THE ETHICAL PURPOSE OF WITTGENSTEIN’S TRACTATUS LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS

A Thesis in
Philosophy
by
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop an account of the ethical purpose of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. I argue that the primary ethical concern in the work (exhibited most fully at 6.3751-6.3752) is with our tendency to reduce to humans to “what can be said,” i.e., to the facts that science makes available to us. In doing this, we run the risk of ignoring the transcendent and transient dimensions of human existence, i.e., that that can only be shown and the fact that things can be other than what we anticipate. Given Wittgenstein’s concern with this risk, I argue that the ethical purpose of the work is to help us to attend to what can be gathered from looking closely at the world as it is, since doing so will (he believes) lead us to recognize the marks of transcendence and transience that make us human. In developing this argument, I reject two current strains of interpretation. First, I reject the “ineffabilist” reading of the *Tractatus*, according to which its ethical purpose requires that we posit both ethical value and the will as metaphysical, nonnatural entities. Second, I reject the “resolute” reading of the *Tractatus*, according to which all talk of ethics is pure nonsense. Finally, I reject the implication (found in both readings) that Wittgenstein endorsed a form of moral quietism that would have us acquiesce to the world as it is and maintain literal silence on ethical matters. Instead, I argue that Wittgenstein offers us a project of committed, intentional, discursive engagement with ourselves and others in order to make the world better than it is.
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INTRODUCTION

In his preface to the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein describes his project as one in which the problems of philosophy are solved and in which a limit to the expression of thoughts is drawn. It would seem that the activity by which these limits are drawn is nothing other than philosophy. Further, it would seem that this philosophical activity of drawing limits solves the problems of philosophy. Philosophy, then, can solve its problems through its own activity. It is not clear if its problems are of its own making (such that its activity paradoxically solves the very problems it creates) or if the problems come from elsewhere but are taken up by philosophy (such that philosophy’s problems are not of its own making). In either case, it is also not clear what, exactly, is drawn when these limits are drawn. These limits are further perplexing in that we do not know how they are drawn. And if we did know that, we would still be forced to wonder how this drawing solves the problems of philosophy, especially since Wittgenstein says that when all questions have been answered these problems have not been touched. How, then, do we touch them?

The standard elements of what we can immediately say here are well known. In order to draw the limit, Wittgenstein provides the conditions for the possibility of any determinate expression. These conditions are found in his logical atomism and picture theory of meaning. The logical atomism provides the necessary ontology, the picture theory provides the necessary semantics, and the general form of proposition provides the necessary syntax. Taken together, what they show is that most of the problems of philosophy are nonsense: they merely appear to pose questions capable of being
answered, when in fact the questions say nothing at all. Philosophical activity can expose this nonsense, so that the problems vanish and are thus seen to need no answer.

There is, however, much that is deeply unsatisfying in this account. First, this account still leaves open the questions of what exactly is being drawn and how exactly the illusory problems are touched upon so that they vanish (and how those problems arise repeatedly in the first place). Further, this account seems to stand against our own experience: we struggle every day with problems that seem to be deep and philosophical in nature, and in the decades of analysis since the *Tractatus* was written, there seems to be little sign of them vanishing. Can we get some sense of what this solving-vanishing would be like? We might think of this in terms of the demands a problem makes upon us. With respect to basic problems such as feeding ourselves, we solve the problem by finding a way to procure food. With respect to questions that need answers, we find the answer to the question, as we do with, say, problems on a mathematics exam that tests our knowledge of mathematics. The problem of getting food is thus solved by actually getting food; the problems on the exam are solved by giving the correct answer. However, we do not typically try to solve a problem by coming to see it from a perspective in which the problem simply vanishes. If I were to see the problem of obtaining food as a matter of seeing how there really is no need for food, or if I were to see the problems on the mathematics exam as if they were no problems at all, I would most likely starve (in the first case) or fail the exam (in the second). I would not, in other words, come to see that there really is no problem. Thus, solving a problem through seeing it vanish – through coming to see it in such a way that we see that it does not actually exist – is not the most common way to solve problems. (In fact, such an
approach to problems is more often associated with denial and the compounding of problems).

Wittgenstein calls the vanishing problems of philosophy the “problems of life” (6.52). Insofar as “[t]he world and life are one” (5.621) and “I am my world” (5.63), the problems seem to be mine, if not me. There is something the matter with me or perhaps with what I do. The concern with who or how I am and what I do is a large part of what ethics is (insofar as ethics is the study of who I ought to be or what I ought to do). That Wittgenstein believed his work had an ethical purpose along these lines seems clear, but what this purpose is remains murky. The evidence in support of the claim that he believed in such a purpose is found in letters (in particular the letter to Ludwig von Ficker in which Wittgenstein wrote that “der Sinn des Buches ist ein Ethischer”), his early Notebooks, and the Tractatus itself, which ends by discussing various issues that are often grouped together under the heading “the mystical part of the Tractatus.”

