof argues

...we may very well view the Tractarian view [of the world as the totality of facts] as emerging from the traditional one [of the world as the totality of objects] by an increasing demand of explicitness and exhaustiveness. . . . [I]ncreasing the demand of explicitness increases the descriptive character. (Stokhof 40-1)

While this is on the right track, Stokhof is mistaken in thinking Wittgenstein views the world as comprising facts because a list of facts gives a better, more detailed description of the world than does a list of objects. The merit of Black's explanation of 1.1 is his recognition that a bare list of objects, in fact, tells us *nothing at all*. A list of objects is not less descriptive; it altogether fails to describe. Still, Stokhof raises the important

issue of description in connection to the world. As we work our way through the main themes of the *Tractatus*, it should become increasingly clear that Wittgenstein considers description to be the essence of language.¹³ Thus if we take the *Tractatus* to inquire into the possibility of expressing thoughts about the world in language, we take Wittgenstein to be interested in the world we describe. This explains why it is unfruitful (or, perhaps, even incoherent) to conceive of the world as a totality of objects. Any description of the world will involve the statement of its *facts*, and a complete description will list them all. It is perhaps also worth noting the importance of Wittgenstein's claim that world is *nothing but* the totality of facts (*TLP* 1.11). (We will return to this point repeatedly throughout this chapter, particularly in the sections concerning the self and ethics.)

I mentioned that Wittgenstein means something special when he states that the world can be broken down into facts (1.1, 1.2). We already know that the totality of facts is everything that is the case. It remains to briefly consider the relationships facts bear to one another and to explain what it means for a fact to "be the case" (that is, to obtain.) Our first point of discussion concerns inter-fact relationships. Wittgenstein submits the following:

The facts in logical space are the world. (1.13)

¹³ In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein asks: "Is it a tautology to say: *Language* consists of *sentences*? It seems it is" (*Notebooks* 52). By the writing of the *Tractatus*, it is decided that "[t]he totality of propositions is the language" (4.001) and "[a] proposition is the *description* of a fact" (4.023, my emphasis). Later in life, Wittgenstein abandons his Tractarian view of language as essentially descriptive. See his *The Blue and Brown Books* and *Philosophical Investigations*.

Any one [of the facts (the *Tatsachen*)] can either be the case or not be the case, and everything else remain the same. (1.21)

What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts. (2)

Atomic facts are independent of one another. (2.061)

From the existence or non-existence of an atomic fact we cannot infer the existence or non-existence of another. (2.062)

In combination with 2.061 and 2.062, 1.21 suggests to the reader that *every* fact is an atomic fact, since all facts are mutually independent. But such a reading conflicts with 2 — the claim that what is the case is not the obtaining of a single atomic fact, but of atomic *facts*. *Tractatus* interpretations usually accord more weight to 2 and 2.061 than to 1.21, taking 1.21 really as having to do with atomic facts, and I too will opt for such a reading. The difference between complex and atomic facts is as we would intuitively expect it to be. Say, for instance, that AF_1 , AF_2 and AF_3 are all atomic facts. Then their obtaining together is some other fact, a complex fact we call CF_1 . CF_1 can be divided into its three atomic facts, but AF_1 , AF_2 and AF_3 cannot be broken down into further facts. This is the reason for which they are called "atomic".

Atomic facts are also distinguished from their complex counterparts by their mutual independence. AF_1 , for instance, obtains independently of the existence or non-existence of AF_2 , AF_3 , and so on. CF_1 , however, depends for its existence on AF_1 , AF_2 and AF_3 obtaining. In order to understand the relationship between atomic facts and complex ones, I find it useful to consider the following analogy, due to Patrice Philie. Consider a grid on which we place one small light bulb at every intersection. Each light has 2 possible states; lit or unlit. Every bulb represents some atomic fact. When the light is lit, its associated atomic fact holds; when the light is out, the atomic fact does not hold.

Each light can be turned on or off independently of every other light. Of course, if we know the size of the board in question and know which of its lights are lit, we also know which are turned off. Hence "the totality of existent atomic facts also determines which atomic facts do not exist"(2.05). Technically, the totality of facts in general is represented on the board by all of the existent atomic facts and every combination of these facts (i.e., every existent complex fact). It is unclear from the *Tractatus* whether Wittgenstein counts both what he calls positive and negative facts as making up the world (where the fact that A holds makes A a positive fact, and the fact that B fails to hold makes B a negative fact). In this case, the *entire* board would count as "the world", not just the set of lights alight. But either conception of the world, at bottom, gives us the same result since the set of lights unlit is determined by the set of lights lit. The next section discusses the nature of the entities to which atomic facts owe their existence or non existence, Tractarian *objects*.

Name and Object

Wittgenstein indicates that Tractarian atomic facts are not *structureless* atoms: they are concatenations, or configurations, of what Wittgenstein calls "objects (entities, things)"(2.01, 2.0272). In the atomic fact, objects are unambiguously ordered (2.031), hanging together much like the links of a chain (2.03).¹⁴ These links, however, are not

¹⁴ Stokhof aptly suggests this simile is used to show that an atomic fact owes its unity to no more than its ordered objects, just as the chain stands as a structured unity solely in virtue of its links (45). (The likeness stops here, however, since there is no reason to think Wittgenstein is suggesting objects are *physical*)

structured unities like the atomic facts in which they appear: they are simple (2.02). One could imagine objects to be simple by definition in virtue of the role they play with respect to the atomic facts in which they appear. After all, one would not be inclined to call a fact F "atomic" if the obtaining of F depended on the obtaining of further facts — that is, the obtaining of the facts which make up the complex objects of which F is composed. This gives us reason to think the simplicity of objects follows from the logical independence of facts (2.061). Yet Wittgenstein sees the simplicity of objects as given by a transcendental argument he produces at 2.02-2.0212.¹⁵ The structure of Wittgenstein's argument is, I think, quite clear:

1. If objects were complex, then the world would have no substance (2.021).
2. Unless the world had a substance, the meaning of any given proposition would depend on the truth of some further proposition (2.0211).
3. If the meaning of any given proposition depended on the truth of some further proposition, we would not be able to picture the world truly or falsely (2.0212).
4. We can picture the world truly or falsely.
5. Therefore objects cannot be complex: the object must be simple (2.02).

Let us take up each of the four premises one at a time. Premise 4, that we can picture the world truly or falsely, roughly makes the claim that we can describe the world accurately

entities like chain links. For an excellent discussion concerning the possible natures of Tractarian objects, see Stokhof's *World and Life as One*, Ch. 3 (104-185).)

¹⁵ Many interpreters refer to this argument as a transcendental one. See Jan Ludwig's "'Substance' and 'Simple Objects' in *Tractatus* 2.02" (Ludwig 307-318) and Chapter XI, "Wittgenstein as a Kantian Philosopher", of Erik Stenius' influential *Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Stenius 214-226).

or inaccurately — that is, that we can use language. For Wittgenstein, this is an obvious truth and the starting point of the *Tractatus*. By premise 3, there could be no propositions if every propositional meaning depended on some further truth: language would never get off the ground, since something must first be a proposition (that is, have a sense (*Sinn*)) in order to be possibly true.¹⁶ In light of 2.024 ("Substance is what exists independently of what is the case"), premise 1 just means that if objects were complex, *everything* could be otherwise. Premise 2, then, means that unless there was something fixed — something independent of whatever is the case — any proposition's meaning would depend on the truth of some other proposition.

While the argument's structure is clear, the reasons for which Wittgenstein commits to its premises are not so obvious. The argument's third and fourth premises are reasonably taken for granted, but why is Wittgenstein committed to the first two? In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein defines 'objects' as "fixed, existent"(2.027) and independent of all happening and being so. I think he gives his most straightforward and illuminating characterization of objects in §36 of his *Philosophical Remarks*, circa 1930:

What I once called 'objects', simples, were simply what I could refer to without running the risk of their possible non-existence; i.e. that for which there is neither existence nor non-existence,

¹⁶ From what I gather, premise 3 does not rule out the possibility of there being, say, a unique proposition P which depends on the truth of some other single proposition Q for its meaning; after all, the threat to the possibility of language addressed in premise 3 arises out of a *regress*, not the impossibility of stating truths concerning meaning. Consequently, I think premise 3 only tells us the sense of a proposition cannot depend on the truth of *infinitely many propositions*. It is only later in the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein argues propositional sense is independent of *any truth whatsoever*. For this reason, I think Stokhof is wrong for interpreting the argument of the 2.02s to rest on Wittgenstein's doctrine of semantic ineffability (Stokhof 115).

and that means: what we can speak about *no matter what may be the case*. (Remarks 72)

Thus the 'objects' with which the *Tractatus* is concerned are nothing like books, chairs and automobiles. The previous remark makes perfectly clear that Wittgenstein gives 'object' a precise technical definition. Although this definition does not shed light on the nature of everyday objects, it is nonetheless valuable because immutable simples, as we shall see, play an important role in the Tractarian worldview. I mentioned premise 1 tells us that if objects were complex, *everything* could be otherwise. If we understand objects as lying outside of what can be otherwise, then, premise 1 tells us that there would be no objects in the Tractarian sense if there were no simples. Premise 1 then implies that every complex holds contingently; and since any complex could fail to hold if things were otherwise, it is logically possible that objects could fail to exist. If objects were, as it were, *thoroughly* complex — if they were not reducible to unstructured simples — there would be no objects, no substance of the world, nothing that existed independently of the facts. Premise 2, in turn, tells us what the implications would be if the world was without substance: that every proposition would rely on another for its meaning. Many interpreters suggest (rightly, I think) that Wittgenstein's justification for his second premise goes something like this.¹⁷ Let F be the atomic fact that ABC and let objects be thoroughly complex. Since Wittgenstein says "[e]very statement about complexes can be analysed into a statement about their constituent parts" (*TLP* 2.0201), the analysis of the

¹⁷ Variations on this theme are given by Black, Canfield, Fogelin and Stokhof.

claim that F would come to an end with the claim that ABC. We know that if objects are thoroughly complex, then A is complex. Let us further stipulate that A is composed of the a pair of objects, *u* and *t*, concatenated such that *ut*. Then there must be a situation in which the world would be such that *u* and *t* were not ordered such that *ut*. The complex A would then fail to hold. A's complexity (and thus, contingency) presents a linguistic problem in virtue of the relationship between *ut* and the complete analysis of the proposition that F is the case. In order to understand the problem, we must look to Wittgenstein's remarks on complete analysis in the 3.2s. There, Wittgenstein states that in the completely analyzed proposition, the propositional elements — its "simple signs"(3.201) or, alternatively, its "names"(3.202) — stand in a one-to-one correspondence with the objects of the fact expressed (3.02). And since a Tractarian name means its object (3.203), such a name is meaningless without a referent. Consequently, the expression "ABC" would be meaningless whenever the complex A failed to obtain since the meaning of "A" (and, thus, of "ABC") would depend on the fact that the complex *ut* obtained. But since objects are, by hypothesis, thoroughly complex, the meaningfulness of the claim that *ut* holds would depend on the truth of some other propositions P and Q, where P guarantees the obtaining of *u* and Q, the obtaining of *t*. The meanings of P and Q, in turn, must be secured by further propositions, as so on. The regress is vicious because, as I mentioned, if objects were complex, language would never get off the ground. And since there is language, argues Wittgenstein, there can be no such regress. Given the means by which names acquire their meanings, the world is not infinitely complex. The smallest complexes are atomic facts and atomic facts are built from simple objects.

Since complex facts are made up of atomic ones and atomic facts are made up of objects, a reader may get the impression that both complexes bear the same relations to their associated elements. There are, however, important differences between these complex-to-constituent relationships. Firstly, objects are unlike atomic facts in that they are defined with respect to the complexes in which they may be found: "it is essential to a thing that it can be a constituent part of an atomic fact"(2.011).¹⁸ More precisely, the essence of an object is the set of possible atomic facts in which it may figure, which Wittgenstein refers to as the object's "logical form"(2.0233) or "internal qualities"(2.01231). These qualities are contrasted with the external or material qualities of an object, which are matters of fact. These external properties arise in virtue of the concatenation in which the object happens to find itself (2.0231). The difference between the two may be illustrated as follows.¹⁹ To know what it means to run does not involve knowing which people or animals are running or which have taken up running in the past. One can have a complete understanding of running without knowledge of any running-facts. All one needs to know is what it means to run: that is, one need only know the *possible* situations in which running plays part. One grasps the essence of running just as she grasps the essence of an object: independently of the facts.

¹⁸ In fact, objects and atomic facts are defined with respect to one another, since (as we saw earlier) the atomic fact is defined as a "combination of objects"(2.01). As we will later examine in greater detail, this ontological relationship mirrors (and is mirrored by) the linguistic relationship between name and elementary proposition, where "the elementary proposition . . . is a connexion, a concatenation, of names"(4.211), yet "only in the context of a proposition does a name have meaning"(3.3).

¹⁹ This example is due to Stephen Latta.

While it is essential to the object that it can be combined with other objects (and thus, have external properties), no one combination is necessary. Wittgenstein clearly maintains that one cannot conceive of an object independently of the *possibility* of its concatenation with objects, but it is hard to tell whether he makes the stronger claim that an object must also always be in *some* concatenation. That claim is suggested by 2.0131: "[a] speck in a visual field need not be red, but it must have a colour; it has, so to speak, a colour space round it. A tone must have *a* pitch, the object of the sense of touch *a* hardness, etc."(2.0131). Here, it seems Wittgenstein is saying the object is similar to a visual field speck, a tone and a tangible thing insofar as no one of its external qualities is necessary, but no matter the state of the world, it necessarily has *some* external quality. And while such a claim does not follow from the necessary combinability of objects alone, I think Wittgenstein is committed to the view that the world can never be such that an object is uncombined. Thus, it is not only essential to an object "that it can be a constituent part of an atomic fact"(2.011), but that it must, at all times, be a constituent part of some atomic fact.

Logical Atomism

Philosophers often characterize the early Wittgenstein as a proponent of *logical atomism*. There is, however, disagreement concerning what counts as a logical atom. Is the atomic fact, as its name suggests, the Tractarian atom? Or is it the simple object? Let us take logical atoms to be very much like classical Democritean atoms, apart from the fact that they are not (necessarily) material objects. Then there are two views on logical atoms and each seems to fail to meet some criterion distinctive of classical atoms. In his book entitled *Wittgenstein*, Robert J. Fogelin holds the first of these two views; he

understands Tractarian atoms (on the ontological side) to be *simple objects*. By the *Tractatus*, simple objects are like classical atoms insofar as they are the immutable substance of the world (*TLP* 2.021, 2.027). However, there is an important sense in which they are completely unlike classical atoms. Fogelin is aware that, on his view, Wittgenstein's atoms are *always* in some combination; they cannot float about freely like Democritean atoms (Fogelin 7). While this is true, it is not the most important difference between Tractarian objects and classical atoms. For if we allow ourselves to skip ahead to 3.3, we see Wittgenstein maintain that "only in the context of a proposition does a name have meaning"(*TLP* 3.3). From this, it follows that names are essentially dependent on propositions for their meaning. From the ontological perspective, Wittgenstein states that "[i]t is essential to a thing that it can be a constituent part of an atomic fact"(2.011). So we see that simple names are simple names in light of their roles in a proposition; objects are objects in light of their roles in possible atomic facts. Thus *atomic facts are logically prior to objects*, since objects depend on atomic facts for their objectuality. If objects are logically derivative, then they are not fundamental like their classical counterparts. Consequently, we begin to wonder why we ought to call objects "atoms" at all.

Our second interpretive option is to follow Martin Stokhof in regarding the fittingly-named *atomic facts* to be Wittgenstein's logical atoms. Doing so circumvents both problems with Fogelin's account. Firstly, since atomic facts are radically independent (*TLP* 2.061), they enjoy the freedom of Democritean atoms. Any atomic fact "can either be the case or not be the case, and everything else remain the same"(1.21); atomic facts do not, as it were, cling to one another in the same way as

objects do. Secondly, atomic facts are logically prior to all other entities in the Tractarian ontology — logically prior to both complex facts *and* objects. This gives the impression that they are fundamental in the same way as Democritean atoms are. On the other hand, atomic facts are unlike classical atoms insofar as they have a structure. Because Wittgenstein characterizes atomic facts as *configurations* of objects, Stokhof's reading of Tractarian logical atomism flies in the face of the central tenet of classical atomism. Democritus' atoms are, if anything, indivisible; they are the unchanging, the fixed, the existent. How paradoxical for Stokhof, then, that Wittgenstein claim "the *object* is the fixed, the existent; the *configuration* is the changing, the variable"(TLP 2.027, italics mine)!

Stokhof fortunately gives us good reasons for interpreting the Tractarian ontology as an atomism of facts. In his eyes, "[t]he key to understanding in what sense [atomic facts] are atoms lies in understanding what sense of composition is at stake"(Stokhof 42). Classically, the structures built out of atoms are of the same "type" as the elemental units themselves; an aggregate of physical atoms is a larger, complex physical object. Conversely, any complex physical object can be broken down into the tiniest physical particles. Similarly, complex facts are made up of more primitive facts. If you were to, say, take your dog for a walk around the block, that fact would be composed of smaller facts: facts concerning the dog's leggedness, breathable air on Earth, your living in a neighbourhood and so on. Atomic facts, then, are the tiniest factual particles into which

complex facts may be divided while preserving the particles' factual character. In other words, "an atom is logically the smallest entity that is the case"(42). And as I mentioned previously, it is obvious that an *object* cannot be the case.²⁰ What is the case is, of course, relevant because "[t]he world is everything that is the case"(TLP 1). Thus, if we are interested in the atoms out of which the *world* is constructed — the building blocks into which it can be broken down — we are interested in atomic facts (Stokhof 42). And, as I argued, Wittgenstein is interested in a world of atomic facts because he is interested in a world open to description.

The Picture Theory

To ask what makes language possible is to ask what conditions need to be satisfied to allow for expression. Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning provides an answer to the following questions: what gives sentences meaning? What is the connection between the proposition and that which it is about?

At 4.01, Wittgenstein asserts that "[t]he proposition is a picture of reality"(TLP 4.01). A picture, in turn, is a fact (2.141) that "presents the facts in logical space, the existence and non-existence of atomic facts"(2.1). One fact pictures another on two conditions: a) its objects stand in the same relations to one another as do the objects in the

²⁰ While a dog is not a proper object on Wittgenstein's view, I can make my point by comparing the dog (as an object) and the claim that the dog is brown (a possible fact). That *the dog is brown* can be the case or fail to be the case, but it makes no sense to say that *the dog* can be the case. On the linguistic side, in stating "the dog is brown," we tell something about the world. But no one can state "the dog." (Of course, there are certain times at which crying out "The dog!" constitutes stating (with amazement) that something is the case. But these statements are elliptical and *really* mean, for example, something like "My goodness, the dog's wriggled out of its collar again!")

fact pictured (2.15), and b) the picturing fact's objects stand in for the objects in the fact depicted (2.131). Thus "[t]he representing relation consists of the coordinations of the elements of the picture and the things [in the possible fact pictured]"(2.1514). Such a relation is possible in virtue of a common logical form in the picture and the fact depicted, which Wittgenstein calls the "form of representation"(2.17).