The phrase “mystical” aptly captures the challenges in articulating what the ethical purpose of the Tractatus might be. The mystical is defined by Wittgenstein as the inexpressible: it cannot be said but it can show itself. It would seem then that we ought to be silent about such things; however, Wittgenstein appears to speak of the mystical as if something could be said. In speaking of it, he seems prima facie to violate his claim that we cannot speak about it; and if he is correct about it, then what he is saying is nonsense, but if what he is saying is nonsense, then there is no sense in which what he says could be “correct.” This apparent paradox has vexed commentators since philosophers such as
G.E.M. Anscombe, Erik Stenius, and Eddy Zemach first turned their attention to it in earnest (or at least in print) in the 1960s.¹

There have been three general responses to this mystical (and in particular to the ethical) part of the *Tractatus.*² In a simplified fashion, they could be put as follows:

Some, such as the logical positivists, believed that the mystical part was, if not the result of youthful exuberance, then at least metaphysically strange and dispensable within a revised philosophical system. Such a reading, of course, does not do justice to the text. Such justice began to arrive in the 1960s, with the publication of the *Notebooks 1914-1916,* book-length introductions to the *Tractatus* by Anscombe and Stenius, a companion to the *Tractatus* by Max Black, and an essay on the mystical part by Zemach (in an Irving Copi-edited anthology of essays on the *Tractatus*). With these authors an appropriate, if at times mistaken, ineffabilist reading took shape. According to this reading, the mystical part is an extension of the earlier part of the *Tractatus,* and the mystical notions (such as value) are ineffable aspects of existence that can be shown but not said. However, in this approach the mystical is still treated as something metaphysically strange. Further, insofar as it leads many commentators to the conclusion that a tractarian ethics requires a quietist acceptance of the world as it is, it seems to belie the value of Wittgenstein’s own efforts insofar as he seeks to demonstrate our illusions to us (and so not accept the world as it is).³ A slightly more pragmatic reading of the ethical purpose emerged in the 1990s

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¹ Anscombe’s *An Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus* actually first appeared in 1959, followed by a second edition in 1963.
² Indeed, as will become clear throughout the dissertation, one cannot discuss the ethical aspects and notions of the *Tractatus* without also discussing the “mystical part” of the text as a whole.
³ Explicit examples of such quietism are found in Anscombe 1959, Stenius, Zemach, P.M.S. Hacker 1972, James Edwards, Michael Hodges 1990, Richard Brockhaus, and Martin Stokhof. All argue that the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus* is to show us that we must quiet our desires and accept the world as it is. Cora Diamond, surprisingly, makes a similar argument, insofar as she claims that the ethical lesson of
with the New Wittgenstein of Cora Diamond and others. As has been well-documented, there are serious flaws in the interpretive approach of these proponents (in particular the claim that Wittgenstein did not, in essence, mean what he said), but their attempt to treat the *Tractatus* as less metaphysically strange and more pragmatic is encouraging.

In what follows, I take it as a fact that Wittgenstein did mean what he said and saw value as being inexpressible and transcendent in the limited tractarian sense of not being an object or a fact in the world. However, there is much that can still be shown in what we say and gathered from looking at the world (such as the form of things or that something is), and the “experience” needed to see this does not require that we posit non-natural entities or faculties of intuition.\(^4\) Further, approaching the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus* in this way opens up the possibility that a tractarian ethics is much more engaged with the world and with purposeful action than previously acknowledged. My task, then, is to accept the ineffability of value while showing how this entails something positive for us to do rather than just acquiesce to the world as it is (especially a world in which others deny the possibilities available to us). Simply put, the argument that I will make is that the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus* is to get us to attend to what can be gathered from looking closely at the world as it is, since doing so will lead us to recognize the marks of transcendence and transience that make us human.

This is not to say that Wittgenstein himself put things this way. In fact, one might say that his concern is with the philosophical I (the transcendental subject) and its\(^4\)  

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Wittgenstein’s tractarian thinking is that we must not make demands on the world. I will argue that this attribution of quietism is mistaken.  

\(^4\) The use of scare quotes to convey an experience that is in fact no experience is Wittgenstein’s (5.552). He also uses the word “pseudo” when speaking of that that appears to be something that it is actually not, as with pseudo-propositions, concepts, and relations. I make use of the scare quotes to speak of other things that appear as what they cannot actually be, such as “necessity” (that is not logical necessity) and certain “facts” (that appear to be what *must* be the case but are not actually states of affairs (actual or even possible) in the world).
happiness and not with the embodied agent and his/her struggles for a happy life. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein does address himself to “those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it – or similar thoughts” (27) and his method requires that we “always” address “someone [who] wished to say something metaphysical” (6.53). The subject does not think and it does not speak; thus, I take his concern – those to whom he address this work with a supposed ethical purpose – to be with other embodied human agents, and I believe that his ethical purpose can be clarified if we take up the issue of how transcendence and transience (as presented by the tractarian philosopher) are related to what Wittgenstein calls “the world of the happy” (6.43). Transcendence and transience are vital to who we are insofar as we are not reducible to facts (i.e., to scientific description) and are able to describe facts and states of affairs in ways that open us up to the recognition of the limits of such description, the possibility that what we describe can always be otherwise, and the value of such recognizing these limits and possibilities. At the same time, we cannot dispense with a clear view of the world as it is, as an illusory view is more likely to leave us susceptible to denials of transcendence and transience. It will also render us incapable of recognizing what Wittgenstein calls “the task” (die Aufgabe) that the world provides for me (6.4321).
Preview of the Individual Chapters:

The dissertation proceeds in two parts, consisting altogether of nine chapters. The first part deals with a non-mystical issue in the *Tractatus* that most clearly ties the non-mystical or “early” part of the *Tractatus* to the mystical part: the subject. Given the early parts of the *Tractatus*, it follows that there is no thinking subject and no subject in the world; the subject is instead a limit of the world (5.631-2). Further, there is an extent to which solipsism is true, insofar as the world is my world (5.62). P.M.S. Hacker has argued that this solipsism is the only route from the early to the mystical parts. While I do not know if this is in fact the case, and while I believe that Hacker misinterprets tractarian solipsism, this is the route that I take to the mystical parts. I take this route because interpretation of the mystical part of the *Tractatus* hinges on the relationship between the subject and the will. But I also believe that the crucial role played by a proper understanding of the subject goes deeper than that: it requires a reform of our view of ourselves that sets up in important ways our ability to gather what a tractarian ethics might look like.