Consequently, propositions are meaningful because they present a model of a possible fact. As a picture, a proposition means the fact it depicts. The proposition is true when the fact it expresses obtains, and it is false when the fact fails to obtain (2.222). Every proposition has a unique, complete analysis on which the proposition is broken down into simple signs (3.25). These simple signs (or *names*) must refer to the simples in the world, the Tractarian objects (3.203). Particular concatenations of these simple objects produce particular facts, making their associated propositions true or false. As there is a one-to-one correspondence between names and objects, and possible facts have logical structures identical to those of the propositions that express them, propositional meaning determines the world just as the world determines what is meaningful and expressible: language and the world mirror one another. No aspect of the world is beyond description and no proposition asserts something beyond the world. This means that any fact can be pictured propositionally; and every proposition pictures a possible fact. Propositions are about the world, and given Wittgenstein's portrayal of the world in the *Tractatus*' opening remarks, there is nothing more to the world than the totality of object combinations that are the case.

When I presented Wittgenstein's argument for the simplicity of objects earlier in this chapter, I took the argument to rest on the fact that every complex is a *contingent*

complex. (If we recast this view of complexes in terms of possible worlds, the simplicity of objects then rests on the fact that language would be impossible without objects that appeared in every possible world.²¹ Every complex, however, is unlike an object; it is such that there is some possible world in which the complex fails to obtain.) I also mentioned that, for Wittgenstein, propositions are meaningful because they are pictures capable of depicting possible facts — concatenations of objects which *may or may not* be the case. This inevitably raises a question concerning the status of any proposition which seems to be about something other than a contingent combination of objects. The next sections of this chapter deal with Wittgenstein's treatment of some of these exceptional cases. The cases I examine include those of logical propositions (i.e., tautologies); propositions about logical form, formal concepts, and the picturing relation obtaining between propositions and the facts they express; and philosophical propositions concerning the self and value, and their relation to the world.²² I also introduce Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction throughout the next sections.

²¹ Peter Carruthers takes this approach in his *The Metaphysics of the Tractatus*. While Carruthers' explanation of the text is clear, it is not necessarily illuminating. This is because, while much about the *Tractatus* is more palatable when explained in terms of possible worlds, there are serious disadvantages to using possible-world language when interpreting the text. I think this language dubiously suggests Wittgenstein subscribed to a robust modal realism, that he thinks tautologies are *true* in all worlds and that objects *exist* in all worlds, and so on. These suggestions conflict with what I take to be important aspects of the Tractatus view: that *the* world (that is, the *only* world) is the totality of facts; that tautologies are, in a sense, not *true* at all; and that since the world is all that is the case (and could be otherwise), objects are, in a sense, altogether outside the world.

²² Wittgenstein also addresses questions concerning, among other things, the nature of mathematical propositions (i.e. equations), the principle of sufficient reason, laws of nature, and induction. I forego an examination of these topics for sake of brevity.

Tautologies

The *Tractatus* accords a special status to statements such as "A rose is a rose" and "Either it is raining or it is not". While the latter statement gives us the impression that it is about states of meteorological affairs, Wittgenstein notes that one knows "nothing about the weather, when [one] know[s] that it rains or does not rain"(4.461). In other words, the tautological statement only *seems* to tell us something about the weather. According to Wittgenstein, tautologies are really without sense (*sinnlos*) (4.461); they "are not pictures of reality"(4.462) and "say nothing"(4.461). If tautologies are not pictures, say nothing and are devoid of content, would it not be a mistake to regard them as propositions? Wittgenstein appears to think along these lines when he maintains (in entry 10.6.15 of his *Notebooks 1914-1916*) that tautologies and contradictions are not propositions (*Notebooks* 58). On the other hand, Wittgenstein refers to tautologies and contradictions as propositions in the *Tractatus* (*TLP* 4.46). One could, of course, argue that this suggests Wittgenstein changed his mind about the nature of tautologies when he wrote the *Tractatus*, but Wittgenstein gives tautologies more or less the same treatment in both of these early texts. Thus, at first blush, Wittgenstein's claims regarding the nature of tautologies appear to be inconsistent.

Here, I follow Michael Hymers in thinking there is little reason to see the "contradiction" in Wittgenstein's account of tautologies as posing a serious threat to his

view.²³ I think this because the *Tractatus* and *Notebooks* suggest Wittgenstein was unsure as to whether tautologies and contradictions ought to be considered propositions because they are senseless (*sinnlos*) but not nonsensical (*unsinnig*). In particular, this is suggested by the fact that, while 4.46 and *Notebooks* entry 10.6.15 disagree on whether tautologies and contradictions count as propositions, 10.6.15 and 4.4611 come to the same conclusion: that tautologies and contradictions are parts of the symbolism of language (*TLP* 4.4611, *Notebooks* 58).²⁴ In the tautology, propositional symbols are combined so as to dissolve, drain or neutralize the sense of the propositions — to undo their symbolism, as it were (*TLP* 4.466).²⁵ What takes place here is nicely captured by Wittgenstein's description of the tautology, given in his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, as "a point of intersection of significant sentences . . . a degenerate proposition on the side of truth" (*RFM* III 33). This explains why the tautology says nothing about the world; the world does not make it true, "for it is *made so as to be true*" (*Notebooks* 55). Even so, it is important to realize that tautologies are connected to the world in a certain way. According to Wittgenstein, *that* a dissolution of sense takes

²³ Michael Hymers, "Norms of Description and Empirical Propositions: Why There Is No Third Wittgenstein," Philosophy Department Colloquium. Dalhousie University. 30 October 2009.

²⁴ Wittgenstein writes that "[t]autology and contradiction are . . . not nonsensical; they are part of the symbolism, the same way that '0' is a part of the symbolism of Arithmetic" (*TLP* 4.4611). In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein says "' $p \vee \sim p$ ' and ' $p \cdot \sim p$ ' are not propositions [But] they are not, of course, to be treated as a completely meaningless appendix — like e.g. a meaningless name. Rather do they belong in the symbolism — like '0' in arithmetic" (*Notebooks* 58).

²⁵ If we think of Wittgenstein as taking tautologies to be empty propositions (and thus, in a sense, empty pictures (*Bilder*)), then there is a striking resemblance between his above remarks (*TLP* 4.4611, *Notebooks* 58) and the following passage from Heinrich Hertz's *Principles of Mechanics*: "Empty relations cannot be altogether avoided: they enter into models [*Bilder*] because they simply are models,— models produced by our mind and necessarily affected by the characteristics of its mode of modelling them" (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 140).

place in certain combinations of symbols — that certain combinations of symbols yield tautologies — shows the logical structure of reality (*TLP* 6.121). This is why tautologies, in their saying nothing, "describe the [logical] scaffolding of the world, or rather they present it"(6.124). So the propositions of logic are distinguished from pieces of nonsense, which are not symbolic (and, thus, show nothing about the world.) This, I think, explains why Wittgenstein is inclined to refer to tautologies and contradictions as propositions in some contexts and to deny them propositionality in others: they are the "limiting cases"(4.466) of propositions.

The Logic of Our Language: Picturing, Constants, and Showing

In my earlier section on the picture theory, I mentioned that, according to the *Tractatus*, a proposition A is capable of depicting a fact B only if both A and B are of the same logical form. At this point, I would like to draw attention to Wittgenstein's claim that all propositions or pictures that have the same logical form as B are, in *essence*, the same as A (3.341). The idea here is that, regardless of the symbolism to which it is native, any proposition which asserts that B is the case only differs from the other propositions asserting B in its accidental traits. The proposition has these traits in virtue of the particular way in which its sense is expressed within its linguistic system (3.34).

This point is beautifully illustrated by the example given at 4.014:

The gramophone record, the musical thought, the score, the waves of sound, all stand to one another in that pictorial internal relation, which holds between language and the world. To all of them the logical structure is common. . . . [T]hey are all in a certain sense one. (4.014)

While their material properties are diverse, the record, score and sounds of a piece are internally related by their shared logical form. Wittgenstein also refers to a picture's logical form as "its form of representation"(2.17).

A proposition has whatever logical form it has in light of the logical properties of the names that constitute that proposition. Those names just would not be *those* names (and thus, that proposition just would not be *that* proposition) if their internal properties were different (4.123, 4.125). So, while a putative claim about the logical form of a proposition is not a tautology (since it is not a combination of symbols in which meaning is dissolved), it does seem as though it should be a necessary truth. However, there are a variety of reasons for which Wittgenstein would think such a putative claim is in fact a pseudo-claim. As we shall see shortly, the *Tractatus* does explain the impossibility of expressing the "logic of the facts"(4.0312) in virtue of the fact that truth-functional operators such as 'and', 'or' and 'not' do not name relations in the world; this logic, however, deals with inter-propositional relations and not the logical form of elementary propositions. Of course, if all propositions depict contingent connections between objects, then claims about logical form as a *necessary* relationship between a proposition and its form are not claims at all. Yet Wittgenstein gives a different reason for which there are no propositions about logical form (or forms of representation):

The picture . . . cannot represent its form of representation; it shows it forth. (2.172)

Propositions can represent the whole reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it — the logical form.

To be able to represent the logical form, we should have to be able to put ourselves with the propositions outside logic, that is outside the world. (4.12)

[T]he picture cannot place itself outside of its form of representation. (2.174)

Propositions cannot represent the logical form: this mirrors itself in the propositions.

That which mirrors itself in language, language cannot represent.

That which expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express in language.

The propositions *show* the logical form of reality.

They exhibit it. (4.121)

What *can* be shown *cannot* be said. (4.1212)

Two points need to be made about the previous passages: one about our inability to "put ourselves with the proposition outside logic"(4.12) and one about the saying-showing distinction (4.1212). I wish to argue the first of these points is, as it were, a variation on a theme at the very core of the *Tractatus*.²⁶ In abstract terms, the theme is this: that there are conditions to the possibility of the world we describe, limits of the world, which cannot themselves be put into words. When drawing on this theme, Wittgenstein does not render transcendental conditions as ineffable on the basis of their *necessity*; that is, he does not focus on the fact that these conditions are not themselves *contingent* concatenations of objects. Instead, he brings attention to the relationship between these conditions and the possibilities they underpin, often doing so by means of metaphor.²⁷ For instance, in the 4.12s, Wittgenstein uses a mirroring metaphor to show why logical form cannot be put into language. Wittgenstein has us consider the relationship between

²⁶ The theme's second variation is taken up in the next section, which deals with Wittgenstein's views on what he calls the metaphysical subject.

²⁷ I thank Peter Schotch for calling this to my attention.

language and the world as analogous to the relationship between a mirror and the object it mirrors. We then ask: how do propositions stand for their facts? Given the picture theory, asking this question amounts to asking for the shared logical form of language and world. Wittgenstein's point is that, in order to give an answer to such a question, language would have to capture the relationship between the proposition and the fact. However, for the same reasons that a mirror cannot go beyond itself in order to capture its relationship with respect to the object it reflects — the mirror cannot reflect itself, only the objects set before it — *language* cannot go beyond itself and describe its relationship with respect to the world.²⁸ This is why Wittgenstein takes questions asking for the shared logical form of language and world to be confused — indeed, to fail to be questions at all (6.5).

²⁸ One may wonder why it is not possible, for instance, to hold up a second mirror which can capture the relation between the first mirror and the objects it reflects; namely, why Wittgenstein thinks there can be no meta-language. My (speculative) intuition is that, for Wittgenstein, the second mirror can in fact capture both the objects and the mirror, but it cannot capture the pictorial relation obtaining between the two. Later in this chapter, on the section concerning the metaphysical subject, I will discuss this point in relation to Wittgenstein's eye analogy as it is presented in the 5.6s. At 5.6331, Wittgenstein stresses that the eye is nowhere to be found in its visual field. Of course, this is false if the eye is looking at a surface which reflects its image. Thus I take Wittgenstein to mean that, while the physical eye can be seen, the eye cannot see itself *playing the role of a seeing eye*: "seeing" is not available for visual scrutiny. It seems to me the case of the language as a mirror is quite similar. Wittgenstein is not denying that we can describe sentences and their factual relationships to other things in the world; rather, he is denying the possibility of capturing the pictorial relation between a fact *playing the role of a proposition* and the fact it expresses. I admit the analogy does little to explain why Wittgenstein thinks language works in this way – why, for instance, is there an eye analogy as opposed to a disanalogy. (Thanks to Michael Hymers for raising this issue.)

My second point concerns Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction.²⁹ While the logical form of reality cannot be said, Wittgenstein says it is shown by propositions (4.121) and by the senselessness of tautologies (6.124). To understand what is taking place here, it is useful to return to the mirroring analogy. Although the mirror cannot reflect any of its own features, it shows itself to have a reflective capacity by means of its mirroring objects. Moreover, these features are essential to the mirror; without them, it would fail to reflect anything whatsoever.³⁰ Wittgenstein wants his reader to see that this further relationship between the mirror and the object of its reflection arises again between the body of propositions and the possibilities they can describe: that one can give a representation of the world shows the logical features of the propositional signs and the possible facts they assert, despite the ineffability of these features. I use the word 'despite' here with some hesitation, since Wittgenstein sees no problem with the ineffability of logical features — for these features, which constitute the language-world relation, must be beyond description in order for there to be any language whatsoever. I will return to this point about the essential ineffability of what is shown in the upcoming sections addressing the self and ethics; for now, I return to the discussion concerning the *Tractatus*' treatment of pseudo-claims concerning logic.

²⁹ Philosophers have taken note of the fact that there seem to be many types of showing at work in the *Tractatus*. See Fogelin's four types of showing (Fogelin 100-3) and David G. Stern's two types, cited in (Hymers 51).

³⁰ It is also worth mentioning that the mirror would not reflect what was before it if it were beyond the limit of its reflection field; by sitting at the limit of this field, it remains connected to the objects it reflects. In the next section, I discuss the similarities between this case and that of the subject.

Wittgenstein gives reasons for the ineffability of inter-propositional logical relations other than those given for the ineffability of logical form. As I mentioned earlier, his claim that his “fundamental thought is that the ‘logical constants’ do not represent. That the logic of the facts cannot be represented”(4.0312)³¹ hinges on the non-objecthood of logical operators. It is in virtue of this that there can be no propositions about the logical structure of complex propositions. Wittgenstein’s point here is aimed at Russell, who was inclined to think there is a fact of the matter regarding the logical structure of propositions. In order to clarify Wittgenstein’s point, I will take up the case of negated and disjunctive propositions.³² At 5.4, he says “there are no such things as 'logical objects' or 'logical constants' (in the sense of Frege and Russell)”(5.4). On Russell’s view, understanding a proposition means being acquainted with each of its entities, including the relation holding the proposition together. This is interesting insofar as one does not need to be acquainted with the abstract entity expressed by the word "not" in order to fully grasp a proposition P. This strikes Wittgenstein as problematic because Russell allows knowledge of the truth-conditions of P independently of those of \sim P. But grasping P means knowing the cases in which P is true and those in which it is false — which is just to say, knowing the truth-conditions of \sim P. P and \sim P cannot be understood independently of one another as they refer to *one and the same* fact. \sim P does

³¹ Here, I assume logical constants are the abstract entities Russell takes to be expressed by logical operators.

³² Using Wittgenstein’s operation N (the Sheffer stroke) we can construct any complex proposition out of atomic propositions (5). This is my motivation for making my point using negation and disjunction (since the Sheffer stroke and negated disjunction are equivalent.)

not, as Russell thought, concern a negative fact distinct from the one pictured by P; it is not a proposition with a higher logical multiplicity that features the additional object or relation *not* and also happens to bear an interesting logical connection to P. As Wittgenstein says in the *Notebooks*, “in ‘p’ neither more nor less can be recognized than in ‘ \sim p’”(*Notebooks* 37). Negations indicate truth-value reversal, not the presence of some extra entity or relation.

Just as the negated proposition seems to express a negative fact, the disjunction appears to express a relation obtaining between its disjuncts that is external to them; it appears to express a disjoint fact. We are tempted to think of the proposition $(P \vee Q)$ in this way because we wrongly assume the wedge contributes to the sense of the proposition, making it not only about P and Q but some additional abstract entity that connects the two. But $(P \vee Q)$ is not made true in virtue of a relation between P and Q. Instead, what it means to be a disjunction is exactly that it is only false when both of its disjuncts are false. Thus, we see again that nothing over and above the truth values of the elementary propositions makes up the disjunction. Robert Fogelin insightfully suggests that the notation Wittgenstein uses in the *Tractatus* stylistically reflects the “disappearance” of logical connectives in non-atomic propositions (*Wittgenstein* 43).

The Self

Wittgenstein addresses topics concerning the subject in three sections of the *Tractatus*: he clarifies the role of the subject in the expression "A thinks that p" at 5.54-5.5422, discusses the metaphysical subject in the 5.6s, and discusses the willing subject at 6.373-6.374 and 6.423-6.4312. I will take up Wittgenstein's discussions in that order.

The Individual Subject

Pre-philosophically, it seems that, as a subject, I am multi-faceted and capable of many things: willing the movement of my toes, judging that it's windy in Amsterdam, having a variety of beliefs, desires, and experiences. Wittgenstein's inquiry into the nature of the subject begins by looking into the subject (call it 'A') as it appears in the following proposition (where 'p' stands for some proposition):

A thinks that p.

The subject A is mentioned in the context of a discussion concerning the fact that any proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (Recall that the output values of a truth-function is completely determined by the input values: there is a unique truth value output for any input given.) If propositions such as "A thinks that p" or "A judges that p" contain (or, are operations on) the proposition p, they present a problem for Wittgenstein because their truth-values are not determined by the truth-value of "p". One could, of course, try to resolve the issue here by saying that "A thinks that p" means an object A stands in a certain relation of thinking to the (possible) fact p. This, however, is also problematic because objects concatenate with one another, not with *facts*. We then ask: if "A thinks p" is not a truth-function of p, and A is not an object concatenated with p, what is the structure of "A thinks that p"?

For Wittgenstein, "it is clear that 'A believes that p', 'A thinks p', 'A says p', are of the form '*p*' says that *p*': and here we have no co-ordination of a fact and an object, but a co-ordination of facts by means of a co-ordination of their objects"(TLP 5.542). Michael Hymers rightly remarks that 5.542 is anything but clear (Hymers 37). However, a number of readings of the *Tractatus* converge on the following, rather attractive

interpretation of the 5.54s (Carruthers 81-2, *Insight* 60, Stokhof 192, Hymers 37). While Wittgenstein³³ does not know the nature of our "psychical constituents"(Stokhof 193), he rejects the view on which the mind or subject is a single object which stands in various relations to possible facts. Facts only relate via logical – that is, *truth-functional*³⁴ – relations, ruling out both of the analyses suggested above. Thus no relationship can obtain between an object, the subject A, and whatever it thinks or believes, that p. Instead, since thoughts are propositional (*TLP* 3.5, 4), Wittgenstein takes "A thinks that p" to mean that *A has a thought which expresses p*. On such a view, the thinking subject is a Humean subject – a flurry of thought-facts, perceptions and feelings which are constantly shifting (*Insight* 61, Stokhof 193). To assert "A thinks that p" is to assert that some fact obtains in the flurry of thought-facts we call A which, in turn, acts as a proposition asserting the possible fact meant by "p". Thus a coordination of *facts* takes place: the logical structure of some thought in A, the thought that p, is shared with the possible fact that p.

What is most important here for our purposes is this: Wittgenstein dismisses the idea that there is a simple object, "the soul – the subject, etc."(5.5421) – a persisting subject which exists *over and above* its thoughts and impressions. The subject is not, as it were, a container in which these mental events take place. It is not a genuine

³³ Quoted from letter to Russell in 1919.

³⁴ Logical relations and predicates relations such as 'being larger than' or 'being cold' are thus of a different nature. As I explained in Chapter 1, Wittgenstein denies there are logical objects; but on some readings, predicates relations count as objects in Wittgenstein's ontology: see (Stokhof 104-85).

individual, but a collection; a non-thing (*Unding*) (TLP 5.5421). As we shall see, this amounts to Wittgenstein's rejection of the self as a Cartesian *res cogitans*.

The Metaphysical Subject

Traditionally, *Tractatus* interpreters take Wittgenstein to distinguish between an individual or empirical subject and what Wittgenstein calls the "metaphysical subject" (TLP 5.633, 5.641). Unlike the individual subject, an empirical phenomenon open to psychological description (6.423, 5.641), the metaphysical subject cannot be captured in language. Consider, for instance, the second half of 5.631:

If I wrote a book 'The world as I found it', I should also have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could *not* be made. (TLP 5.631)

Here, Wittgenstein suggests the subject of such a book – the 'I' which finds the world whatever way it is – cannot be mentioned in the book. (Notice how 5.631 echoes the mirroring issue raised in the 4.12s, which I discuss on pages 26-28.)

It is natural to ask whether such an 'I' cannot be mentioned because it does not exist or, rather, because it is such that we cannot speak about it. I think Wittgenstein's famous eye analogy of the 5.633s can be read as supporting the latter reading. At 5.633, Wittgenstein asks:

Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted? You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do not really see the eye. And from nothing in the field of sight can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye. (TLP 5.633)

Following this, Wittgenstein claims at 5.6331 that the field of sight is not such that it contains the eye; or, rather, he presents a picture of an eye inside a visual field and

maintains the visual field does not have that form. It is perhaps worth mentioning that, while the eye is *inside* the field in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein rejects different pictures earlier on. For instance, in the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein rejects the depiction of the visual field with an eye at the limit (i.e., half inside and half outside the field); and in the *Prototractatus*, he rejects a depiction of the field such that the eye sits just outside the field, with only a point of contact with the field (*Notebooks* 80, *Prototractatus* 5.335431). So it seems that, for Wittgenstein, the most important problem with the visual field drawn at 5.6331 in the *Tractatus* is not its placement of the eye, but the fact that an eye appears *at all*. In other words, the point is more than that the eye does not appear *in* the form of the visual field; it is that the eye just *is* the form of the field as a whole.

This may sound a little unnatural for two reasons. While an eye is clearly a necessary condition for the possibility of its visual field, it is not clear why that eye cannot be a permanent object in the field. Furthermore, we do not normally *identify* eyes with the form of the visual fields they make possible. I think these issues disappear when we take Wittgenstein to refer to what he later calls the *geometrical* eye (as opposed to the *physical* eye) (*Blue Book* 63-4). First, it is, of course, entirely possible for my physical eye to be available for visual scrutiny; I can, for instance, look in a mirror and see my own eyeball. Secondly, it is also possible for physical eyes not to be sighted. Nevertheless, in neither of these cases are we dealing with eyes *as sighted*. By this, I mean one does not see physical eyes *as sighted*. The geometrical eye differs from the

physical one insofar as it is defined in terms of sightedness. Thus, one's acquaintance with the geometrical eye is always, as it were, "from the inside". Moreover, the geometrical eye cannot exist independently of the visual field it makes possible.³⁵

Wittgenstein's point is that such an eye – which, seen through, cannot be seen – is a necessary condition for the possibility of its visual field.

I gather the metaphysical subject is supposed to be similar to the eye insofar as it is a necessary condition for the possibility of description of the world; it is given by there being a world to describe at all. Since such a subject is not contingent, it is ineffable. Thus, since the metaphysical subject is not substantial, there is a sense in which "there is no such thing"(5.641) as that subject. Most importantly, however, there is absolutely no subject in the world as a permanent object (and not just a Humean flurry of impressions or a flesh-and-blood person.) This is shown, for instance, by the fact that it is logically possible for me to conceive of a world in which none of the physical or psychological facts that make up Maja obtain – there is nothing necessary about the thoughts, feelings, perceptions and physiology I happen to have. On the other hand, I cannot think beyond the limits of thought and picture a world without the metaphysical subject, as "[w]hat we

³⁵ Understanding Wittgenstein's eye analogy is easier, I think, if we consider other analogies which I take to make the same point about the metaphysical subject. In Chapter 2, I compare the geometrical eye to the points used in perspective drawing (see page 78.) At present, it is useful to think of the geometrical eye as something like the membrane of a (ballooned) balloon. This membrane gives the balloon its structure and literally delimits a "ballooner space" to which it does not properly belong. Analogously, the metaphysical subject delimits a thought-space – namely *logical* space. (It is important to note this does *not* make the metaphysical subject a container within which mental events take place.) Given that the 5.6s refer to the world not as the totality of facts, but (as David Pears notes) "all the possibilities" (*False Prison* 174), this shows why Wittgenstein claims the metaphysical subject "does not belong to the world but is a limit of the world" (*TLP* 5.632).

I follow Stokhof in taking Wittgenstein to draw two orthogonal distinctions: one between the metaphysical and individual subjects, and another between the logical-linguistic subject (or "knowing subject"(Stokhof 194)) and the willing subject. I have already explained the difference between the empirical and metaphysical subject on the linguistic side and turn to the distinction between the metaphysical and individual will. Recall that the proposition "A thinks that p" is really a claim about certain mental facts being used to mean other possible facts: it does not make a claim about a genuine subject in the world, a simple soul which thinks or bears relations to thoughts. I think the case is similar for attempts to claim something like "A wills that p". For Wittgenstein, if it were possible for a proposition like "A wills that p" to be true – that is, if it were a genuine proposition – then p would be *logically deducible* from A's willing p (*TLP* 5.1362). However, we know the only cases in which a proposition Q can be deduced from another, P, are cases in which P contains Q (5.54). And as Richard Brockhaus rightly notes, expressions of the form "A wills that p" do not properly contain the propositions they purport to; in this respect, they are very similar to claims that a subject A thinks that p (Brockhaus 308). So while it *seems* that I am a causally potent thing – my body, for instance, can bring about changes in the world by moving in certain ways – Wittgenstein denies anything significant takes place here, since there is no logical necessity connecting past events to ones in the future (*TLP* 5.1361). (In this sense, the empirical willing subject is as much of a chimera as the empirical thinking subject.) Consequently, there can be no propositions of the form "A wills that p". No facts can be willed into existence by a subject; hence Wittgenstein's claim that the world is independent of the will (6.373).

I argued the linguistic metaphysical subject has some sort of being for Wittgenstein despite its ineffability. I take Wittgenstein to have a similar commitment to the being of a willing metaphysical subject. He maintains "the will as a phenomenon [i.e., the individual will] is only of interest to psychology", yet he does not deny the reality of a philosophically interesting will; he only says "[o]f the will as the subject of the ethical we cannot speak" (*TLP* 6.423). Although this ethical will is independent of *particular facts* in the world, Wittgenstein suggests it may change the world, but only by changing the limits of the world and not its facts (6.43). Following the section on Wittgenstein's ethics, I will present a way of understanding this talk of changing limits without changing facts as a matter of one's perspective on or attitude toward the world as a whole.

Ethics

In this section I present what I take to be the early Wittgenstein's treatment of ethics. I say I present his early view (as opposed to his strictly Tractarian view) because I read the *Tractatus*' sparse ethical remarks in light of three other texts which document Wittgenstein's pre-1930's thoughts on ethics, God and value: the *Notebooks*, the *Prototractatus*, the "Lecture on Ethics", and notes on some of Wittgenstein's conversations with Moritz Schlick, taken by Friedrich Waismann (and published as "Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein"). In the next section I argue for a particular view of the connection between Wittgenstein's early ethics, the *Tractatus*' logical-linguistic doctrines and its ontology.

Since his "Lecture on Ethics" and the "Notes on Talks" make several points which seem to be continuous with Wittgenstein's Tractarian remarks on ethics, I find it useful to

turn to his definition of ethics, given in the lecture, in order to understand what takes place in the *Tractatus*. In the lecture, Wittgenstein follows Moore in defining ethics as "the general enquiry into what is good"("Lecture" 4). This is but one of many appropriate definitions which, for Wittgenstein, all gesture at the same idea: that ethics "is the enquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or . . . the enquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living"(5). Consequently, ethics aims at telling us what is good, describing the good or explaining why something is good.

While the ethicist may *aim* at saying something about the good, Wittgenstein thinks she is bound to fail, as "there can be no ethical propositions"(TLP 6.42). Consequently, any putative ethical claim (such as "it is good that X", "one ought to do X", "the good is X" or "X is good") is in fact a pseudo-claim: it is nonsense. At first, it may be perplexing that Wittgenstein – a man who claims the purpose of his logical-philosophical treatise is an ethical one – maintains there are no ethical propositions; no ethical truths or falsehoods. However, in coming to understand Wittgenstein's early remarks on ethics, one sees why he thought his remarks are far from nihilistic; they are intended to communicate what he took to be an important distinction between factual and aesthetic-ethical discourse.

Understanding the distinction at hand involves differentiating the type of value Wittgenstein takes to be of ethical significance, absolute value, from another (namely relative value.) Whereas "this is the right road to take" is a statement of relative value, "this is the right way to live" is a statement of absolute value ("Lecture" 9). On the surface, statements such as "I ought to take this road" appear to have the same structure

as putative ethical statements (such as "I ought not to kill.") However, one who utters that he ought to take such and such a road has a contingent end in mind: "I ought to take this road" serves, for example, as shorthand for "given my goal – getting to the university with the utmost efficiency – I ought to take this road."³⁶ Upon consideration of the complete statement of relative value, it becomes clear that this proposition is a statement of fact. Science – consultation of the world – can settle the best means by which a traveller can meet his end. But statements about absolute value, such as ethical and aesthetic statements, are completely independent of the facts. Thus Wittgenstein's view is that ethics "can be no science"("Lecture" 12); we learn nothing about absolute value by consulting the world. Wittgenstein uses the following example to illustrate his view in the "Lecture on Ethics". Consider a book containing a complete factual description of the world. If a person were to read a section of this book that dealt with all the factual details of a murder, Wittgenstein claims she would never come across an indication that killing is wrong. All the details of the murder would be "on exactly the same level as any other

³⁶ In the preface of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein calls attention to one of the book's central theses, which re-emerges in a later remark: "Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language"(4.003). Wittgenstein uses a value-theoretical example of a traditional (and thus, confused) philosophical question at 4.003: nonsensical, philosophical questions are "of the same kind as the question whether the Good is more or less identical to the Beautiful"(4.003). It is interesting that this remark is followed by 4.0031, in which Wittgenstein praises Russell's work uncovering the logical structure of propositions that obscured by the sentences of natural language. I think reading Wittgenstein's discussion of absolute and relative value in the "Lecture on Ethics" in light of 4.003 and 4.0031 helps us see why Wittgenstein thought *all* of the traditional problems of philosophy arose out of linguistic confusion. What at first seem to be completely independent problems – problems in ethics and the problems addressed in Russell's "On Denoting" – share a common root; ethical and metaphysical-linguistic problems arise when the structure of propositions is unclear and one fails to recognize the nonsensicality of pseudo-propositions.

event, for instance the falling of a stone"; the complete description of the act would consist of "facts, facts, and facts, but no Ethics"("Lecture" 6).³⁷

Wittgenstein's stance on value opposes two other views, which I refer to as the naturalist and nihilist views. For Wittgenstein, the problem with these positions arises from a failure to properly distinguish fact from value.³⁸ The problem is, I think, clearly captured by Karl Kraus³⁹ in the following passage from his *Werke*:

I have done nothing more than show that there is a distinction between an urn and a chamber pot. . . . The others, those who fail to make this distinction, are divided into those who use the urn as a chamber pot and those who use the chamber pot as urn. (quoted in *Wittgenstein's Vienna* 89)

In keeping with this analogy, I wish to argue that on the Tractarian view, ethical naturalists use the chamber pot as an urn; ethical nihilists, on the other hand, use the urn as a chamber pot. Let us consider these positions and see why Wittgenstein would take this to be the case.

Consider a naturalist or moral psychologist who disagrees with Wittgenstein, asserting that "killing is wrong" is a truth-functional, contingent statement. On her view,

³⁷ Wittgenstein also writes: "A stone, the body of a beast, the body of a man, my body, all stand on the same level. That is why what happens, whether it comes from a stone or from my body is neither good nor bad"(*Notebooks* 84). This appears in entry 12.10.16 of the *Notebooks*, in the context of a discussion of the connection between idealism, realism and solipsism and the relationship between world and spirit; or rather, as Wittgenstein states on 9.10.16, "the connexion of ethics with the world"(84).

³⁸ As we will see, for Wittgenstein, *properly* distinguishing fact from value not only involves differentiating the two but also seeing that the facts are unimportant.

³⁹ *Wittgenstein's Vienna* puts Karl Kraus at the centre of its investigation into the ethical-cultural Viennese climate in which Wittgenstein was raised. See Chapter 3, "Language and Society: Karl Kraus and the Last Days of Vienna", in (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 67-91).

the truth of "killing is wrong" can be confirmed (or disproved) by means of empirical study. It could be shown that what we call right and wrong can be given complete explanations: we could feel that something is wrong or bad, for example, every time our C-fibres are stimulated. The project, here, would be to do ethics by seeking psychological explanations for our disinclination to kill and our disgust when we see others killed.

Such a naturalist's project may be worthwhile, but in Wittgenstein's eyes, it has no bearing on ethics. Firstly, Wittgenstein sides with Moore on the point that the ethical naturalist, in her identifying ethical properties with psychological ones, commits the naturalistic fallacy.⁴⁰ This explains why Wittgenstein maintains "psychology is no nearer related to philosophy, than is any other natural science"(TLP 4.1121). Thus, those who misunderstand the type of value at stake in ethics mistake everyday, natural properties for supernatural ones; they exalt the ordinary, taking the chamber pot for an urn. But there remains a further point, namely that Wittgenstein does not think there are supernatural, ethical-aesthetic value facts as opposed to natural facts. He not only refuses to accept

⁴⁰ I realize the term 'naturalistic fallacy' now covers a variety of fallacies. By 'naturalistic fallacy' I mean the particular fallacy Moore mentions in his *Principia Ethica* concerning the non-analysability of simple terms such as 'yellow' and 'good'. Moore maintains one commits the naturalistic fallacy when she mistakenly attempts to provide a definition for a simple concept. While Moore was not the first to criticize philosophers for attempting to analyse simple concepts (cf., for example, Blaise Pascal's discussion of 'light' as a primitive concept in §§24-25 of his *L'Esprit géométrique*), he does make an important (Wittgensteinian) point about the relationship between putative definitions of simple terms and the terms themselves. For Moore, the fact that 'yellow' is coextensive with waves of length X does not mean that yellowness just is the wavelength X. I think this is partly Wittgenstein's point as well: that one makes a mistake when identifying goodness with some natural property. This is suggested by Wittgenstein's claim that ethical projects fail because "whatever definition one may give of the Good, it is always a misunderstanding to suppose that the formulation corresponds to what one really means" ("Notes on Talks" 13).

ethics as an empirical science, but as a science whatsoever. Thus, while Moore rejects definition of the good in natural terms, he is unlike Wittgenstein insofar as he conceives of ethics as an *a priori* science with a body of factual truths.⁴¹ Contra Moore, Wittgenstein maintains that "nothing we could ever think or say" – that is, no definition or description of the Good in factual terms – "should be *the* thing" ("Lecture" 7). Wittgenstein thinks there are no supernatural ethical facts because the facts, for him, carry no imperative force; they cannot settle questions as to how one ought to live. In this sense, ethics, like logic (*Notebooks 2*, *TLP* 5.454), must take care of itself.⁴² Hence Wittgenstein's belief that, if there is such a thing as value, it is not to be found in the world: "if there is a value which is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. . . . [The sense of the world] must lie outside the world" (*TLP* 6.41).⁴³

It is understandable that one may take Wittgenstein to be a moral nihilist because he commits to a view on which the propositions of natural science are all that can be said (and thus, all that can be true or false), and putative ethical claims are not scientific claims. Yet anyone well-acquainted with Wittgenstein's biography knows he cared deeply about ethics and certainly did not *live* nihilistically.⁴⁴ It is worth nothing that Wittgenstein's relationship with ethics was not an intellectual one. By this, I mean that he

⁴¹ It is interesting that Wittgenstein has parallel disagreements with Moore (about ethical facts) and Russell (about logical facts.) For Wittgenstein, ethics is neither a science ("Lecture" 12) nor a theory ("Notes on Talks" 16) – and the same goes for logic (*TLP* 6.111, 6.13).

⁴² The remarks at 6.371 and 6.372 also suggest this similarity, as neither ethics nor logic can be explained. (See my discussion of the ethical case at page 47.)

⁴³ Many thanks to Stephen Latta and Daniel Kofman for their guidance on these points concerning comparing Moore and Wittgenstein's views on ethics.