In Part One, then, there are three chapters that develop the tractarian notion of the subject. I begin in Chapter One with the introduction of the tractarian subject in 5.5421 as a comment on the nonexistence of propositional attitudes, such as belief that a proposition is true. Such attitudes seem *prima facie* to provide a “belief function” that violates the thesis of extensionality, according to which propositions are truth-functions of the simpler propositions out of which they are built. This objection to tractarian truth-extensionality is introduced in 5.541 and is rebutted in 5.542; the three comments on

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5 The “early” part of the *Tractatus* is that part that deals with its logic, semantics, and ontology. Typically, this is simply everything before 6.41, although I do not attempt to argue that a specific proposition provides a demarcation between the two “parts.”
5.542 (5.5421-3) spell out the consequences of this rebuttal, which require that we reject the “ordinary” conceptions of the subject and belief. The first chapter explains the rebuttal, the notion of (propositional) belief that it entails, and the first consequence of this notion, which is that there is no subject as commonly conceived, i.e., no subject that asserts or thinks or projects. The subject “withdraws” (so to speak) from the world, and this will change how it is that we come to understand ourselves: in particular, we are no longer seen as having special and immediate access to an introspective realm of thoughts; further, self-discovery will become a matter of more fully discovering my world and my ability to voice it. I then develop the role that the subject plays as a condition for the possibility of determinate meaning: the tractarian claims that if such meaning is to be possible, it must be that there are some facts within the world (such as spoken words, written signs, or firing neurons) that can picture other such facts. Without this “givenness,” I cannot have a world about which I think.

In Chapter Two, I further develop the tractarian notion of the subject by turning to the 5.6s and tractarian solipsism. I argue that this solipsism is related to the way in which the subject provides for the unity of the world as “my world” and for the way in which we can see and make sense of the experience of others. Hacker and, following him, Severin Schroeder, treat the solipsism to be primarily an issue of the inaccessibility of the

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6 I take Wittgenstein to be at times critiquing views he took to be “ordinary,” meaning that they are views typically held by the average, “everyday” person (who may in fact be another philosopher). I put the word in scare quotes to acknowledge the fact that what is “ordinary” is a perhaps a matter of Wittgenstein’s perspective and the time at which he wrote. I believe that both Russell and Schopenhauer provide a model for making such a distinction and for using philosophy to critique “ordinary,” “common sense,” or even “superficial” views in order to reveal the errors of such views in ways that lead to challenging insights into our existence.

7 Such belief is, I will argue, a specification of whether I take a proposition to be true or false. Belief in this propositional sense can be specified in various ways (as when I state that I take (or another takes) a proposition as true or when I mark (or another marks) a proposition with “T” (or some such sign)). Beliefs can also be shown in/by what we do, and so there is also a dispositional sense of belief, but when we try to describe the beliefs implicit in the dispositions of ourselves and others, we once again run into the problem with propositional beliefs.
experience of others. However, given the tractarian distinction between experience (of facts in the world) and “experience” (of what can be gathered from what is shown), it is clear that others can share their experience with me by describing it in propositions and, further, that I can see that they too approach their world as (from their perspective) my world. Hacker and Schroeder also miss the ethical implications of this solipsism (in large part because they misread Arthur Schopenhauer’s view on solipsism and its influence on Wittgenstein): solipsism is a view fit for the madhouse, and in denying reality to others, the solipsist denies the possibility of ethical value insofar as the denial of the reality of others is to deny my world as it is. (The connection of others to my world and to ethical value will be developed in the second part of the dissertation.)

The real lesson of solipsism is, then, that my experience is no more propositionally real than yours, but I can see that you, like me, are subject to a unified world of experiences that you attempt to think and even communicate. And since the world is composed of your experiences, understanding the world involves understanding your experiences, which are available to me only in language. Likewise, I exist for you only in this manner. Thus, for the tractarian, language (or at least some form of picturing) is crucial to our encounters with each other: it marks our potential separation from other persons and the world and, therefore, from ourselves (since I am my world), and I can only overcome such separation if I attend fully to the world and to a clarification of what is being said (or pictured in some fashion) by me and by others. Doing this brings us closer to each other and to the world as it is (and thus to ourselves).

*The term “language” is perhaps too restrictive here: your experiences are available to me not simply through language but through any (tractarian) picturing. Thus, for instance, non-linguistic images could be use to share experience insofar as they enable us to picture what is the case.*
In Chapter Three I continue to develop the tractarian reform of how we understand ourselves and our relations to each other as I return to the 5.54s and follow out the other two consequences of 5.542: that it is impossible to judge a nonsense and that what we talk of as “seeing as” is really seeing two different facts. At issue is the vital role that what I can say plays in my encounter with the world, myself, and others as I struggle to exercise my ability to overcome the way in which I and my world (which I am) can be withdrawn from my understanding and at odds with the world as it is. There is thus the possibility of fundamental alienation within a person, among persons, and between a person and the world; the tractarian philosopher’s aim is to encourage an attempt to say more and to say it better through attending more fully to the facts of the world that we find and to the sense of what I say and what is shown in my saying it.9 I am subject, then, to a limited world that is given to me in language, and my task (if I wish to understand it) requires as a preliminary that I recognize it as fully as possible. This process of attending to my world – of attending to what is possible and what is shown within it – is an empirical process, such that my chances of success are not guaranteed and, given the contingent nature of the world, never likely to come to an end.