⁴⁴ See Ray Monk's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. London: Vintage, 1990.

was not, for instance, *curious* about the status of moral value and interested in philosophical theories of the good; nor did he think he (or anyone else) had a duty to provide an explanation as to why things are good or bad. Quite the opposite: he was bothered by philosophers' theoretical interest in ethics and, especially, their taking it to be an area of inquiry like any other.⁴⁵ If anything, Wittgenstein felt his task was, at least in part, "to put an end to all the chatter about ethics – whether there is knowledge in ethics, whether there are values, whether the Good can be defined"("Notes on Talks" 13).⁴⁶ It remains to be shown why Wittgenstein's beliefs about the impossibility of ethics did not, for him, entail ethical meaninglessness.

On Wittgenstein's view, we cannot utter ethical propositions because any attempt to make a judgment of absolute value yields *essentially* nonsensical pseudo-propositions.⁴⁷ Earlier, we saw this meant that a complete account of the world will not capture ethical facts, as there are no ethical facts. But this only leads us to an ethical nihilism if we grant that something only carries any weight, is only important, if it is a

⁴⁵ These criticisms may be aimed at Russell and Moore, since Russell thought philosophy was an *a priori* science and Moore thought ethical truths were factual ones, discoverable by means of philosophical investigation.

⁴⁶ See Wittgenstein's 1919 letter to von Ficker: "My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the *ONLY rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. And for that reason, unless I am very much mistaken, this book will say a great deal that you yourself want to say. For now, I recommend you to read the *preface* and the *conclusion*, because they contain the most direct expression of the point of the book"(*Prototractatus* 16).

⁴⁷ "I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just *to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language"("Lecture" 11).

matter of fact. Those who subscribe to such a view think, as Stokhof puts it, that the matter of possible scientific discovery provides "the ultimate explanation of the world, *one that leaves nothing out*"(Stokhof 138, my emphasis). For Wittgenstein, those who hold such a view, which he calls the "modern view of the world"(*TLP* 6.371), fall prey to an illusion:

At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena. (6.371)

So people stop short at natural laws as at something unassailable, as did the ancients at God and Fate. And they were both right and wrong. But the ancients were clearer, insofar as they recognized one clear terminus, whereas the modern system makes it appear as though *everything* were explained. (6.372)

For our present purposes, these passages are important expressions of our tendency to misunderstand the role played by science and the natural meanings it involves. We tend to mistake scientific explanations for complete explanations – explanations which, for example, *demonstrate* there is no such thing as value. However, when science knows its place – that is, when I understand the logic of my language – science's relation to value comes into clear view. One means by which we can catch sight, so to speak, of the relation between ethical (that is, supernatural) discourse and factual or natural discourse is by considering Wittgenstein's discussion of miracles in the "Lecture on Ethics".

Wittgenstein asks that we imagine a case in which something miraculous occurs – for example, "that [someone] suddenly grew a lion's head and began to roar"("Lecture" 10).

He continues:

Now whenever we should have recovered from our surprise, what I would suggest would be to fetch a doctor and have the case scientifically investigated and if it were

not for hurting him I would have him vivisected. And where would the miracle have got to? For it is clear that when we look at it in this way everything miraculous has disappeared; unless what we mean by this term is merely that a fact has not yet been explained by science which again means that we have hitherto failed to group this fact with others in a scientific system. This shows that it is absurd to say "Science has proved that there are no miracles." The truth is that the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle. For imagine whatever fact you may, it is not in itself miraculous in the absolute sense of that term. ("Lecture" 10-11)

Taking up the scientific perspective, then, means presupposing the possibility of complete explanation. Wittgenstein's point is clear: that nothing is properly miraculous on the scientific worldview because miracles are precluded by this perspective. The supernatural reaches beyond the world of facts we describe in *just the way* that cannot be captured by explanations. There can be no value if one takes there to be only one way of looking at the world: as a world in which reality is decided on grounds of openness to description. Against this, Wittgenstein affirms that "[t]here is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical"(TLP 6.522).

Let us finally return to the points concerning the ethical naturalist and nihilist. It should now be clear that *both* the naturalist and nihilist think we can arrive at a complete scientific explanation of the world; their positions are only differentiated by their disagreements on whether there are ethical facts. For Wittgenstein, however,

To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life.

To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter.

To believe in a God means to see that life has a meaning.

(Notebooks 74)

In other words, neither the nihilist nor the naturalist understands the questions at stake in ethics because they take the facts to be "the end of the matter". Thus instead of exalting facts as the naturalist does and taking them to be something more than they can be, the nihilist claims there is nothing more to the world than these facts. But in refusing to acknowledge that the facts are unimportant, the nihilist fails to see that the non-existence of ethical facts has no value-related repercussions; he fails to see that the urn is, as it were, more than a mere chamber pot.

Fact and World Revisited: an Eternal Perspective

We are now in a position to see the connection between Wittgenstein's early views on ethics, language and the *Tractatus* itself. Two remarks guide our present discussion:

Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is. (*TLP* 6.44)

There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical. (*TLP* 6.522)

We have seen that, for Wittgenstein, the province of fact is how the world is. To see the world as being one way as opposed to another is to have a scientific attitude and see the world from the linguistic perspective. It should now be clear that Wittgenstein takes there to be another way of looking at the world.⁴⁸ When one has what Wittgenstein calls the "mystical feeling", one contemplates the world *sub specie aeterni* (from the perspective of eternity) " as a limited whole [*als—begrenztes—Ganzes*]" (*TLP* 6.45). The

⁴⁸ Martin Stokhof, Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, and John C. Kelly argue for similar interpretations of the 6s. See their respective (Stokhof 186-249), (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 167-201) and (Kelly 567-579).

Tractatus does not explicitly state that looking at the world *sub specie aeterni* means, or is, looking at the world as ethically meaningful; however, in the "Lecture on Ethics", Wittgenstein suggests experiences in which one "wonder[s] at the existence of the world" ("Lecture" 8) are experiences of the world as ethically significant. I follow Stokhof in taking Wittgenstein to see ethical meaning in one's "direct, unmediated confrontation with being" (Stokhof 197). To view the world from this perspective is to have an ethical attitude toward the world. Since it is the ethically important subject which can change its attitude toward the world, changing perspectives does not involve a change in *facts*, but rather in the *limits* of the world (*TLP* 6.43).

I now wish to (very briefly) argue the *Tractatus* is an ethical work partly because it aims at "reporting" on the world as seen from the ethical perspective. It is important to note that this does *not* mean the *Tractatus* is intended to *show* us the world is, indeed, ethically meaningful. Ultimately, it is up to the reader to modify her attitude toward the world in order to bridge the gap, as it were, between the *Tractatus*' elucidating remarks and her own experience of the world as a limited whole. Moreover, as Wittgenstein mentions in the *Tractatus*' preface, the book is meant to teach its reader something new; it "will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it—or similar thoughts" (*TLP* 27). (We shed some light on this preface remark, I think, by recalling Wittgenstein thought he would be best understood (in giving the "Lecture on Ethics") by appealing to his listeners' deep feelings toward their lives and the world.) Thus there is a sense in which Wittgenstein's "report" on the world is, as Janik and Toulmin put it, "intensely personal" (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 201). Still, I think the *Tractatus* and "Lecture on Ethics" make a case for a more

universal thesis: that if one understands the (place of the) logic of one's language, she must see there is at least *room* for value in the world.

Finally, I turn to the question of realism and anti-realism in the *Tractatus*. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned my reading is at odds with straightforwardly realist readings of the *Tractatus*, such as those given by Peter Carruthers and David Pears. On a realist reading, language is the way it is because it conforms to the structure of *Tractatus* objects. I see two problems with such a reading. I addressed one of these problems in my earlier discussion of logical atomism on pages 17-20. There, I argued objects are logically dependent on *facts*, which are the true logical atoms. Bear in mind, however, that Wittgenstein is only interested in facts insofar as they are the meanings of *propositions*; and using propositions to describe the world is something *we* do. It is also worth mentioning Janik and Toulmin's note that Wittgenstein's discussions of description "are given in active, constructive terms. . . . A *Bild*, or 'picture', is for Wittgenstein something which we make, or produce, as an artifact" (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 183). Thus one problem with realist readings of the *Tractatus* is that they lose sight of the subject's contribution to language needed to say anything about the world.

The second problem is this: if language is as it is because it taps into the structure of language-neutral reality, then language gives what Stokhof calls the "absolute categories of reality" (Stokhof 241). This means language connects to reality in the only possible way and thereby precludes any ethics whatsoever. On this view, there can be no such thing as changing one's attitude toward the world and seeing it differently, because there is only one legitimate perspective: the linguistic perspective. I think I have given good reasons for thinking these are unacceptable consequences for a reading of the

Tractatus. If another is needed, I mention only that realist readings cannot be squared with 6.522.⁴⁹

The New Wittgensteinians

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that my reading of the *Tractatus* is at odds with a new interpretation championed by Cora Diamond and James Conant, among others. More traditional readings of the *Tractatus* (such as those given by David Pears, Peter Hacker, Robert Fogelin, Max Black, G.E.M. Anscombe and, more recently, Martin Stokhof and Michael Hymers) cast Wittgenstein as subscribing to the doctrines he presents in the text: logical atomism, the picture theory of meaning, the bipolarity theory of propositions, the saying-showing distinction, the transcendentalism of logic and ethics, the doctrine of the metaphysical subject, the theory of the will. Diamond, however, thinks traditional interpreters are uncharitable if they take Wittgenstein to maintain "[t]here is indeed much that is inexpressible — which we must not try to state, but must contemplate without words" (Anscombe 19). On her view, a resolute Wittgenstein would not "chicken out"; he would not subscribe to metaphysical theses precluded by the findings of his own investigation. Instead, Diamond urges us to view Wittgenstein as, in the end, revealing his Tractarian "theses" to be completely incoherent. The resolute reader of the *Tractatus* may find the text's views attractive, but will ultimately reject them as yet another piece of traditional philosophy:

⁴⁹ "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical" (*TLP* 6.522).

To read Wittgenstein himself as not chickening out is to say that it is not, not really, his view that there are features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves. What *is* his view is that that way of talking may be useful or even for a time essential, but in the end to be let go of and honestly taken to be real nonsense, plain nonsense, which we are not in the end to think of as corresponding to an ineffable truth. (Diamond 181)

In the same vein, Conant characterizes the *Tractatus* as aiming at

. . . undo[ing] our attraction to various grammatically well-formed strings of words that resonate with the aura of sense. The silence [Wittgenstein] wishes to leave us with in the end is one in which nothing has been said The silence we are left with is not a pregnant silence that comes with a conscious posture of guarding the sanctity of the ineffable. ("Throwing" 344)

And finally,

Tractarian elucidation aims to show us that [the text's] sentences that apparently express substantially nonsensical thoughts actually express no thoughts. . . . The illusion that the *Tractatus* seeks to explode, above all, is that we can run up against the limits of language. ("Frege" 197)

I will forego a detailed examination of the arguments the New Wittgensteinians present in support of their interpretations and all the reasons to reject them. I do this mostly because there already are two persuasive responses to the New Wittgensteinians: one given by Peter Hacker in *The New Wittgenstein*, and another by Michael Hymers in *Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy*.⁵⁰ At this time, I wish only to present one serious problem facing the New Wittgensteinian reading of the *Tractatus*. The problem

⁵⁰ See Hacker's "Was He Trying to Whistle It?" (*The New Wittgenstein* 353-394) and Chapter 3 of Hymers' book (especially 63-74).

is this: despite its arguable consistency with the *Tractatus*, the reading is, *prima facie*, inconsistent with Wittgenstein's own feelings about the content of the *Tractatus*. The present chapter closes with some quotations in light of which the New Wittgensteinian reading can be seen as inadequate.

In the second quote given above, Conant states that "the *Tractatus* seeks to explode [the *illusion*] that we can run up against the limits of language"(197). As I mentioned previously, Wittgenstein gave a lecture on ethics in 1929 which, in many respects, is reminiscent of his Tractarian views. In this lecture, he said, "My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless" ("A Lecture " 12). In his talks with Schlick in 1930, Wittgenstein also stated he thinks that, as human beings, "[w]e thrust against the limits of language. Kierkegaard, too, recognized this thrust and even described it in much the same way [as Wittgenstein] . . . This thrust against the limits of language is *ethics*"("Notes" 13). These passages suggest Wittgenstein did indeed think there are limits to language and that we have an innate tendency to bump up against them, as it were, when we try to speak the unspeakable. Of course, Conant might reply that, while Wittgenstein *seems* to hold these views in the *Tractatus*, a proper reading of the text in its entirety — paying special attention to the book's preface and conclusion — exposes Tractarian "views" to be pure, irredeemable nonsense. Conant may add that Wittgenstein's lecture and talks with Schlick in fact seem to *support* Conant's reading, as Wittgenstein admits to speaking nonsense in his lecture ("A Lecture" 10) and, in conversation Schlick, says that "[l]anguage is not a cage [to thrust against]"("Notes" 16).

The New Wittgensteinians could claim that the talks and lecture were not aimed at presenting Wittgenstein's actual views, but rather at inducing the same effect in his listeners as he allegedly sought to provoke in readers of his *Tractatus*.⁵¹

I have two responses to this potential objection. First, I wish to explain how my reading of the *Tractatus* can at least be reconciled with Wittgenstein's claims about nonsense and language in the lecture on ethics and in his talks with Schlick. I interpret the *Tractatus* as partly aiming at showing that language has no limits from within the linguistic perspective; everything is open to description and all possible facts can be asserted. However, when one appreciates the world *sub specie aeterni* (or, as I shall call it, from the mystical perspective), one contemplates the world as a *limited* whole (6.45). This appreciation is clearly incompatible with the linguistic perspective; for if it were not, it would show the bounds of the unbounded, so to speak. What is perhaps most interesting is that such an incompatibility arises directly from the nature of ethics and language. Linguistically, the incompatibility explains why Wittgenstein suggests language both is and is not like a cage.⁵² It also explains why neither of these suggestions are descriptions of natural facts and, thus, why they are nonsense. Ethically, the

⁵¹ Thanks to Mike Hymers for pointing this out.

⁵² I have argued elsewhere that, in some cases, a piece of Tractarian nonsense is especially illuminating when presented with its "negation". In "On Felber, Kant and Wittgenstein", I address a related problem raised by Fogelin. Fogelin accuses Wittgenstein of "tak[ing] sides on a transcendental issue"(Fogelin 103), namely whether the world of the happy man is or is not different from that of the unhappy man. My paper argues that Wittgenstein would have made the same point had he said their worlds were different or the same. While Wittgenstein says "the world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy"(TLP 6.43), the difference (in the non-psychological sense that interests Wittgenstein) is not a difference *in* the world. Thus, from the perspective we take in describing the *world*, there is no distinguishing happy from unhappy.

incompatibility lies at the heart of the relationship between science, meaning, value and nonsense:

Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, *natural* meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water [even] if I were to pour out a gallon over it. ("A Lecture" 7)

Given this, it is clear that delivering "A Lecture on Ethics" cannot be anything other than an exercise in nonsense. As he gives the lecture, Wittgenstein is, on his own view, running up against the limits of language; he is using words with merely natural meanings in an attempt to state something more. So it can be Wittgenstein's view that value can be seen when one contemplates the world as a limited whole and that we are mistaken if we think this value can be put into words. It can be his view that there are two ways of looking at the world and that, from within, each shows the limitations of the other. To say that ethics thrusts against language is to say that when we do ethics, we are not doing science; we are not describing the world, and that is why we are speaking nonsense. I take these ideas to be the ones which Wittgenstein aims at presenting in "A Lecture on Ethics" and in his discussions with Schlick and Waismann.

Secondly, consider this excerpt from Wittgenstein's 1929 conversations with Schlick and Waismann, in which Wittgenstein reflects on the *Tractatus*:

When I was working on my book I . . . *thought* then that every inference depended on a tautology. . . . This is bound

up with my then *believing* that elementary propositions had to be independent of one another: from the fact that one state of affairs obtained you couldn't infer another did not. But if my present conception of a system of propositions is right, then it's even the rule that from the fact that one state of affairs obtains we can infer that all the others described by the system of propositions do not. (*Remarks 317*)⁵³

I believe the New Wittgensteinian reading cannot provide a satisfactory account of the status of this passage. Taken literally, this quotation tells us that Wittgenstein was genuinely committed to the independence of elementary propositions while writing the *Tractatus*, but developed a new view by 1929. But if the New Wittgensteinian reading is right, then Wittgenstein never held elementary propositions to be logically independent. It seems to me this leaves the New Wittgensteinians two options: they may either claim that the passage is false (Wittgenstein is either lying or his thoughts on his first book are incorrect) or claim that it is a piece of nonsense which Wittgenstein is employing in order to put his listener in a certain state. Clearly, the first of these options is unacceptable. However, the second is not much better, as it is entirely unclear what sort of linguistic-philosophical illusion Wittgenstein would be intending to undo.⁵⁴

One would, I think, only ever be inclined to say Wittgenstein was bluffing about giving up his logical atomism because he or she was committed to a New Wittgensteinian reading of the *Tractatus*, and this ought to make the reading far less attractive. Moreover,

⁵³ My emphasis. Hymers draws attention to this quotation (Hymers 68).

⁵⁴ We encounter the same type of problem when trying to make "resolute" sense of the 1919 letter to Russell (see n6, p. 5) in which Wittgenstein says the most important part of, or idea in, the *Tractatus* is the difference between what can be said and what can only be shown (*Cambridge Letters* 124). Nothing in the letter suggests Wittgenstein really meant that one ought to *overcome* the saying-showing distinction.

as Hymers notes, Wittgenstein *received* Frank Ramsey's criticisms of the Tractarian logical atomism; he did not "react by saying, 'You're missing the point! I never held such a view . . . !'" (Hymers 73). Finally, I think interpreters of the *Tractatus* should be troubled by the fact that the New Wittgensteinian reading can be made to agree with *any* passage, so long as the latter is interpreted as nonsense aimed at breaking a philosophical illusion. Of course, these points do not settle the question of which reading is best; however, they do show there is a tension between the New Wittgensteinian interpretation and some of Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* work. More precisely, I think they show that Conant and Diamond's reading can only be squared with Wittgenstein's lecture on ethics and conversations with Schlick and Waismann at the cost of the reading's plausibility.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ I am grateful for Colin Hirano's help in working out the details of my response to the New Wittgensteinians.

CHAPTER 3: SOLIPSISM: A SURVEY

Introduction

This chapter provides a critical discussion of various interpretations of the *Tractatus*' treatment of solipsism, given by Peter Carruthers, Richard Brockhaus, David Pears, Peter Hacker, and Michael Kremer.

Peter Carruthers

In his 1990 book, *The Metaphysics of the Tractatus*, Peter Carruthers presents a critique of phenomenalist interpretations of Wittgenstein's early ontology. A phenomenalist reading of the *Tractatus*, which Carruthers ascribes to Ayer, Favrholt and the Hintikkas, takes Tractarian objects to be sense-data (Carruthers 75). Carruthers argues against these readings in light of one of his book's main contentions: that the point of the *Tractatus* is, in part, to "insist upon a realist attitude to metaphysics"(26). In his eighth chapter, entitled "Sense-data and solipsism", Carruthers presents three main arguments against an identification of Wittgensteinian objects with sense-data.⁵⁶ Carruthers' third argument is the most important for our present purposes, as it concerns

⁵⁶ The first argument concerns the *Tractatus* in relation to Russell's *Logical Atomism*. According to Carruthers, Wittgenstein did not intend for the *Tractatus* to give a theory of knowledge. Thus, while Russell acknowledges his debt to Wittgenstein in *Atomism*, Carruthers thinks interpreters ought to see Russell not as extending the theory of the *Tractatus*, but as undertaking an original – and, importantly, an *epistemological* – project (76). Secondly, Carruthers argues that taking Tractarian objects to be sense-data yields counterintuitive results. In particular, if we take these fleeting entities to be objects, then they must exist in every possible world. This point, coupled with the plausible assumption that "the time at which an experience occurs . . . is essential to its identity"(78), means phenomenalist readings must take Wittgenstein to be committed to a strange metaphysics on which every one of my experiences – at the cost of its identity – *must* occur when it does. Such a metaphysics obviously leaves nearly no room for contingency, and it is uncharitable to think Wittgenstein held such a view (78-79).

whether the phenomenalist interpretation of the *Tractatus* is bolstered by the book's treatment of solipsism (Carruthers 79). Carruthers maintains that reading the solipsistic remarks as he suggests allows us to forego commitment to the phenomenalist reading, which he takes himself to have revealed as implausible. We now examine Carruthers' reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism.

Carruthers begins his discussion of solipsism in the *Tractatus* by conceding that, on the face of things, the book's solipsistic passages do seem to suggest Tractarian objects are sense-data. In particular, he notes it is easy to see Wittgenstein's claim that death ends the world (*TLP* 6.431) as implying that only experiences are real – that is, that phenomenism is true. However, Carruthers thinks there are two good reasons to assume Wittgenstein solipsism does not imply a phenomenalist ontology. Firstly, he takes Wittgenstein to explicitly deny phenomenism when the latter claims that "psychological life", i.e., the life of immediate sense perceptions, "is of course not 'Life'" (*Notebooks* 77). Secondly, since solipsism is normally taken to stand opposed to realism, Carruthers thinks we can only make sense of 5.64 ("solipsism strictly carried out coincides with pure realism" (*TLP* 5.64)) by taking Wittgenstein to be using the term 'solipsism' in an unusual way. Thus Carruthers' presents what he takes to be an appropriate understanding of the term as it appears in the *Tractatus*. He grounds his conception of Tractarian solipsism on two doctrines he claims Wittgenstein subscribes to in the *Tractatus*. The first of these is what Carruthers calls the 'great mirror' doctrine, by

which logic and language are as they are in virtue of their reflecting "essential features of an independently existing reality"(Carruthers 25).⁵⁷ The second is the doctrine of the metaphysical subject, which is likened to the Kant's transcendental unity of apperception (82). I will explain what Carruthers thinks each of these doctrines means for our understanding of 'solipsism'.

As Pears remarks in *The False Prison*, one of the questions any reading of the solipsistic passages has to address is to what extent solipsism is a truth for Wittgenstein (*False Prison* 188). According to Carruthers, the truth of solipsism is captured by the world's being *my* world (*TLP* 5.641). Further, he takes the world's being my world and the coincidence of realism in solipsism (5.64) to be two sides of the same coin. Carruthers claims that, if we take Wittgenstein (in the 5.6s) to use "the world" to mean the totality of all possible facts⁵⁸, the connection between the two statements of the truth of solipsism (given at 5.64 and 5.641) comes into clear view: "the world is my world" just means that all possibilities are, in a sense, available to me. More precisely, everything logically possible is also thinkable and sayable by me. Thus, "the world is my world", for Wittgenstein, is a statement that "metaphysical possibility (real world) and conceptual possibility (my world) are one and the same"(80) – a statement corollary to the doctrine of the 'great mirror'. Carruthers' point here is a good one, particularly if we

⁵⁷ The doctrine gets its name from 5.511 and 6.13: "How can the all-embracing logic which mirrors the world use such special catches and manipulations? Only because these are connected to an infinitely fine network, to the great mirror"(*TLP* 5.511); "Logic is not a theory but a reflexion of the world"(*TLP* 6.13).

⁵⁸ While Wittgenstein sometimes uses this expression to refer to the totality of positive and negative facts (*TLP* 2.06, 4.26), at other times it seems he means the totality of possible facts (e.g., at 6.124).

allow ourselves to think of conceptual possibility, or thought-possibility, in terms of thoughts understood in a somewhat Fregean sense. These are not thoughts in a psychological-conceptual or experiential sense of the word; instead, they are *logical-conceptual* entities.⁵⁹ If we assume *these* are the thoughts being discussed, then we see Wittgenstein as interested in thoughts that, at bottom, are really just propositions.⁶⁰ From such an interpretive position, the collapse of solipsism into realism becomes quite unsurprising and straightforward, as claiming the coincidence of these two metaphysical views amounts to claiming every worldly possible fact is captured by a thought-proposition and that every possible thought-proposition asserts a possible fact of the world.

There remain the questions concerning the appearance of the first-person in Wittgenstein's claim that the "'world is my world'" (*TLP* 5.641). Carruthers believes

⁵⁹ It is important that we distinguish Fregean and Wittgensteinian thoughts: Wittgenstein takes the thought to be a meaningful proposition, whereas Frege takes the thought to be the meaning of a proposition. I draw the comparison here to emphasize the rather impersonal nature of Frege and Wittgenstein's *Gedanken*.

⁶⁰ I think Carruthers would be sympathetic to this interpretation of Wittgenstein's use of the term 'thought' (*Gedanke*), given that he thinks "Wittgenstein regards thinking and speaking as activities essentially on a par" (Carruthers 82). Furthermore, I think this way of looking at Wittgensteinian thoughts as Fregean in spirit is captured, for example, by 3.01: "[T]he totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world" (*TLP* 3.01). If we understand Wittgenstein to be talking about the world that figures in the complete descriptions given by "'The world as I found it'" (5.631) and the fact-book in the "Lecture on Ethics" ("Lecture" 6-7), then the "picture" at 3.01 likely includes extraordinarily complex propositions the entertaining of which is mentally impossible (where mental potential and processes are taken to be contingent, worldly phenomena.) But the facts meant by these *contingently* unthinkable propositions would still obtain, and a complete thought-picture of the world would have to capture such facts. Opposed to the contingently unthinkable is the necessarily unthinkable – namely, nonsense (see *TLP* 5.5422). (Finally, while I do not intend to argue this point at present, I think it useful to think of the *Tractatus* as attempting to, as it were, imbue facts with thought in order to preserve Frege's notion of form whilst deflating his Third Realm. It would be interesting to see whether Wittgenstein's move here bears any important similarities to Aristotle's relocation of Platonic Ideas to Aristotelian forms, which cannot exist independently of content.)

Wittgenstein draws in the first-person out of fascination with the fact that, although I can think anything logical (i.e., any possible fact), my point of view on the world cannot be put into words. According to Carruthers, my point of view cannot be expressed because my possibilities are the world's possibilities; I am at the limit of the world, which gives the world from my perspective an ineffable *myness* (82). While he does not put his point quite this way, it seems to me Carruthers thinks that the sense in which "a non-psychological I"(5.641) figures in Wittgenstein's philosophy is comparable to the sense in which one figures in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. This is because he thinks that, for both Wittgenstein and Kant, while there *is* a *myness* to the world – a unifying subject – such a *myness* cannot, on the Wittgensteinian side, be put into words; it cannot, on the Kantian side, be known (82).

In order to make clear to his readers what sense of *myness* is at stake here, Carruthers asks us to imagine an all-inclusive fact-book, much like the one Wittgenstein mentions in 5.631 ('The world as I found it'). He claims:

[T]he one fact which would not be conveyed in such a description would be which of all the various experiences and perspectives is my own. One can thus imagine exclaiming, with a shock of recognition when one finally succeeds in working the matter out, 'And those experiences and thoughts must be mine! (Carruthers 82)

Carruthers' point is that the *myness* one would claim of the story surpasses the world in just the way Wittgenstein thought interesting and, though ineffable, true.

I think there are serious problems with this interpretation of Wittgenstein's treatment of *myness* in the *Tractatus*. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Carruthers takes Wittgenstein to hold the same view of the empirical, psychological or individual subject as P. M. S. Hacker (*Insight* 61) and Martin Stokhof (Stokhof 93). Recall that, on

this view, Stokhof thinks 'me' and 'you' are only "convenient labels"(Stokhof 198) for distinguishing one cloud of psychological-experiential phenomena from another. It is, of course, a logical possibility that two such clouds contain numerically different but otherwise identical combinations of thoughts, feelings and perceptions. In such a case, how would I be able to distinguish my thoughts and experiences from those of my psychological Doppelgänger? The truth of the matter is that, if Wittgenstein is interested in any sort of *myness*, it is not the *myness* involved in my recognizing that some set of thoughts, feelings and perceptions happens to match the thoughts, feelings and perceptions I happen to experience. For if we take Wittgenstein to use 'my' in the philosophically important sense – to mean my *possibilities* (as Carruthers himself urges we should) instead of my *actual* thoughts and experiences – then the 'my' appearing in "Those are my thoughts and experiences!" can have nothing to do with the *myness* of interest to Wittgenstein. This is because the 'my' involved in Carruthers' illustration is a factual, contingent 'my'; it is as much in the world as is the *myness* of my pencil or my pet fish, and it can be put into words. And while my individual self just *is* its actual psychological cloud, there is no necessary connection between any one of these contingently-existing clouds and the metaphysical subject. Consequently, it seems uncharitable to cast Wittgenstein as interested in the sort of *myness* Carruthers thinks is central to the Tractarian treatment of solipsism.

Richard Brockhaus

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that some philosophers think any adequate interpretation of the Tractatus centres on Wittgenstein's treatment of solipsism. Richard Brockhaus is one such philosopher, maintaining that "an understanding of

[Wittgenstein's] contention that what the solipsist tries to say is of great importance is central to becoming clear about 'the whole sense' of the *Tractatus*"(Brockhaus 280-1). More precisely, Brockhaus thinks it is important to understand the *Tractatus*' remarks on solipsism because one may only bridge the gap between the book's ethical and logical-linguistic parts by coming to see why Wittgenstein thinks the world is *my* world (Brockhaus 293).

Brockhaus discusses what he takes to be the Tractarian view of solipsism in Chapter IX of *Pulling Up the Ladder* ("Realism, Idealism, and What Solipsism Intends".) Roughly speaking, Brockhaus' discussion divides into two sections: one pertaining to Wittgenstein's remark on the coincidence of realism and solipsism (*TLP* 5.64) and another concerning the sudden appearance of first-person possessive pronouns in the 5.6s. In the first of these sections, "Solipsism", Brockhaus argues that, for Wittgenstein, realism and solipsism coincide because it is impossible to differentiate the two positions. In the second section, "What Solipsism Intends: The Metaphysical Subject", Brockhaus argues that "my" enters the *Tractatus* in virtue of the fact that there are propositions. I will take up each of these sections in turn.

In "Solipsism", Brockhaus argues the 5.6s aim, in part, at showing that there is no difference between realism and solipsism (as an extreme case of idealism.) He takes Wittgenstein to use these terms as they are normally used, whereby the solipsist thinks all objects depend for their existence on a particular subject (me), the idealist thinks all objects depend on subjects for their existence, and the realist thinks some objects exist independently of subjects. According to Brockhaus, Wittgenstein thinks these positions cannot be distinguished from one another because the philosophically interesting subject

they concern (i.e., *not* the psychological subject of the 5.54s) cannot be described, nor can it be named; it is neither a possible fact nor an object. He casts Wittgenstein's point as made in three arguments: two arguments against the possible factuality of a subject and a third against its possible objectuality.

The first of these arguments is presented in the passage about the book "The world as I found it"(5.631). Recall that the example Wittgenstein presents in this passage is supposed to show that there is no thinking, presenting subject in the world. While one could take Wittgenstein's "argument" in this passage to be a straightforwardly Humean rejection of a subject,⁶¹ Brockhaus thinks Wittgenstein's argument is unlike Hume's for three important reasons. Firstly, Hume's argument, unlike Wittgenstein's, relies on empiricism as a crucial premise (Brockhaus 285).⁶² Secondly, the original *Notebooks* passage from which 5.631 is pulled⁶³ seems to propose a crucial similarity

⁶¹ See Pears' discussion of the "Humean solipsist" (*The False Prison* 36, 153n2) and Hacker's reference Hume's *Treatise* when discussing *Tractatus* 5.631 (*Insight* 59).

⁶² I am unsure as to whether this is a legitimate criticism. It is not uncommon for interpreters to emphasize that Wittgenstein thought projects in epistemology are psychological and, thus, not properly philosophical, but this does not mean that no epistemological work can be relevant to understanding the *Tractatus*. (After all, influential interpreters have also taken the *Tractatus* to give the *Critique of Pure Reason* a linguistic twist: see Hacker's *Insight and Illusion*.) My point here is that Wittgenstein *could* be giving Hume's argument a linguistic twist, where instead of concluding "since all we can know are sense impressions, and the subject is not itself an impression, we can have no knowledge of a subject", Wittgenstein concludes "since all we can say are facts, and the subject is not a fact, there are no propositions – no truths or falsehoods – about a subject".

⁶³ Brockhaus does not cite the passage, but I find it worth quoting at length: "I have long been conscious that it would be possible for me to write a book: 'The world I found'. . . . But it also seems certain that we do not infer the existence of simple objects from the existence of particular simple objects, but rather know them—by description, as it were—as the end-product of analysis, by means of a process that leads to them. . . . In the book 'The world I found' I should also have to report on my body . . . [T]his is a way of isolating the subject, or rather of shewing that in an importance sense there is no such thing as the subject; for it would be the one thing that could *not* come into this book"(*Notebooks* 49-50).

between the indescribable yet real Tractarian objects and the author of 'The world as I found it'. If Wittgenstein thought the similarity did indeed hold, we would have reason to think the purpose of 5.631 is to show that, while the subject cannot be described, it is real (Brockhaus 285). Finally, Brockhaus highlights the fact that Wittgenstein does not completely reject a subject altogether, only one that "*thinks or entertains ideas*"(285). Thus Brockhaus maintains that 5.631 distinguishes the philosophically uninteresting empirical ego of psychology from the metaphysical ego, the philosophically important subject (286). On the whole, then, Brockhaus thinks 5.631 shows the metaphysical subject is real, but that it resists description.

Brockhaus thinks Wittgenstein gives a second, "deeper"(Brockhaus 286) argument for the reality of an inexpressible subject in the 5.63s. His interpretation of that section (in which Wittgenstein makes use of an analogy between subject and eye) is quite like mine, which I present in Chapter 3. Brockhaus thinks Wittgenstein's point is that, just as the eye is a necessary condition of a visual field into which it cannot enter, the subject is a necessary condition for a world into which it cannot enter, either. And while Wittgenstein writes that "from nothing *in the field of sight* can it be concluded that [the field] is seen from an eye"(TLP 5.633), Brockhaus thinks this means "that *no particular object* in the visual field entails the existence of the subject . . . but rather that the existence of the field *whatever it contains* entails the existence of the corresponding eye"(Brockhaus 287). It is clear that, although he does not explicitly, Brockhaus takes Wittgenstein to a) infer the metaphysical subject from the existence of the world as a limited whole; and b) think the subject is indescribable in the same way in which the eye cannot be seen.

Wittgenstein's last argument both attacks the possibility of naming the subject and shows why realism and solipsism coincide. (Since solipsism is, according to Brockhaus, just an extreme case of solipsism, he includes idealism in the coincidence.)

Wittgenstein's task is presented as follows. Since realism, idealism and solipsism are traditionally distinguished by the relations they bear to a philosophically important self, the identity of these competing metaphysical positions rests on the possibility of expressing something about a philosophical subject (289). As Wittgenstein has putatively shown that the relevant self certainly cannot be described, if he succeeds in proving it cannot be named either, he will have shown "there are no philosophically important, sayable differences between the three positions"(Brockhaus 282). Brockhaus then presents the distinctions between the metaphysical positions at hand (where objects in the range of 'S_x' are subjects):

Idealism: Every possible fact contains as a constituent some S_x, e.g. S₂, S₁₃, etc.

Realism: Some facts contain no S_x.

Solipsism: Every possible fact contains *the same* S_x, e.g. S₁. (Brockhaus 288)

Finally, he asks that we consider the case of a proposition "ABC." If either idealism or solipsism were true, since none of 'A', 'B' and 'C' refer to a (or the) subject, "ABC" would picture an impossible fact. However, says Brockhaus, "no proposition fails to picture a real possibility"(288). From this, Brockhaus infers the impossibility of naming the subject. He concludes that, since idealism, solipsism and realism can only be distinguished from one another by reference to an unnameable subject, there is no sayable difference between any of these positions.

Brockhaus' conclusion is rather suspect. I take Brockhaus to say that, if we assume that a) the subject is nameable *and* b) either solipsism or idealism is true, it

follows that c) "ABC" would break the *Tractatus*' semantic rules. But why does it then follow that the subject cannot be named? Could we not, instead, reject our other assumption and conclude that realism is true? This the most reasonable conclusion Brockhaus can draw, especially since he assumes realism is true by using "ABC" as an example of an elementary proposition that does not name a subject. Furthermore, Brockhaus' point here cannot be entirely right, since he makes the mistake of taking ABC's impossibility as an indication that "ABC" would be *false a priori*.⁶⁴ However, in my discussion of the Tractarian view of tautologies in Chapter 2, I mentioned that, for Wittgenstein, one can only speak of falsehood in cases where one can speak of truth (and vice versa.) Really, then, "ABC" must not be a proposition, but nonsense.⁶⁵

We finally turn to Brockhaus' second section, in which he argues the self is brought into philosophy because "the 'world is my world'"(291). He reminds us that the "my" used in this expression does not refer to the composite, empirical ego, but a simple soul. Indeed, Brockhaus seems to think the self of psychology and metaphysical subject bear the same relationship to one another as do Kant's transcendental and empirical egos.⁶⁶ This is because facts *qua* propositions presuppose a metaphysical subject which, by an intentional act, wills factual signs in projective relations to other (possible) facts.