In Part Two, I build on this interpretation of the tractarian subject and the reform of our “ordinary” understanding of ourselves in order to elucidate the tractarian notions of the will and value. A common move at this point is to identify the subject with a willing subject that takes up an attitude toward the world; this attitude is then treated as the “value that has value” mentioned in remark 6.41. In order to understand this common

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9 In what follows, I make frequent mention of “the tractarian philosopher” and “the tractarian” insofar as I am interested not simply in what the early Wittgenstein believed or intended or meant but also in how one would approach the world is s/he took the *Tractatus* to be, as Wittgenstein claimed, “unassailable and definitive” in its truth (Preface).
move, I offer a reading of the earliest attempts to grapple with the mystical parts of the Tractatus, addressing Anscombe and Stenius in Chapter Four and Zemach in Chapter Five. (All three endorse a form of the ineffabilist reading of the Tractatus.) In the process, I develop the notion of experience and “experience” and lay out the fundamental role of the unassailable (das Unantastbares), which is introduced in remark 6.371 (shortly before (or even as the beginning of) the mystical part of the Tractatus). The notion of the unassailable will turn out to be crucial for understanding the ethical purpose of the Tractatus, especially insofar as Wittgenstein will speak of the dangerous temptation to treat the world as reducible to facts, such that one might believe science is able to explain everything. To do this is to deny the transcendental aspects of existence, which make my world (and so me) possible. Further, to deny the (tractarian) transcendental is to deny ourselves the “experience” that is vital to an ethical encounter with ourselves and others: such an encounter is not possible if we treat ourselves or others as reducible to facts and so deny not just our transcendence but also the “fact” that things can always be otherwise. Ethical action will thus be in large part an attempt to resist such reduction and to bring about recognition of the dangers of it. And, as will be seen in the closing chapters, a willing subject is not necessary to account for such action.

The identification of will and subject depends almost entirely on the use of the Notebooks. However, in the final entries on the will in the Notebooks, Wittgenstein seems to find no reason for a willing subject, finding that the notion of “my world” is sufficient. The key entry, on 4.11.16, is easily the longest on the mystical notions that occupy the second half of 1916. In Chapter Six I offer a close reading of these entries and the two following (on 9.11.16 and 19.11.16) in order to show how Wittgenstein came to conclude
that the will is neither a cause nor an attitude but rather an “accompaniment” of what I do, one that makes me feel responsible for what I do, individuating the world as mine, such that the notion of “my world” is sufficient for what we would like to say with the notion of a “willing subject”.

The crucial role that we might have expected the will to play in the *Tractatus* is instead performed by the notion of “a value which is of value [ein Wert, der Wert hat]” (6.41). We might expect such a notion to vanish upon tractarian analysis, since such value is not something that can be found in the world. However, the opposite is the case, and I turn in Chapter Seven to the interaction of Nora and Torvald, the married couple in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, by way of illustration. Value will function as something that claims me when I respond to the world, such that I can be said to be at the mercy of something beyond what can be said (a task and the value of my performance of it) that nonetheless claims me. We see this when Nora comes to see facts that she did not previously know: her world changes, and as a result what she must do changes. Confronted by Torvald, she finds that she must attempt to convey her “experience” to another. Such value pseudo-experience serves to reinforce Nora’s uncanny sense that, doll-like, she does not have a will that is a causal force or an attitude that she can control, since it does not seem that value comes when she willingly (so to speak) seeks it. This sense of the uncanny is intensified to the extent that the “experience” in question serves initially to dislocate the one undergoing it, placing me (the one undergoing it) outside the world (that can be said), insofar as nothing in the world has changed and so something somehow not in the world has changed … namely, *me*. Such change will result from looking more closely at the world and seeing the task it calls for; it calls for setting aside
what is quibbling and distracting, which keeps me from seeing the world as it is. In the case of Nora we see that she, upon seeing the limited whole that the world is, is unable initially to put into words what now silently but strongly claims her. However, she is able to speak in a way that turns Torvald toward what is to be seen, and this is done through the use of nonsense and through what is shown in what she can say.

Nora’s experience illustrates remark 6.422 in particular. This remark, the longest of the mystical remarks (at seven sentences), introduces us to the problem of speaking of ethical value in terms of duty and consequences, and to the idea that value is found in the action itself (which is where, in the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein located the act of will). 6.422 is odd for a variety of reasons, and three in particular stand out: Wittgenstein there speaks of what our “first thought” would be upon being told of our duty (How does Wittgenstein know that this would be our first thought?); the remark moves according to an agenda or argument that is not *prima facie* clear; and the remark has no predecessor in the *Notebooks*. I argue in Chapter Eight that remark 6.422 can best be understood as following H.A. Prichard’s 1912 essay, “Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?”, and that the tractarian notion of value can be understood as moving a step beyond Prichard’s notion, insofar as Prichard stops short. Or rather, in treating value as something assailable, Prichard goes too far, and in going too far he stops short of carrying his own insight to what, for the tractarian, should be its conclusion: there is nothing objective and necessary about what is revealed in the situations where I reflect on what it is that I must do. To demand that there be such objective, intuitable, nonnatural value to guide is a form of what I shall call “tractarian despair”: it is a way of despairingly trying to be who I am insofar as it entails a misunderstanding of the world at which I must look if I am to act
well. I explicate this despair in terms of Kierkegaard’s notion of despair and then end the chapter by using what I have so far developed to illustrate the pseudo-conflict of duties that Nora faces at the end of Ibsen’s play.

In the final chapter I bring the developments of the previous chapters together with the notion of “the stain of transcendence,” which I develop in response to Diamond’s reading of the Hawthorne short story “The Birthmark.” Diamond takes the lesson of the story to be that we should not make demands of the world, by which she means that we must not demand that the world conform to our will. I argue that there is insufficient basis for such an interpretation of the early Wittgenstein’s ethics. Instead, I argue that “wrong” or “bad” action is (for the tractarian) action that responds to the world without having acknowledged its transcendental dimensions. Sometimes it might be the case that I must resist the impositions of another or “place” conditions on the world (as Nora does), and there is no tractarian reason to see this as faulty. What is to be avoided are the attempts of those who (like Torvald and Aylmer) demand that another be not only something that she is not but something that she cannot be.10

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10 It is worth noting that I dedicate no space to aesthetics and the way in which ethics and aesthetics are one. My hope is that this is shown in my use of literature; my fear is that there is not at present room to say more.
PART I: BELIEF AND VALUE
CHAPTER 1: THE BELIEF FUNCTION and THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SUBJECT

“Therefore here, as everywhere, the style bears the stamp of the thinking from which it has arisen, for style is the physiognomy of the mind.” (Schopenhauer on Kant, WWR I 446)

The Argument of 5.542: Why A does not say a proposition, i.e., Why A is silent

In 5.542, Wittgenstein offers his famous critique of propositional attitudes. It is here that we get his first explicit statement regarding the subject, and so it is here that I would like to begin. The critique is quite simply an application of the “fact” that an object cannot be associated with a fact. This critique leads to three consequences: (1) that the subject cannot be composite, (2) that it must be impossible to judge a nonsense, and (3) that there is no significant notion of perspective.

These initial tractarian consequences for the subject challenge us to think about ourselves in new ways (or, at least, in ways that differed from the ways in which Wittgenstein’s contemporaries though about us). Key concepts of psychology as we commonly understand them must be revised: the subject and belief will not be what we thought they were. Further, a failure to properly attend to these revisions and their consequences for a tractarian approach to the world can lead to confusion. With respect to the subject, two possible confusions are most prominent. The first is that, although the argument at 5.542 shows that the subject cannot be thinking or presenting, it might be tempting to take this to mean only that the subject cannot do it in the world – it must do it elsewhere. The second results from a failure to deal with the way in which “belief” as
commonly understood also drops out. Here, the challenge is twofold. The first challenge is largely a challenge for psychology. How can the psychologist think about belief claims if there cannot be “belief propositions”? More specifically, how is s/he to account for our relation to nonsense (such as a claim that moral laws exist) if it is not possible to judge a nonsense, and how is s/he to account for assertions that are significant but that I clearly don’t understand event though I am uttering them (i.e., can I believe a sentence I don’t understand, even though the sentence is true)? These questions touch on issues that should be of interest to the tractarian philosopher, as they speak to the necessities of our relationship to our world, to language, and to the subject. The clarification of the issues raised at 5.542 will also prove to be vital to understanding the notions central to the tractarian concept of value (as we will see later).

To understand 5.542, we must begin with remark 5.54, on which it is a comment. At 5.54 Wittgenstein claims that propositions can occur in other propositions only as the bases for truth-operations. In 5.541, he notes that it may appear that there is an exception to this in statements of belief, or what I am calling “belief propositions.” Wittgenstein rejects this possibility with a brief observation:

5.542 But it is clear that “A believes that $p$”, “A thinks $p$”, “A says $p$”, are of the form “‘$p$’ says $p$”: 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.

In this section I wish to provide exegesis of this critical observation, as our introduction to Wittgenstein’s notions of the subject, belief, and judgment stem from it. I will proceed initially by following the reading of 5.542 offered by Irving Copi, which, while it does not follow out the implications of this 5.542 (including those that Wittgenstein offers in the three comments on 5.542), nevertheless provides an excellent introduction.
The key to Copi’s reading of 5.542 is the claim that “whatever says a composite must be itself composite” (Copi 164). Thus, “any A that believes, thinks, judges, or says \( p \) must be composite” (164), whereas an object must be simple. Thus, A is not an object; rather, it is a fact. Thus, it is a configuration of objects. Further, since a fact is composed of objects and coordinated with objects, it can neither be an object nor be coordinated with (simply) an object. Therefore, the “A” in this proposition is thus not an object; it is a fact.

Copi then turns not to the nature of “A” but to that of belief, wondering at the assimilation of belief to saying that 5.542 entails. Here he quotes J.O. Urmson, who claims that Wittgenstein is in fact equating “belief” with “utterance,” so that “belief” is simply “the set of words [Jones] utters” (164, quoting Urmson 133). Copi responds by pointing to an ambiguity in the word “belief”: it is not clear if belief is here the set of words (what is believed) or an action (the act of believing). Copi then notes that it cannot be the former, since the analysis of “A says \( p \)” is not “A says ‘\( p \)’” but “‘\( p \)’ says \( p \)” (164). In other words, Wittgenstein’s point is not that A says a set of words, but that a set of words says (pictures) a fact. We thus confuse the empirical fact that Jones utters a sentence with the significant work the sentence does.

But Copi also notes that Urmson’s formulation of the problem is wrong from the start: a thought is not simply a set of words. The set of words must have a sense if it is to be a proposition, and the words are merely the perceptible cloak of the sense. But not just any set of words has a sense – not just any set of words is a fact that can project a thought that can then be “believed.” Thus, the set of words in question must be a significant
proposition – a propositional sign in a projective relation to the world. However, if that is the case, then the other fact must be a state of affairs in the world. Thus, “A says \( p \)” cannot be “A (the subject or person) says ‘\( p \)’ (the proposition that pictures \( p \))” since A too must be a fact, and it is a fact having to do with words that are uttered, and so it must be a proposition (the propositional sign (the words) in projective relation with a state of affairs). “A says \( p \)” must therefore be “‘\( p \)’ says \( p \).” A speaks not to a simple subject or a mere random set of words or an action that A (the subject or person) does but to a proposition in its projective relation to the world.

Copi ends by observing that this formulation allows for false beliefs, since “the term ‘fact’ is ambiguous” (165), referring both to possible facts and actual facts. This is not a chance conclusion. Richard Brockhaus notes that the need for false beliefs was part of the problem that the theory of judgment had to solve: “A theory of judgment is a theory of the proposition as understood” (Brockhaus 253, quoting Bosanquet). As we will see below, Wittgenstein can be seen to be attacking certain “superficial” judgments made by G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell in their search for such a theory.