⁶⁴ Brockhaus thinks ABC's impossibility is problematic because "the possibility of ascertaining *merely from inspection* that a given elementary proposition is true or not goes against . . . the picture theory"(288) and because "no picture is true or false a priori"(288). (These remarks suggest a confusion between impossibility and falsehood.)

⁶⁵ "ABC" is nonsense because it is not a contradiction.

⁶⁶ At least, I think this can be said if we follow P. F. Strawson in taking Kant to think the metaphysical ego is a necessary condition for the possibility of the empirical ego in particular (Strawson 108).

Thus the proposition presupposes a subject to breathe life, so to speak, into the dead matter of its sentential sign (Brockhaus 293); this is one means by which the metaphysical subject makes Life of the world. Life and world are also identified in virtue of the omnipresence of the willing metaphysical 'I'. Brockhaus says such a subject lies behind every possible fact and, thus, the world – that "everything that I can represent in language or thought . . . is *conditioned* by this intending metaphysical ego and thus is 'mine'"(292, my emphasis). Thus, Brockhaus makes the same claim as Carruthers – that, since any possible world is a world of which I can conceive, "any world of which I can conceive must be 'mine'"(293) – but with an obviously more critical and less straightforwardly realistic thrust. Finally, it is worth noting once again that, for Brockhaus, Wittgenstein is committed to the reality of a metaphysical subject. This subject seems to live in the world as ethical and linguistic meaning, but no one can say anything about it, on pain of running up against the limits of language (293). This subject lives in the world as ethical and linguistic meaning. Here, Brockhaus follows Hacker in thinking that, for Wittgenstein, any meaning or significance is due to the metaphysical subject because "[t]hings acquire 'significance' only through their relation to the will"(Notebooks 84, Brockhaus 295). Again, it seems as though the metaphysical subject, as the willing subject, brings unity to the world comparably to the way in which Kant's transcendental ego does. In the next section, we will look at interpretation which is highly critical of Hacker's and Brockhaus' belief that Wittgenstein is committed to the being of a robust metaphysical subject.

David Pears

David Pears addresses Wittgenstein's treatment of solipsism in three texts: his 1987 book, *The False Prison*, and two later articles, namely "The Originality of Wittgenstein's Investigation of Solipsism" (1996) and "The Ego and the Eye: Wittgenstein's Use of Analogy" (1993). One of the most important lines of thought Pears presents in these three texts is his view that Wittgenstein's later writings do not criticize the *Tractatus* and *Notebooks* views on solipsism. For Pears, the truth is quite the opposite: that Wittgenstein's later work merely develops his early attack on solipsism, which aims at showing that the solipsist's claims are without sense. Of course, such a reading seems to contradict Wittgenstein's remark that "what solipsism *means*, is quite correct" (*TLP* 5.62). In the second half of this section, I will explain the way in which Pears tries to accommodate 5.62. We now turn to Pears' explanation of Wittgenstein's critique of solipsism.

According to Pears, the *Tractatus* and *Notebooks* detail Wittgenstein's exploration of the failure of a particular kind of solipsism. Like Carruthers, Pears thinks the *Tractatus* does not discuss the type of solipsism which problematizes the physical world lying behind sense-data (*False* 187-88). I take Pears to think Wittgenstein was uninterested in sense-data because the Tractarian remarks on solipsism do not concern the connection between the objects of one's experience of the world and the world as such, but rather are focused on the relation between the subject and the world (*False* 154). Put otherwise, Pears believes Wittgenstein was only interested in the subject *itself*, regardless of whatever it is subjected *to*. Thus, for Pears, the Tractarian solipsist is not making a

claim about experiences; she is, instead, denying the existence of anything other than a unique metaphysical ego – hers ("Originality" 124).

The solipsist's claim is false, of course, if she means there is only one thing in the world, i.e., her flesh-and-blood person (126). What, then, does she mean when she claims she is the only thing? Pears maintains the early Wittgenstein argues that the solipsist cannot mean anything other than the uninteresting falsehood cited above, on pain of making an empty claim (and thus, no claim at all.) This is because the solipsist lacks a "criterion of identity of his ego"(126) other than that of his flesh-and-blood person.⁶⁷ The issue here is, I think, more easily understood if we consider an example in which a similar problem arises. Suppose I invite some friends over for dinner and tell them I live two blocks from the Halifax Commons. If they ask, "Where are the Commons?" and I reply, "Two blocks from my place," I certainly will not have identified my location. Similarly, if I claim to be the metaphysical subject who takes in, as it were, the *real* world and identify that world as whatever is taken in by the metaphysical subject, I too will have said nothing. Thus, my directions and the solipsist's thesis have no sense for the same reason; my directions do not give an adequate criterion of identity for my address and the solipsist's characterization of the world does not give an adequate criterion of identity for her ego. Pears thinks this interpretation is supported by 5.633-5.634 and that these remarks give and support Wittgenstein's thesis that no substantive,

⁶⁷ Pears cites the *Notebooks* (*Notebooks* 82) in support of his claim that Wittgenstein thinks egos are to be individuated on the basis of our bodies ("Originality" 127).

non-empirical description can be given of the subject.⁶⁸ Pears claims the argument criticizes Russell's 1913 theory that the subject is known by description ("Originality" 127, *False* 161).

Pears takes Wittgenstein to block another possible avenue for solipsism, by which the solipsist claims not to need a criterion of identity for her ego because it is perfectly clear to her what the 'I' is ("Ego" 60). In such a case, the solipsist would maintain to have unmediated knowledge of her ego (or, in Russellian terms, to know her ego by acquaintance.) Pears thinks Wittgenstein uses the eye analogy (*TLP* 5.6331) to show that, just as the eye does not appear in the visual field (it cannot see itself), the subject does not figure in experience (it cannot become acquainted with itself.)⁶⁹ Thus, these dual arguments show the metaphysical subject is neither known by description nor by acquaintance: it "is neither a nameable item in the world nor something waiting outside the world for the encounter that would make it nameable" (*False* 179). Thus, one cannot formulate propositions about the metaphysical subject, including claims to the truth of solipsism. It is worth noting that, while Pears' interpretation up to this point is strikingly similar to Brockhaus' reading, these two come to very different conclusions. Brockhaus thinks the 5.6s argue there is indeed a metaphysical subject (the willing subject) inferable

⁶⁸ It is worth noting that Brockhaus claims, to the contrary, that previous to the completion of the *Tractatus*, the lack of "criteria of individuation for the metaphysical subject. . . . worries Wittgenstein very little" (Brockhaus 293n20).

⁶⁹ Pears remarks that the eye does not just happen not to be in the visual field, but that it is *necessarily* excluded from the field (*False Prison* 182). Thus, the metaphysical subject is unlike the physical eye (which can be seen in a mirror, for instance) and closer resembles the *geometrical eye* Wittgenstein discusses in *The Blue and Brown Books* (*BBB* 63-64).

from the existence of the world, but that such a subject defies description. For Pears, however, Wittgenstein's point is that the notion of a metaphysical subject is completely empty. As we will see at the end of the section, Pears thinks Wittgenstein is most interested by the fact that the term 'metaphysical subject' *is* empty, and that that is what is most important or insightful about solipsism. Before turning to that, however, one point remains to be made.

In *The False Prison*, Pears briefly discusses another aspect of Wittgenstein's putative critique of solipsism. Over and above all the problems surrounding one's attempt to make a claim about the relationship between a metaphysical subject and the world, Pears seems to suggest there is a further problem which, I think, stands independently of the problem associated with the lack of a criterion of identity for the metaphysical subject.

For Wittgenstein, the limits of the world are given by the totality of objects and, once again, by the totality of elementary propositions (*TLP* 5.5561). Pears reads the 5.5s and 5.6s in light of 5.5561, taking 5.5-5.641 to inquire into whether there can be any further restrictions imposed on the world (and, thus, on language) (*False* 173). On this line, then, Wittgenstein addresses a particular type of restrictive hypothesis. Looked at this way, solipsism presents "a way of restricting language through the explicit specification of a particular person"(163), by which "the limits of the world are fixed from the inside by their relation to [the solipsist's] ego"(164). When we think about this aspect of solipsism – when we focus on what it is supposed to tell us about *possibilities*, as opposed to the self – new difficulties present themselves independently of the possibility of identifying a metaphysical subject.

Throughout the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein highlights a fundamental difference between possibility and necessity. The distinction is an important one, as philosophers tend to mistake necessities for facts. (Indeed, from the early Wittgensteinian perspective, this seems to be the confusion underlying Russell's logic and Moore's ethics.) Furthermore, the world, thinks the early Wittgenstein, is not a set of possibilities that just *happen* to constitute empirical reality. Consequently, it makes no sense to speak of one totality of possibilities as opposed to another. This is, as Pears puts it, an important point distinguishing philosophy from science: "science can exclude a fact from the actual world by identifying the possibility and saying that it is not realized, but there is no comparable way in which philosophy can exclude a possibility" (*False* 163). But, argues Pears, this is exactly the exclusive move the solipsist tries to make – and not just the solipsist, but anyone who tries to make a claim about the nature of the world as a whole by maintaining a certain collection of possible possibilities are not the actual possibilities. Metaphysicians make the mistake of trying to, as it were, "go behind the possibilities or consider identifiable alternatives and ask why they are not possibilities" (157). But such an activity or inquiry is explicitly ruled out by 5.61:

Logic fills the world: the limits of the world are also its limits.

We cannot therefore say in logic: This and this there is in the world, that there is not.⁷⁰

For that would apparently presuppose that we exclude certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case since

⁷⁰ I take Wittgenstein to mean that we cannot say, "p, q, and r are possibilities; however, x, y, and z are not."

otherwise logic must get outside the limits of the world:
that is, if it could consider these limits from the other side
also. (*TLP* 5.61)

The idea here is this: that it is impossible to distinguish solipsism from realism because one cannot go beyond the world in order to contrast it to a set of possibilities which happen not to be *actual* possibilities. Recall that logic – the single, "all-embracing logic which mirrors the world" (*TLP* 5.511) and which is limited by the world (5.61) – is the logic which "treats of *every* possibility" (2.0121, my emphasis). This means precisely that there is, as Pears puts it, no "further world of *candidates* for possibility" (*False* 172) and, thus, no metaphysical subject-matter. I think this is one of Pears' most insightful points which, sadly, is underdeveloped in *The False Prison* and disappears almost entirely in his later treatments of the 5.6s.

We finally turn to Pears' explanation as to why Wittgenstein says the solipsist is correct. According to Pears, Wittgenstein's early writings are not solipsistic, since "[h]e is, of course, a realist" (*False* 188). Pears explains other interpreters' misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's position in terms of the *therapeutic* aspect of Wittgenstein's early attack on solipsism. While Wittgenstein concedes that the solipsist is acquainted with an important insight, he thinks she makes the mistake of trying to turn her insight into a factual claim ("Originality" 125). Thus, the *Tractatus* is meant to be a corrective device which shows exactly where solipsism goes wrong.

We know the solipsist's claim is empty for Pears' Wittgenstein, but why is it philosophically important? Pears takes the following to be the two solipsistic insights: that "any experience is had from a point of view which is not represented in that experience [and] any language has to be understood from a point of view which cannot

be captured in that language"(False 165). I think it is important to note that Pears uses the expression "point of view" in describing the solipsist's insight. Recall that Pears thinks the later Wittgenstein develops (as opposed to recants) his early view on solipsism. Pears supports this thesis by appealing to passages in Wittgenstein's *The Blue and Brown Books* and *Notes for Lectures on 'Private Experience' and 'Sense-data'*, especially those concerning what Wittgenstein calls the 'geometrical eye' (*Blue* 64). This geometrical eye is unlike the physical eye; it is not an object that one can point to in the world. To point to one's geometrical eye is, instead, a purely mental enterprise, consisting in, e.g., having one's finger gradually take up the entirety of one's visual field. It is, in essence, pointing to the metaphysical subject ("Originality" 129). Pears emphasizes the abstract, geometrical, purely formal and *grammatical* nature of this eye. While he does not use the analogy himself, I think it useful to liken the geometrical eye to the vanishing point used in point-perspective drawing. These points are transcendental to the objects they structure but cannot themselves be drawn (as they have no extension.)⁷¹ And although a vanishing point is necessary within an image, it is necessary only in virtue of the role it plays – that is, so to speak, in virtue of its pictorial-grammatical position. So, just as there is a sense in which no vanishing point can be drawn, "there is a sense of I/me in which my language cannot talk about me"(False 166). Similarly, just as a vanishing point is given by the drawing of a picture, the metaphysical subject is given by the

⁷¹ Of course, artists draw *physical* vanishing points on their work all the time. It is the geometrical vanishing point which cannot be drawn.

assertion of a proposition. Thus, for Pears, Wittgenstein returns to realism because the "necessary" ego is not substantial. When I understand the nature of the metaphysical subject, I see it as a mere posit, an innocuous, "transcendental underpinning" (*False* 167) of my language.

Peter Hacker

In his 1972 book *Insight and Illusion*, Peter Hacker argues the *Tractatus* and *Notebooks* attempt to detail an ineffable semantic doctrine "best described as Empirical Realism and Transcendental Solipsism" (*Insight* 81). In this section, I explain what Hacker takes to be Wittgenstein's view and give his reasons for thinking Wittgenstein is committed to it.

In a discussion of Wittgenstein's claim that there is no thinking, presenting subject, Hacker argues against certain anti-metaphysical interpretations of 5.631. In particular, Hacker gives reasons for which we ought not to follow Max Black in thinking that, in the 5.6s, Wittgenstein entertains and finally denies the existence of a metaphysical subject (*Insight* 64). According to Hacker, Wittgenstein does indeed think there is no thinking, presenting subject; but in thinking this, Wittgenstein dismisses the Cartesian subject, a thinking *thing* of putative philosophical importance. Hacker argues that Wittgenstein's use of Schopenhauerian metaphors in the 5.6s suggests the *Tractatus* only attacks the notion of a substantial philosophical 'I' in a Kantian style (66). Thus, *pace* Black, Hacker thinks Wittgenstein was not saying that, since there is no Cartesian subject, there is no subject other than the one open to purely psychological inquiry. Instead, he argues Wittgenstein aimed at drawing a distinction between two subjects – the

subject as a limit (the metaphysical subject) and as an entity (the empirical subject) – and defending the reality of the former, the simple, non-encounterable metaphysical subject.

Much like Brockhaus, Hacker thinks Wittgenstein's Schopenhauerian view of the metaphysical subject is central to the *Tractatus*' treatment of solipsism.⁷² Hacker defends this thesis by highlighting crucial similarities between Wittgenstein's and Schopenhauer's philosophies: among other things, both are committed to similar views concerning the relationship between the subject and an aesthetic object of contemplation (74), the duality of reality (70), and the cessation of the world at death in virtue of the transcendental ideality of time (72). Of course, Wittgenstein breaks away from Schopenhauer insofar as the former sees solipsism (or "theoretical egoism") as philosophically insightful, whereas the latter does not (71, 75). Thus, Hacker identifies what he takes to be Wittgenstein's crucial modifications to Schopenhauer's doctrine: arriving at theses via a new, linguistic (as opposed to metaphysical) approach; and an un-Schopenhauerian sympathy for solipsism (76). Furthermore, Hacker stresses that evidence of the young Wittgenstein's sympathy for solipsism is not, as Brian McGuinness suggests, evidence that Wittgenstein had a mystical experience which the *Tractatus* aims at describing. For Hacker, Tractarian solipsism, insofar as it is an extension of Schopenhauer's and Kant's philosophies, bears a *theoretical* content Wittgenstein takes to be ineffable (76).

⁷² It is worth mentioning that Anscombe thought Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* could only be understood by those sympathetic to Schopenhauerian philosophy (Anscombe 168).

Let us take a closer look at this theoretical content of Wittgenstein's transcendental solipsism. In particular, I want to examine Hacker's unusual reading of the realism-solipsism coincidence (*TLP* 5.64). Hacker proposes casting the traditional clash between realism and solipsism in terms of the propositions the realist and solipsist think can be true. On this view, the realist believes propositions such as "the cat is on the mat" – sentences about mind-independent objects – are sometimes true (*Insight* 80). The solipsist, on the other hand, believes they are always false; only propositions concerning my mental events (such as "I am in pain") can be true. This, says Hacker, is not the sort of solipsism with which Wittgenstein is concerned. Rather, he takes Wittgenstein to think that the truth of transcendental solipsism shows itself in the analysis of propositions featuring subjects (80). In particular, the truth of transcendental solipsism is shown by the fact that the analysis of the proposition "I have a toothache" – a proposition about (my) *experiences* – differs from the analysis of "A has toothache" – a proposition concerning certain *behaviours* exhibited by an (empirical) subject picked out by the expression 'A'. We thus see the sense in which a metaphysical subject is necessary; it gives experience a form necessary for the meaningfulness of propositions concerning myself. However, since "everything the realist wishes to say can be said"(81), the necessity of the subject does not preclude the truth of realism. This explains the coexistence of (empirical) realism and (transcendental) solipsism.

At this point, I would like to raise two issues. First, while it is believable that Wittgenstein may have held this view, Hacker provides no textual support for his claim that subject-related propositions can be given two Tractarian analyses. While he indicates that he has evidence suggesting Wittgenstein would analyze propositions about

me into experiential terms (80n1), there is no evidence that propositions about *other* selves are not eventually analyzed into elementary propositions concerning my experience as well. Secondly (and far more tentatively), I think it may be problematic to assume that, for Wittgenstein, "A has toothache" means nothing more than that an empirical subject is behaving in such-and-such a way. I realize that, *ex facie*, the 'A believes that p'-discussion of the 5.4s implies this is *exactly* what is meant by "A has toothache". Still, I would like to draw attention to Hacker's phrasing: "[The complete analysis of 'A has toothache'] will refer only to the *behaviour* which others manifest when they are said to have toothache"(81, my emphasis). Unless Hacker is using the term 'behaviour' exceptionally loosely, it seems he is not making a claim about "psychical constituents"⁷³ (to use Wittgenstein's term), but about the way an aching person moves, whines and so on. Although a person's behaviour plays an important role in the later Wittgenstein's discussion of pain-states, nothing suggests an empirical subject's outward behaviour was involved in the *Tractarian* analysis of propositions such as 'A has toothache'. And Wittgenstein did not necessarily think other subjects were incapable of *experiencing* toothaches⁷⁴ – especially if we take his "psychical constituents" to mean the stuff of experience. Thus, it seems we return to the first point – that A's toothache might be couched in experiential terms.

⁷³ See (*Insight* 62).