Belief and judgment are in this context synonymous: they both refer to “holding” a proposition to be true or false or “taking” a proposition as true or false. Presumably, I reject false beliefs when I can; I believe only those that I take to be true; however, I can

11 The term “significant proposition” is usually redundant for Wittgenstein, since a proposition without sense is not a proposition at all. However, he does occasionally use this term (at 3.4, 4, 5.1241, 5.525, 6.1263-6.1264) and it serves to distinguish propositions with sense from logical propositions (which are senseless), although both have a logical form and so are actual propositions. Wittgenstein more often speaks simply of “propositions,” and he uses the term “pseudo-proposition” to distinguish those sentences that appear to be significant propositions (because, most likely, they are grammatically correct, ordinary, and/or we believe that we understand them) but that in fact are nonsense (cf. *unsinnige Scheinsätze* at 4.1272; cf. also 5.535, 6.2).

12 It is also worth noting that Russell, in his “On the Nature of Truth,” which was a primary target of Wittgenstein’s comments in the 5.54s, noted, “I shall use the words “belief” and “judgment” as synonyms” (Russell 1910, 148) (New York: Routledge 2000 (1910)).

13 Wittgenstein refers to this psychological act as “holding” (*halten*) a proposition as true (translated as “taking” by Pears-McGuinness) (4.442).
be wrong about what I take to be true and false. The question then is: in what do I believe when I believe falsely? For Wittgenstein, the solution is rather simple: The world is the collection of actual facts, while what can be thought is the collection of possible facts. Thus, what we might call “the actuality of beliefs” (whether what I believe to be the case is actually the case) is a separate matter from “the actuality of facts” (the set of facts that happens to be true).

Copi ends here, but these observations open up a can of worms having to do with what belief, judgment, and the subject then are. For instance, Copi never deals with the second half of the disjunction he set up in response to Urmson: he explains why “belief” cannot be just any set of words, but he never explains what happens to the act. At the end of Copi’s interpretation, we have a proposition asserting its sense. But what then happens to believing – to what Jones is doing when s/he looks out at the world and takes it (rightly or wrongly) to be as s/he thinks it is? And what has happened to the subject, whom we historically have thought to be the one believing and to which we would prima facie take “A” to be referring? Further, we might ask what happens when we do utter a set of words without sense and claim to believe it. If I say “Jones believes that God is here,” does this mean that, since “God is here” is nonsense, Jones cannot believe it?

The remark offered by Wittgenstein at 5.542 thus yields questions that in turn can yield much deeper insights (with more far-reaching consequences) than Copi’s exegesis reveals. Wittgenstein points to these consequences in 5.5421-5.5423. The rest of this first chapter will focus on the first of these consequences, and the chief aim will be to further

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14 I take it to be the case that, since there is no (tractarian) object in the world to which the name “God” refers, to utter something about God will be to utter nonsense. However, the point I wish to make does not require that God be nonsense – we could substitute some other nonsense, such as “There are no ethical propositions.”
clarify the relation of the subject to thought and belief and of individual humans to the subject. Without understanding these relations it will be impossible to make sense of the even more challenging claims made with respect to willing and value.

The First Consequence: There is no complex subject, i.e., there is no A who asserts

We must keep in mind the context of the critical observation at 5.542: we are entertaining (in 5.541) what seems to be an alternative possibility for the way in which propositions can occur in other propositions, with “occur” here meaning “[be] bases for the truth-operations” (5.54). This alternative – what I will call “belief-functions”15 (and what Russell calls “propositional attitudes” (Russell 1922, 19)) – would be destructive of the picture theory insofar as it would be a violation of the thesis of extensionality (a version of which is given at 5.54). This is because with the belief-function (if there were such a thing), we could supposedly build a complex proposition the truth value of which does not depend on the truth value of a proposition that is one of its bases. Wittgenstein does not question whether this might be possible: since it violates the truth-preservation required of propositional functions, it logically cannot be possible. If he is correct about this, then his remark on belief propositions will reveal a mistake, as it does: with belief propositions, we have not “A believes that \( p \)” but rather “‘\( p \)’ says \( p \),” and so we have the coordination of two facts (and not that of an object (A) with a fact (\( p \))). The object

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15 The phrase “belief function” is taken from Wittgenstein’s description of “I believe that, etc.” as a “function” into which molecular propositions can enter” in his 1913 “Notes on Logic” (95). It is clear that he rejects the possibility of such a function in the *Tractatus*, although already on the same page of these notes he writes, “The proper theory of judgment must make it impossible to judge a nonsense” (which makes it into the *Tractatus* at 5.5422). He also anticipates the problem of belief in relation to propositions: “There are only unasserted propositions. Assertion is merely psychological.” This notion of belief as assertion will be dealt with in more detail below.
designated by A (the subject or soul) disappears upon tractarian reflection, and with it the supposed belief-function; the extensionality thesis remains intact.

After showing at 5.542 why this attack on the extensionality thesis fails, Wittgenstein offers three comments on this failure: (1) The observation at 5.542 “shows that there is no such thing as the soul – the subject, etc. – as it is conceived in contemporary superficial psychology,” since “[a] composite soul would not be a soul any longer” (5.5421). (2) The “correct explanation” of the sentence used in the objection “must show that it is impossible to judge a nonsense” (5.5422). (3) We have a statement regarding the perception of facts, including a comment on what might be understood as “seeing as,” in which Wittgenstein rejects the notion of an individual orientation or perspective that implies that two people could see the same fact differently and so form different judgments about it (5.5423).