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Wittgenstein's claim concerning the spirit of the snake, lion, elephant and wasp (*Notebooks* 85).

We finally turn to the following question: for Hacker, what "linguistic route" does Wittgenstein take in order to arrive at his solipsistic conclusions, and why are they ineffable? Hacker argues that the route is traced by coming to (what I like to call) a solipsistic-critical conclusion from within language. Perhaps my expression "solipsistic-critical" requires some explanation. Hacker discusses two ways in which one may investigate a phenomenon "from the inside"(77): a metaphysical way and a linguistic way. I call these approaches 'critical' (or Kantian) in virtue of their aim to grasp what makes a phenomenon possible without surpassing its limits. (For our present purposes, I will leave aside the metaphysical case and concentrate on the linguistic case.) To carry out a critical inquiry into language is, it seems, to carry out the *Tractatus*' project: to establish what makes language possible, and to give its limits from within language (*TLP* 27).⁷⁵ I mentioned earlier that, for both Brockhaus and Hacker, Wittgenstein thinks propositions owe their meaningfulness to a metaphysical subject who imbues sensibly perceptible signs with meaning. As Hacker puts it, language depends on a metaphysical subject because language is "nothing but a husk"(77) without a consciousness which, as it were, makes a "living picture [*lebendes Bild*]"(4.0311) out of a fact. The point is not an unfamiliar one: language (and, thus, the world) depends on my making symbols out of signs. This captures the sense in which solipsism is "true" from a critical-linguistic perspective.

⁷⁵ This is not a perfectly happy way of putting the aim of the *Tractatus*, since there is an important sense in which it does not give the limits of language from within language (insofar as the *Tractatus*' remarks are *unsinnig*.)

Yet clearly, the "truth" of solipsism is not a genuine truth. Hacker cites three reasons why solipsism cannot be put into words: firstly, since the metaphysical subject is neither an object, nor a structured combination of objects, it cannot enter into a proposition; secondly, a claim to solipsism would be a non-contingent claim, which is impossible by the picture theory; and, most interestingly, the subject cannot picture itself in relation to anything, on pain of entertaining a picture containing an infinite regress – that is, an impossible picture (80, 77). At this time, Hacker's first and second points should strike us as familiar. The first point is discussed in both Brockhaus' and Pears' treatments of the *Tractatus*, which I covered earlier in this chapter; thus, I will not return to the first point here.⁷⁶ The second point is quite straightforward: insofar as the self of solipsism is a transcendental self, it is a *necessary* condition of the world and, thus, cannot be captured by propositions (which are, picture-theoretically, essentially *contingent*.) The third point, however, deserves some further attention. At bottom, it presents a new way of looking at a central Tractarian theme – more precisely, the paradox of self-reference – which I presented on p. 28 of Chapter 1. Throughout the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein presents different variations on this theme that the necessary conditions for some x cannot appear in x ; ineffability of solipsism is one such variation. For if solipsism were sayable, thinks Hacker, it would be possible for the subject to capture its own state in a mental state. I think it is easiest to understand why this is problematic by considering

⁷⁶ Hacker shares Pears' reason for thinking the subject is not an object and Brockhaus' reason for thinking it is not a fact.

the nearly-isomorphic case of self-reference in which a "proposition" P contains itself as follows:

$$P = (P \ \& \ Q)$$

Here, P has an infinitely complex left conjunct, since the conjunct P is *really* (P & Q), which can likewise be expressed as ((P & Q) & Q), and so on. This means every analysis of P will yield a conjunction with P as a conjunct. But as P (the conjunct) is complex, no finite number of analytic steps will bring us to the point where P (the conjunction) is completely analysed. However, by the Tractarian semantics, something only counts as a meaningful symbol if it can be analyzed into elementary propositions in finitely many steps. Thus, since P cannot be analyzed, it is not a proposition. Analogously, no mental state can succeed in picturing itself. Hacker takes this sort of example to show why the early Wittgenstein commits to the ineffability of the metaphysical subject (and thus, in turn, of solipsism.)

Michael Kremer

In "To What Extent Is Solipsism a Truth?", Michael Kremer argues for a strikingly original reading of the *Tractatus*' remarks on solipsism. Kremer's interpretation radically differs from those offered by Hacker, Pears, Brockhaus and Carruthers insofar as it takes Wittgensteinian solipsism to be "an intellectual, moral and mystical *exercise* aimed at bringing about a change in one's spiritual life"(Kremer 59, my emphasis). Thus, Kremer takes Wittgenstein to claim that solipsism is not *theoretically*

true, but a *practical* truth (to some extent.)⁷⁷ More precisely, Kremer thinks Wittgenstein sees solipsism not as a true-yet-ineffable metaphysical doctrine, but as an ethical heuristic – a step one ought to take in purifying the soul (59). In this section, I will present Kremer's interpretation and draw attention to some of its more questionable aspects.

Readers of Kremer may find it difficult to grasp what type of solipsism is at stake in his discussion of the *Tractatus*. For one, the "solipsism" he wishes to ascribe to Wittgenstein is nothing like the philosophically popular notions of metaphysical and epistemological solipsism. Indeed, I think the epistemological and metaphysical variants only bear a resemblance to Kremer's solipsism insofar as all three *put my self at the centre*, as it were. But even this remark is ambiguous, since it can be read as suggesting Kremer's ethical solipsist thinks the subject gives the world value. This is not the case; for Kremer, putting the 'I' at the centre of the *Tractatus* does *not* mean grounding value on the Wittgensteinian subject. Indeed, as we will see, the Kremer-solipsistic aspect of Wittgenstein's ethics is indifferent to ontology.

Kremer argues the *Tractatus* shares its solipsistic tone with the following passage, which he quotes from St Theresa of Avila's *Life*: ". . . the utmost we have to do at first is

⁷⁷ A 'practical truth' is to be understood as a non-propositional truth – as Kremer puts it, a "'path' for life" (Kremer 63). Roughly speaking, such a 'path' is true insofar as it brings me where I ought to go. Some practical truths – the ones which bring me only so far – are of limited veracity (hence, are true 'to some extent'.) Thus, to say that solipsism is true to some extent is to say that there comes a time when one ought to diverge from its path. (In this respect, for Kremer's Wittgenstein, solipsism is to the good life as training wheels are to cycling excellence.)

to take care of our soul; and to remember that in the entire world there is only God and the soul; and this is a thing which is very profitable to remember"(Kremer 67-8).

Understanding Kremer, I think, involves reading St Theresa's encouragement to

"remember" one's being alone with God as encouragement to, say, feel alone with God.⁷⁸

Thus, she does not think it profitable to remember a metaphysical truth, but rather to put one's self in a certain state or to have a certain feeling.⁷⁹ According to Kremer, her

recommendation is aimed at those who are still in the midst of spiritual maturation and,

thus, prone to chastise others while not being free of vice themselves. Consider, for

instance, the following advice from St Theresa: "Let us strive, then, always to look at the virtues and the good qualities which we find in others, and to keep our own grievous sins

before our eyes so that we may be blind to [others'] defects"(Kremer 68). On St

Theresa's view, purifying the soul requires a dramatic turning inward. It requires my

adoption of a solipsistic attitude whereby I exempt all others from judgment – I "forget"

about them, as it were, making myself my world – and work on *myself*. Kremer argues it

is this practical solipsism which Wittgenstein recommends to the readers of the

Tractatus; an act of self-improvement which has nothing to do with denying or doubting

the existence of things outside my mind.

⁷⁸ I avoid using expressions such as "picture one's self as alone with God", or "think of one's self as alone with God", which have an inappropriate *intellectual* tone.

⁷⁹ I must admit, however, that it is unclear to me how *feeling a certain way* can count as *remembering*, especially if one never experienced the related feeling in the past.

Since so few classic (or, at least, more orthodox) interpreters of the *Tractatus* read Wittgenstein as interested in practical solipsism, it is natural to ask why we ought to follow Kremer in doing so. Although Kremer cites evidence that Wittgenstein may have seen ethical value in practical solipsism, the data does nothing to connect such a solipsism to the rest of the *Tractatus*.⁸⁰ Indeed, at first, it is unclear how 5.6 ("The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (TLP 5.6)) could have anything to do with Kremer's reinterpretation of 5.62 – that is, his reinterpretation of an elucidation of 5.6. (I cite the original remark for the purpose of comparison):

Wittgenstein's 5.62: This remark provides a key to the question, to what extent solipsism is a truth. In fact what solipsism *means*, is quite correct, only it cannot be *said*, but it shows itself. (TLP 5.62)

Kremer's 5.62: This remark provides the key to the question as to how far solipsism can take us along the path of spiritual and ethical enlightenment. In fact, the intention of solipsism is a good one, but this cannot be communicated through a set of principles, but must be demonstrated in practice. (Kremer 63)

On traditional readings of the *Tractatus*, 5.62 is straightforwardly relevant to 5.6: since there is no world to describe without a language with which to describe, and there is no language without a language user, meaning – and thus, the world – *depends* on the speaker, the necessary-yet-ineffable metaphysical 'I'. But what do language and world

⁸⁰ In particular, Kremer points out Wittgenstein's admiration for Leibniz – who, in turn, admired St Theresa of Avila – and one of Wittgenstein's journal entries, in which he reflects on Nietzsche, ethics, the happy life, Christianity, and solipsism (Kremer 66-67). The evidence suggests Wittgenstein was acquainted with and sympathetic toward solipsistic Christian mysticism.

have to do with the spiritual practice of solipsism? And why does Kremer reject traditional readings of the *Tractatus*?

These two questions must be answered in tandem. To start, Kremer takes issue with traditional readings insofar as they cast Wittgenstein as committing to the existence of "fact-like quasi-truths"(Kremer 61) about the limits of language. Kremer makes a point of identifying himself as writing in the New Wittgensteinian tradition. In particular, he sympathises with Diamond and Conant insofar as all three argue the purpose of the *Tractatus* is not to disclose certain super-truths inaccessible from within language; it is, instead, to *deconstruct* the limits of language, to do away with the metaphysical subject, and enable us to 'go on' (Kremer 62-3). While Diamond and Conant raise arguments against traditional, language-centred interpretations of the *Tractatus*, dealing with the linguistic details of Wittgenstein's deconstruction, Kremer's criticism focuses on an ethical problem with "irresolute" readings. His specific target is James C. Edwards' interpretation of Tractarian ethics, as it is presented in his *Ethics without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life*, which Kremer argues is uncharitable and deeply unWittgensteinian. According to Kremer, Edwards reads the *Tractatus* much as Hacker does, taking ethical meaning to depend on the metaphysical subject. Kremer further claims that, with Hacker's picture in hand, Edwards goes on to accuse Wittgenstein of falling into moral narcissism, glorifying the self by giving it the position of ultimate meaning-maker (Kremer 74). Kremer concludes that accepting a traditional interpretation of the *Tractatus* means accepting a view of logic and language inextricable from Edwards' moral narcissism.

Kremer thinks this consequence can be avoided, however, by interpreting the *Tractatus* as urging us to overcome the limiting metaphysical subject. Although one *commences* her ethical journey by practicing spiritual solipsism, this act of self-mastery culminates with the complete rejection of the metaphysical subject, whereby one "kill[s] the 'I' that recognizes no neighbours"(Kremer 77). Kremer quotes a variety of passages from works of Christian mysticism which capture the spirit of his reading, including the following (from Angelus Silesius' *Cherubinic Wanderer*):

One must be killed
Everything must be slaughtered. If you don't slaughter
yourself for God,
Eternal death in the end will slaughter you for the enemy.
(Kremer 76)

Completely carrying out ethical solipsism does not lead to one's becoming God; it means giving up whatever there is to one's self for the good. Thus, solipsism coincides with realism because the former ends in self-denial; it ends with "the radical undermining and transformation of the very nature of our wanting and willing"(Kremer 75) and with one's limitless being-in-the-world.

Kremer's reading of the *Tractatus* is set apart from others by the distinctive way in which it is sensitive to the ethical dimension of Wittgenstein's work. In the end, more traditional ethical interpretations, such as those given by Martin Stokhof in *World and Life as One* and Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, take the *Tractatus* to be ethical because it *treats* of ethics in some way. Janik and Toulmin, for instance, argue Wittgenstein "attempts to provide a theoretical groundwork for the distinction between . . . the sphere of natural science [and] the sphere of morality"(*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 197): his is presenting a meta-ethical *theory*. But for

Kremer, Wittgenstein was not motivated to write his book in order to communicate ineffable truths about a metaphysical subject and the value it brings to the world; rather, he sought to bring about the good by providing his readers with a spiritual guide. Thus, on Kremer's reading, the *Tractatus* contains none of the "transcendental prattle"(citation) its author so despised. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Kremer's Wittgenstein has, I think, an altogether better understanding of what it means to be a good person than does Edwards' Wittgenstein. On Edwards' reading, Wittgenstein cannot explain, for instance, selfless love for others – everything inevitably comes back to *my* metaphysical self, the value of *my* spirit, and so on. On the other hand, for Kremer, Wittgenstein casts ethically mature persons as genuinely altruistic. I think both of these points make Kremer's reading very attractive. So, should we accept it?

I regret to say we should not, for three reasons. Firstly, Kremer's reading is built on New Wittgensteinian foundations – foundations which, I argued in Chapter 2, are likely dubious. Secondly, I think there is some truth to Edwards' view that Tractarian ethics is self-centred and heroic. Kremer argues it is unreasonable to see Wittgenstein – a man deeply moved by writers such as Tolstoy, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky – as a self-asserting moral narcissist (Kremer 74). Yet Wittgenstein was also deeply critical of himself and those around him and known for his "excessive scrupulosity"(Shields 32). According to Janik and Toulmin, after 1919, Wittgenstein "became a lonely and introverted figure. . . . retreat[ing] more and more into ethical attitudes of extreme individualism and austerity"(*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 177). Moreover, his correspondence with his friends in England suggests that when the First World War broke out, he voluntarily joined the Austrian army because he wanted to "test himself"(Blumenau 197). And when Fania

Pascal once asked him if he wanted to be perfect, he replied, "*Of course* I want to be perfect"(Monk 369). These biographical tidbits suggest Wittgenstein may, indeed, have thought we ought to aim at personal godliness.⁸¹ Lastly, Kremer suspiciously stops quoting Wittgenstein when he begins investigating the ethical significance of "killing" the metaphysical subject. The rationale here, it seems, is that if Wittgenstein sympathizes with (quasi-)religious thinkers, and those thinkers believe truly good people "slaughter themselves for God", Wittgenstein must hold the same view. Yet as Kremer cites no direct textual support for his conclusion, we should take it for what it is – a conjecture which, in light of the countervailing evidence, is probably false.

⁸¹ Note that Janik and Toulmin read Kierkegaard as taking 'true morality' to be arguably solipsistic; on their view, for Kierkegaard, "true morality is asocial, because it consists in an absolutely immediate relationship between each man and God"(Wittgenstein's Vienna 157).

CHAPTER 4: THE EARLY WITTGENSTEIN AND SOLIPSISM

"The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious!"(*Notebooks* 80)

Introduction

In this chapter, I present my interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism in the *Tractatus*. My discussion centres on three questions: was Wittgenstein a solipsist? What kind of solipsism is at stake in the *Tractatus*? And finally, how does Wittgenstein's treatment of solipsism in that text fit with the rest of the book?

The Subject of Solipsism

If we wish to know whether the early Wittgenstein is a solipsist, we must first identify the nature of the subject of the solipsism Wittgenstein explores in the *Tractatus*. In Chapter 2, I argued Wittgenstein draws a distinction between two subjects, the *individual* and *metaphysical* subjects. Along with Pears, Brockhaus, Hacker, and Stokhof, I take Wittgenstein to think the first of these subjects is not philosophically interesting; it is not a genuine subject, but a chimerical pseudo-thing – an *Unding* (*TLP* 5.5421). I also argued the philosophical subject, in its being completely distinguished from the individual subject, is nothing like a person; it does not experience sensations, desires, and so on, but is merely a formal precondition for these. Thus, there is a sense in which the metaphysical subject, on this view, has more in common with a system of rules than it does with a human being. This is not as foreign a way of thinking of the subject as it might seem at first. Hacker (*Insight* 76) and Carruthers (*Carruthers* 82) both liken Wittgenstein's "doctrine" of the metaphysical subject to Kant's unity of apperception, whereby the unification of a subject as a system of laws or judgments is a transcendental

condition of an objective world (Vinci 10). And in "Wittgenstein, the Self, and Ethics",

John C. Kelly explains:

[Wittgenstein's] position is similar to Kant's doctrine of the transcendental unity of apperception. . . . Kant's critical idealism yields a form of realism in which objects of experience exist in a common space and time, and function in accordance with the laws of causality. Similarly, Wittgenstein thinks that solipsism when properly understood also coincides with realism, for the metaphysical subject which constitutes the common logical structure of thought, language, and the world is not an object within the world; rather, Wittgenstein characterizes it as an extensionless point that functions as a limit to the world. Hence, all that exists is the common realm of facts whose boundaries are fixed by the logical structure of language. (Kelly 573)

If we accept this similarity between Wittgenstein's critical solipsism and Kantian idealism, we see why the "all-embracing logic which mirrors the world" (*TLP* 5.511), or logical space, can be identified with an *organizing* subject. (Note that, while Kant's subject is a system of laws of judgment, Wittgenstein's subject is a system of laws governing the totality of Tractarian *Gedanken* and is, accordingly, the logical form of the world.)

Thus, although the world certainly does not depend on the *empirical* subject in any way, the *metaphysical* subject is a necessary precondition for the world. Consequently, insofar as the world cannot exist independently of the latter subject, there is a sense in which solipsism is true of the early Wittgenstein. Yet two concessions must be made immediately. The first is that, even if the world depends on the subject, the subject-as-form cannot exist independently of its objects-as-matter. This follows immediately from the identification of the subject with logical form and the discussion of objects and logical form in Chapter 2. Given that, for Wittgenstein, the logical form of

the world is given by the totality of its objects (*TLP* 5.5561), we cannot make sense of logical form independently of the worldly substance in which it inheres.⁸² Since form and substance rise and fall together, neither has ontological priority.⁸³ I call this the *no-priority concession*.

The second concession we must make is this: insofar as the world depends on a subject which is completely unlike a *person*, Wittgenstein's "solipsism" is quite unlike traditional types of solipsism. Wittgenstein says the solipsist is right, in a sense, but only if she maintains the world depends on a metaphysical subject – not the *individual* subject of experience which usually interests solipsists. Thus, while there is a sense in which Wittgenstein can be said to be a solipsist, as Jaako Hintikka puts it, "[Wittgenstein's] version of solipsism ha[s] little to do with what is ordinarily called 'solipsism'" (Hintikka 91). I call this concession the *no-personality concession*.