The common thread that runs through the three comments is an attempt to briefly show the consequences of Wittgenstein’s observation at 5.542 for our understanding of subjectivity and epistemology (which, for Wittgenstein, is the philosophy of psychology (4.1121)). I take the target of “contemporary superficial psychology” in 5.5421 to be in large part (if not entirely) Russell and Moore,¹⁶ who believed (according to Wittgenstein at 5.541) in the superficial appearance of propositional attitudes (and yet from whom Wittgenstein would have inherited the task of offering a theory of judgment).

Wittgenstein’s target could, perhaps, be construed more broadly if we take him to be

¹⁶ Russell, in the introduction to the Tractatus, claims his own work as the targeted theory, citing his articles in his Philosophical Essays (1910) and The Proceeding of the Aristotelian Society 1906-7 (Tractatus 19). The article in Volume VII of The Proceedings is “On the Nature of Truth” (28-49), which is reprinted in Philosophical Essays. The Essays also contains three other articles on the nature of truth, one dealing with a Hegelian monistic theory of truth and the other two with Pragmatism. It is the article from The Proceedings, however, in which Russell offers “the view of truth which commends itself to the author” (Russell 1910, 9).
concerned with “vanishing” the fundamental and perennial philosophical illusions and problems that plague everyone (and not just Russell or Moore). Thus, it may be permissible to envision a traditional, commonsense, “folk-psychology” understanding of belief as the target. (In either case, psychology is the target, and if epistemology is the philosophy of psychology, then Wittgenstein is here engaged in a bit of what he would call epistemology.)

The three comments on – or consequences of – his remark on belief propositions have an impact on how one can significantly (sinnvoll) talk about believing and thinking and judging. The first consequence speaks to what I call the “withdrawal” of the subject.

5.5421 This shows that there is no such thing as the soul – the subject, etc. – as it is conceived in contemporary superficial psychology. A composite soul would not be soul any longer.

Quite simply, any time we try to invoke my subjectivity or that of another, we will in an important sense logically fail to speak: we will be logically silent. As we have seen, “A” – which we might prima facie take to be a subject – cannot be simple. We cannot picture a simple any more than a simple can picture something complex: we name simple objects, but we cannot picture an object; rather, a picture is formed when the names are arranged with the same form as the objects that they name; in order to picture a fact (an arrangement of objects), the picture must have the same mathematical multiplicity as the pictured fact and it must be isomorphic with the pictured fact. But if “A” is complex, it turns out to be a proposition – a fact that pictures other facts. So in saying “Jones believes it is raining” we are merely saying “‘It is raining’ says that it is raining.” The subject has in a sense dropped out.
I say that the “the subject has in a sense dropped out,” but what exactly might this mean? One sense in which the subject drops out is that the subject (as understood by contemporary psychology) is not (philosophically) at issue is belief propositions: Jones, in saying he believes something, is actually asserting something about the external world, not about his/her beliefs.17 This follows from the logical atomism and picture semantics of the *Tractatus*: a proposition by its very nature asserts itself, so to speak, meaning that, once thought or uttered, it makes a claim about how things stand. It is able to do this insofar as it a kind of picture: “The proposition only asserts [*sagt*] something, in so far as it is a picture” (4.03 (4)). But what the proposition asserts is not simply what it pictures; the proposition *qua* picture *shows* what is the case, but the proposition also *asserts* that things are as it shows them to be: “The proposition *shows* its sense. The proposition *shows* how things stand, *if* it is true. And it *says* [*sagt*], that they do so stand” (4.022). However, the proposition’s saying that things do so stand (as they would stand if it were true) is not the same things as its saying that it is true, since a proposition cannot assert that it is true: “A proposition cannot possibly assert (*aussagen*) of itself that it is true” (4.442). Thus, the proposition asserts that things are a certain way, but it cannot assert that it is true. In other words, the (significant) proposition can also assert something about the world (the facts), not itself (its truth or form). For it to be true, the proposition must get things right (it must show things as they actually are), and that it does so is something we can recognize in virtue of our capacity to see that how things stand is indeed as the proposition shows them to be.

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17 This raises questions to which we will shortly return: Since Wittgenstein is clearly not dismissing the reality of beliefs (a kind of fact with which psychology deals), we must ask what the status of beliefs are and how we come to know them (if not through assertion).
The point here (that the proposition asserts that things are a certain way but not that it is true) is at the heart of the logic and semantics of the *Tractatus*, insofar as recognizing the inability of a proposition to say anything about itself is central to the dispensing (*erledigen*) of Russell’s paradox (cf. 3.333). If, for instance, belief propositions were simply a way of saying “*p* is true,” and if *p* were the proposition “This sentence is false,” we face a paradox (and not just a violation of the extensionality thesis). But if we recognize that propositions cannot be self-referential, the problem dissolves: a proposition (and so Jones) cannot say anything about its form or its truth or the status of the simpler propositions that are its truth-operational bases (5.54) and that, with their truth-possibilities, provide its own truth-conditions (4.431). Instead, we have to look at the world as see if the proposition is true – we have to look and see whether things do so stand. And our ability to recognize such a thing is, for the early Wittgenstein, a matter for empirical (not philosophical) investigation.