Solipsism, Realism, and "Necessity"

The no-priority and no-personality concessions help us understand two of the most problematic features of Wittgenstein's solipsism: why solipsism is a necessity and why solipsism collapses into, or coincides with, realism. First, while Wittgenstein never explicitly discusses the *necessity* of solipsism, this latent necessity does pose a problem

⁸² For connections between this interdependence of form and content and the ontologies of Frege, Plato and Aristotle, see n59-60, pp. 59-60 of this thesis.

⁸³ It is especially interesting that this hanging-together of subject and object bears a striking similarity to the primacy of representation in Schopenhauer's philosophy. In *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, Janik and Toulmin explain that Schopenhauer, in taking representation as a point of departure, never loses sight of the fact that subject and object are "reciprocal *limits* of the world as representation" (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 153).

for *Tractatus* interpreters. For we usually think of the truth of (metaphysical) solipsism as being contingent; the world could have been (or is) such that I would be (or am) the only thing in it, but it could also have been (or could be) such that some of its parts would be (or are), ontologically speaking, completely independent of me. We know, however, that for Wittgenstein, since solipsism shows itself (*TLP* 5.62), all contingent possible facts can be asserted, and "what *can* be shown *cannot* be said"(4.1212). It seems Wittgenstein must accept that solipsism, if it is "true" to any extent, it is necessarily so. What I take to be the sort of solipsism which is "true" for Wittgenstein is obviously *not contingently so*. For if what Wittgenstein's solipsist tries to say is, ultimately, just that the world must have a structure, then this goes without saying – by the *Tractatus*, it could not possibly be false. (Note, however, that the solipsist's claim is not a tautology; instead, as a nonsensical pseudo-proposition aiming at saying something about the logical underpinnings of the world, it is interestingly similar to the *Tractatus*' remarks.) Thus the present reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism squares nicely with the "necessity" of Wittgensteinian solipsism.

I mentioned my reading also helps to explain why Wittgenstein takes his solipsism to coincide with pure realism (*TLP* 5.64). It is easy to show this is the case if we think of the realist as resisting the thesis that the world's possibilities are *my* possibilities because "my" inappropriately imposes a restriction on logical space. But if "my" possibilities are *the* possibilities – if we identify the subject with logical space – the conflict between realism and solipsism disappears. In Chapter 3, I show Carruthers explains the realism-solipsism coincidence in just this way. Recall that Carruthers argues the metaphysical subject is not the subject of thoughts in the psychological-conceptual or

experiential sense of the word; rather, it is the subject of logical-conceptual Tractarian *Gedanken*. Such a subject, once it is completely distinguished from the individual subject, is acknowledged as empirically empty and thus "shrinks to an extensionless point"(5.64) limiting a purely formal space in which thought-possibilities can obtain. As there is an inevitable one-to-one correspondence between thought-possibilities and world-possibilities, solipsism and realism coincide.⁸⁴

An Objection and Reply

My reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism depends on my taking Wittgenstein's metaphysical subject to have no experiences; to be unable to will one thing as opposed to another; and to have no perspective on the world. Consequently, I anticipate objections along the following lines. A central issue one faces when interpreting the 5.6s involves explaining why Wittgenstein so boldly claims that "I am my world"(*TLP* 5.63), that "world and life are one"(5.621), and that "what solipsism means, is quite correct"(5.62). The question is: why does Wittgenstein think *the subject is the (limit of the) world?*⁸⁵ Of course, one can cast Wittgenstein's "subject" as being nothing like a subject; one can maintain, for instance, that Wittgenstein's subject is really just the totality of logical-linguistic possibilities, which makes solipsism vacuously true.

⁸⁴ Moreover, consider the following passage from the *Notebooks*: "Now it is becoming clear why I thought that thinking and language were the same. For thinking is a kind of language. For a thought too is, of course, a logical picture of the proposition, and therefore *it is just a kind of proposition*"(*Notebooks* 82, my emphasis).

⁸⁵ Recall Pears' note that, in the 5.6s, "'the world' does not mean 'all the facts', but 'all the possibilities'"(*False Prison* 174).

But in its taking Wittgenstein to use 'subject' as a term of art, such an interpretation loses its explanatory power. Any reading which suggests that, whenever Wittgenstein says 'metaphysical subject', he really means 'logical form', does not get to the heart of the matter. For what *Tractatus* readers really want to know is how the early Wittgenstein (if he is a solipsist) can think something we *intuitively recognize as a subject* – an experiencing, willing subject with a perspective on the world – constitutes the world. Otherwise, the 5.6s have no bearing on the traditional philosophical question of solipsism.

I wish to begin by first pointing out that this objection would be a little stronger if Wittgenstein abstained from use of technical terms in the *Tractatus*. He does not; terms like 'thing', 'object', 'world', 'fact', and 'picture' are regarded as technical terms on most readings of his text. Thus, while this is a minor point, it at least makes it easier to accept my claim that Wittgenstein uses the word 'subject' in a special way.

My more substantive reply to this objection focuses on issues concerning the subject's relation to experience and willing. Consider the following entry from

Wittgenstein's *Notebooks*:

Is belief a kind of experience?
Is thought a kind of experience?
All experience is world and does not need the subject.
(*Notebooks* 89)

Let us leave aside Wittgenstein's interest in belief and thought. What is striking about the preceding passage is Wittgenstein's claim that *experience does not need the subject*. If there is no *need* for a subject of experience, *is* there such a thing? I am inclined to think Wittgenstein would say there is not. This is because we can make sense of beliefs, thoughts and experiences, as factual phenomena, without positing a "simple soul" (*TLP*

5.5421), a Cartesian *res cogitans*, to which such mental events are ascribed.

Consequently, as Hacker, Pears, and Brockhaus argue, Wittgenstein thinks there is no "thinking, presenting subject"(5.631) for the reasons he gives in the 5.6s.

What is crucial here, however, is that Wittgenstein thinks the *Undinglichkeit* (for lack of a better term, the 'unobjectuality') of the subject of experience, belief and thought does not entail that there is no philosophically interesting subject. For there is

a sense in which in philosophy we can talk of a non-psychological I. . . . The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit—not a part of the world. (*TLP* 5.641)

What I want to argue is that this philosophical I, at least insofar as it is dealt with in the 5.6s, is whatever is left of the I as an essentially linguistic subject if it is stripped of all contingent restrictions on its expressive power. In Chapter 2, I argued Wittgenstein's eye analogy aimed to show the geometrical eye (to borrow some *Blue Book* terminology) – whatever is essentially sighted – cannot be represented within the visual field because it constitutes that space. Analogously, the (linguistic) metaphysical subject cannot be represented within thought or experience because it constitutes that proposition-space. This brings us to an identification of subject with logical form and, as I mentioned previously, it is then a short step to solipsism; as Hintikka puts it,

Having identified the metaphysical subject with the totality of one's language and the limits of language with the limits of the world, [Wittgenstein] could say that the limits of the (metaphysical) subject are the limits of the world. (Hintikka 91)

Although such a subject is not the subject of thought and experience, I think we now have good grounds for thinking Wittgenstein's solipsistic remarks concern the former subject, not the latter.

The Metaphysical Subject of Ethics

As I have only dealt with the metaphysical subject of solipsism as a linguistic subject so far, we now turn to the metaphysical subject as ethical will. At 6.423, Wittgenstein distinguishes "the will as the subject of the ethical" – a philosophically interesting willing subject – from "the will as phenomenon [which] is only of interest to psychology" (*TLP* 6.423). What is the relationship between the former willing subject and solipsism? We know, for instance, that if the I of solipsism is the linguistic subject, solipsism is true because there can be no world without logical form. Furthermore, recall Hacker and Brockhaus' claim that the willing subject brings both linguistic and ethical meaning to the world. I have already discussed the sense in which the world depends on the linguistic meaning provided by the subject. What remains to be discussed is what the ethical subject could possibly be, and whether it is a second transcendental condition of the world.

In Chapter 2, I mentioned that the Wittgenstein of the *Notebooks* thinks that seeing the world as (absolutely) valuable involves, or may just be, belief in God. Indeed, various passages from the *Notebooks*, the "Lecture on Ethics", the "Notes on Talks" with Schlick and Waismann, and the *Tractatus* suggest Wittgenstein thinks God gives the world value and that there is a "world soul" (*Notebooks* 85) or "world-will" (85). Many interpreters agree that Wittgenstein connects and even identifies ethical value with God. When Michael Hymers asks what Wittgenstein takes to be the transcendental ground of

ethical value, he says: "The answer that Wittgenstein gave in his 'Lecture on Ethics' . . . is the 'absolute good' or 'absolute value' (but, I think, we could easily and accurately say God)"(Hymers 48); Martin Stokhof claims that, for Wittgenstein, "God's Will . . . can be equated with the absolute good"(Stokhof 215); and interpreters John Kelly and Philip Shields think Wittgensteinian ethical value can perhaps best be understood from a religious point of view (Kelly 576, Shields 31-51). I follow these interpreters in thinking we should read Wittgenstein as taking the metaphysical subject of ethics to be God; that is, for the ethical will to be God's will. I wish to examine two ways in which we can make sense of such a will. We will see also see that although each of these ways of understanding value in terms of God's will has its limitations, both are compatible with the solipsism of the ethical subject.

The first way of looking at God's will is inspired by Hymers' treatment of Tractarian transcendentalism in *Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy*. Hymers notes that Wittgenstein may have taken logic and ethics both to be transcendental insofar as "logic and ethics are both *normative*"(Hymers 47). If we take ethics primarily to involve norms, then the ethical subject could be said to bring *unified ethical form* to the world similarly to the way in which the metaphysical subject "fills the world"(TLP 5.61) with logic.⁸⁶ God brings such a form to the world by, as it were, embodying the network of ethical obligations, permissions and prohibitions which govern our moral lives. I think

⁸⁶ Note that Kelly thinks that ethical pluralism is possible, here, with a variety of subjects giving rise to different ethical forms.

this view is attractive partly because it takes the ethical subject to make a similar contribution to the world as I have argued the linguistic subject does: by providing a unified, necessary, principled transcendental ground for meaning.⁸⁷ Just like the logical form of the world, which takes care of itself (*Notebooks 2, TLP 5.473*) and does not depend on some further fact, the ethical form of the world "has nothing to do with facts" ("Notes on Talks" 15) and is what it is "because God wills it"(15).

On this first characterization of the ethical will, the will is static. Another way of understanding God's will is as a dynamic, unfolding world-soul: the sort of will involved in *action*. Stokhof identifies this species of will as the metaphysical willing subject, proceeding along a Schopenhauerian line. According to Schopenhauer – who, Stokhof notes, had an important influence on Wittgenstein, especially in the *Notebooks* – we are acquainted with ourselves in two completely different ways. On one hand, I can know my mental phenomena and my body as I know those of other human beings: as objects among one another in the world. On the other hand, I can also know myself "'from the inside', so to speak"(Stokhof 195), whereby I experience myself "as will, as a force, a drive that results in externally observable actions and events, but that cannot be equated with them"(195). As this will is not an object in the world, there is a sense in which it is unique and has no neighbours. And while I am acquainted with this noumenal will by

⁸⁷ In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein maintains "Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic"(*Notebooks 77*).

observing its "effects" on my mind and body, there is no reason to connect the will to my body instead of the world as a whole; for he who realizes

[t]he human body . . . my body in particular, is a part of the world among others, among animals, plants, stones, etc. . . . will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body. He will regard humans and animals quite naïvely as objects which are similar and which belong together. (*Notebooks* 82)

Consequently, as David Pears points out, "[w]ith no empirical criterion of individuation, the ego will be spread over everything"(*False Prison* 171).⁸⁸ Thus Wittgenstein's ethical willing subject can be seen as a single world-will, spreading over and permeating everything, much like a Spinozan God in which everything participates. Such a God would, according to Wittgenstein, "simply be fate"(*Notebooks* 74).

It seems to me we are justified in ascribing either of these competing views to Wittgenstein on the basis of his writings, but both seem problematic. If God's will is the norms of absolute value and such a will is the *only* ethical will, then how can *I* do good or evil? (Indeed, how can any genuine *actions* take place in the world if the only "will" is a set of principles?) At first, it may seem this problem is solved if we conceive of the subject of ethics as an active, living world-soul instead. Yet this presents an issue, too, because I lose responsibility if I am but a participant in a global world-soul. (How could I do any wrong, for example, if I were always, in a sense, doing the will of God?) In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein considers living happily to mean agreeing with the will of God

⁸⁸ Note, however, that Pears thinks this is part of a *reductio ad absurdum* showing there can be no such ego.

(75). On the first view, this would mean shaping one's life around the norms set by God; on the second, it would mean accepting whatever facts happen to obtain in the world. But in either case, we are still left wondering whether first-person terms have meaning in an ethical context. Put otherwise, we are at a loss when we ask *who* is to agree with God's will. And in logical-linguistic contexts, too; for, intuitively, I myself am nothing like logical form or language, and this seems to paradoxically drop out of Tractarian solipsism. This issue is a variation on the objection I considered in the last section: how can Wittgenstein be a solipsist for whom *I* am not at the centre of the world?

Experience and "Experience"

I think this issue can be suitably addressed by recalling the investigative approach Wittgenstein takes in the *Tractatus*. Two questions the *Tractatus* addresses are: what makes language possible? What makes ethics possible? It is crucial to note that this sort of investigation takes as its starting point, on the linguistic side, that there are propositions, and, on the ethical side, that there is absolute value.⁸⁹ For Wittgenstein, my acquaintance with propositions and the valuable world depends on two confrontations with the world as a *whole*. The linguistic and ethical confrontations are, respectively, "[t]he 'experience' which we need to understand logic" (*TLP* 5.552) and "[t]he feeling of

⁸⁹ It is, perhaps, a contentious claim that Wittgenstein assumes the world is valuable. Stokhof, for instance, thinks Wittgenstein "had experiences, in the wider sense of that term, in which the ethical dimension of the world . . . proved itself real to [him]" (Stokhof 240). Kelly claims "the question of the meaning of life was an intensely personal and troubling one for Wittgenstein" (Kelly 568). It is unclear whether Kelly's claim conflicts with Stokhof's: it would if Kelly means Wittgenstein was deeply worried about the possible meaninglessness of the world.

the world as a limited whole [or] the mystical feeling"(6.45). 5.552 is worth quoting at length:

The 'experience' which we need to understand logic is not that such and such is the case, but that something *is*; but that is *no* experience.
Logic *precedes* every experience—that something is *so*.
It is before the How, not before the What. (5.552)

The logical "experience" is not a genuine experience because experiences are of intrinsically contingent facts; they are experiences of things being one way as opposed to another. Recall that, for Wittgenstein, "no part of our experience is a priori. Everything we see could also be otherwise. Everything we can describe at all could also be otherwise"(5.634). But the "experience" that something is – one's "confrontation with being"(Stokhof 197) – cannot be otherwise, as there is no possible experience of non-being. (Note, also, that the picture theory precludes expression of such an "experience".) Furthermore, in the "Lecture on Ethics", Wittgenstein provides examples of "experiences" of the world as valuable which are strikingly similar to the logical "experience". He maintains one falls into nonsense in trying to express anything about, for example, the miraculous existence of the world:

If I say "I wonder at the existence of the world" I am misusing language. Let me explain this: It has a perfectly good and clear sense to say that I wonder at something being the case, we all understand what it means to say that I wonder at the size of a dog which is bigger than anyone I have ever seen before or at any thing which, in the common sense of the word, is extraordinary. In every such case I wonder at something being the case which I could conceive not to be the case. I wonder at the size of this dog because I could conceive of a dog of another, namely the ordinary size, at which I should not wonder. To say "I wonder at such and such being the case" has only sense if I can imagine it not to be the case. . . . But it is nonsense to say

that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing. ("A Lecture" 8-9)

Wittgenstein draws attention to these ineffable "experiences" of the world as a whole, the transcendental conditions for linguistic and ethical meaning. (Note, however, that the difference between the logical and ethical experiences is a difference in one's attitude toward the world. Such an attitude is not a fact of the world; rather, it concerns its limits.)

I submit that these "experiences" are the key to understanding the role played by *me* in the "truth" of Tractarian solipsism. More precisely, these "experiences" show that I play a role as the willing subject who brings structure to the world. For Wittgenstein, I think, facts cannot provide structure because facts are not norms; they carry no imperative force. This explains why the *Tractatus* tells us that facts in the world decide neither logical (*TLP* 5.551) nor ethical matters (*TLP* 6.41): both logic and ethics are norm-governed, and norms are laid down not by the world, but by a *subject*. By this, I do not mean that, in seeing an expression as meaningful (for example), I employ rules independent of me in order to make a proposition of a factual sign in the same way I would use scissors to cut a string. The point of Wittgenstein's eye analogy and argument rejecting the individual subject is that the subject is not some object over and above the willed meaningfulness of the propositional sign. In other words, *the subject just is the use of a certain structuring system*. Thus, while there is a very special sense in which the metaphysical subject has a will, this will does not cause certain events to take place in the world; it does not change the facts. As the metaphysical subject, I am the power to see things in two particular ways: as linguistically and as ethically meaningful.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to show, *pace* David Pears and Richard Brockhaus, that the early Wittgenstein subscribes to an unusual solipsism whereby the world depends on a metaphysical willing subject which generates – and can be identified with – logical space (as a linguistic subject) and ethical meaning (as an ethical subject.) The position I argued for borrows and differs from a variety of *Tractatus* readings, particularly those given by Peter Carruthers, Jaako Hintikka, Martin Stokhof, John C. Kelly, Michael Hymers, Richard Brockhaus, Peter Hacker, and David Pears. On the basis of Wittgenstein's eye analogy in the 5.6s, I maintained (like Carruthers, Hintikka, and Stokhof) that Wittgenstein's early remarks on solipsism concern a metaphysical subject which (from the linguistic side) has more in common with language and logic than with a human, individual subject. I also argued Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* suggest he was committed to an ethical solipsism as well, where we can take the ethical subject to be synonymous with absolute value or God's will. I developed two possible ways in which the metaphysical subject could be identified with God's will (inspired by Hymers and Stokhof, respectively): as a static network of norms and as a world-will. Finally, I argued one has first-hand "experience" of the metaphysical subject of solipsism insofar as one sees the world as ethically valuable or as the subject of propositions, and that the metaphysical subject just is the (possibility of) those "experiences". Since these "experiences" are not (and cannot be) experiences of contingent phenomena, by the picture theory, their content cannot be truthful. Consequently, while Wittgenstein thinks the extent to which solipsism is true is *shown* by these "experiences", it cannot be said (*TLP* 5.62).

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