So a belief proposition is not a disguised way of saying that a proposition is true. Nor is it a means of asserting a proposition – of saying that I “second” (so to speak) what the proposition asserts. If a significant proposition intrinsically says that things are as it claims them to be, then adding something to the proposition in attempt to show that I too assert what the proposition is asserting is meaningless. Wittgenstein makes this explicit in his commentary on 4.4. Proposition 4.4 asserts, “A proposition is the expression of agreement and disagreement with the truth-possibilities of the elementary propositions [that constitute the more complex proposition].” In offering a perspicuous representation of these truth-possibilities, we can make truth tables, in which we use the signs “T” and “F” to “specify” these possibilities. The notion of “specification” [*Angabe*] is used by
Wittgenstein at 4.26 to refer to the means by which we designate truth and falsity, such that a mark such as “T” shows what we hold as true. “T” specifies the possibility that an elementary proposition is true (that the world is as it asserts), and “F” that it is false. Taken together, these specifications can (in a truth table) provide a propositional sign (4.44). In other words, the truth table asserts that same thing as the ordinary language proposition with which it is logically isomorphic. However, the sign “T” is not an assertion sign – it is not a way of saying that I assert (or believe) what the proposition already asserts: “Frege’s assertion sign [der Urteilsstrich] ‘\(\top\)' is logically altogether meaningless [bedeutungslos]; in Frege (and Russell) it only shows that these authors hold as true the propositions marked [bezeichneten] in this way” (4.442). Such a sign cannot refer to an object since there are no logical objects (4.441), and so it cannot be part of the proposition. And such a sign cannot refer to the proposition, since a sign (in this case, a name) cannot name something complex nor picture something more complex than it is. Treated as a pseudo-sign, the mark “T” is an attempt to say what can only be shown: that the world is as it is pictured. So again, we see that a belief proposition is not a disguised way of saying that the proposition it contains is true, and further, it is not a disguised way of asserting what the proposition already asserts.

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18 Black sums up the argument for the removal of the “assertion sign” or “judgment stroke” (der Urteilsstrich) as follows: Frege needed the judgment stroke “in order to pass from a sentence that designates the True or False to a ‘recognition of the truth of a thought’” (Black 227). For Frege, the former is a “designation” while the latter is a “judgment.” However, Frege wants to say both that the judgment is not simply his (it is objective, not subjective) and yet that it is not thought. But then the stroke can be removed and nothing is changed. Black thus claims that “Frege’s introduction of the assertion-sign may be viewed as an unsuccessful attempt to restore to the propositional sign, which he had degraded to mere designation, its truth-claiming aspect. Wittgenstein’s account of the proposition does justice to this aspect from the start” (227). He does this (as we have seen) by showing how assertion is part of the essence of what a proposition is. For an extensive and thorough account of Wittgenstein’s critique of Frege’s judgment stroke, cf. Ian Proops 2002.
However, it is worth noting that there is a means for specifying or indicating (angeben) which propositions we hold as true: we can mark them with a “T.” This marking (bezeichnen) enables us to communicate with others in a non-propositional way about what we take to be the case. For instance, we can (technically) offer a complete description of the world using such specification: “The specification [die Angabe] of all true elementary propositions describes the world completely. The world is completely described by the specification of all elementary propositions plus the specification, which of them are true and which false” (4.26) Context is often sufficient to show that we hold certain propositions as true. For instance, if a psychologist asked me to specify which of the propositions of my language are true, I could simply utter all the propositions that I hold as true. And much everyday conversation occurs with the premise that we hold what we utter as true. And when disagreements arise, repeated assertions of the truth of what one is saying are meaningless: it is time to clarify what we mean and/or look at the world more carefully.

Logically, then, belief does not enter into propositions, whether in terms of truth or assertion. Propositions are true if they agree with the world, not because we believe them, and propositions already assert that things stand in a certain way, such that simply uttering the proposition is sufficient for such assertion. In elucidating these insights, Wittgenstein manages to remove the paradox faced by Russell’s logic and semantics and the ontological problems of Frege’s Urteilsstrich. He also manages to put a useful wedge between belief/judgment and truth, logic, and semantics – a wedge that highlights more clearly how belief is to be understood on tractarian terms. Thus, the issue of whether I hold a proposition to be true is something separable from the issue of what the
proposition means and whether it is true, insofar as my belief has no affect on the sense or truth of the proposition. Further, belief is (logically) indifferent to whether what is believed is true; the belief in the truth of what the proposition says is dependent on what I take to be the case and what I take the proposition to say. The belief, in other words, is a matter of how I take the world and language (my world and my language) to be. Therefore, a description of my beliefs must take place using some kind of Angabe: since there are no belief propositions, beliefs are not facts that can be described in propositional terms but rather a relation between me, language, and the world that is shown through a specification of those propositions in my language (the one I understand) that I hold as true. It is a matter of what I put before myself as possible and what, out of those possibilities, I take as actually being the case.

To anthropomorphize for a moment, we could say that the proposition is not concerned with whether how things stand is as it says they are; it only presents the possibility, claiming merely that this is so if it is true; but it cannot say that it is true. This point is stressed latter in the Tractatus: “And so also it is one of the most important facts that the truth or falsehood of non-logical propositions can not be recognized [erkennen] from the propositions alone” (6.113). Logically and semantically, this “fact” is important since it preserves a recognition of the bi-polarity of the proposition: the proposition is potentially either true or false, and it cannot say which it us. Anthropologically and psychologically, this “fact” is important because the separation of belief and truth it entails helps Wittgenstein to deal with the theory of judgment in the 5.54s: one must look at the world to see if a proposition is true, and how things actually do stand in the world
will be a contingent matter and so outside the concerns of logic.\textsuperscript{19} From this we see that we cannot logically speak of Jones believing \( p \), and that it is superfluous to add a statement about the truth of the sentence that corresponds to the words. So, if “Jones believes \( p \)” is really “‘\( p \)’ says \( p \),” then not only do we lose the sense that a subject is doing anything logically significant (such as believing), and we lose the sense that a propositionally expressible notion of truth is contained within belief. The subject and truth both drop out in this sense.

Given the account of believing we have just offered, we can also claim that belief, while synonymous with judgment, is nevertheless different from thinking. Thinking, for the tractarian, is simply the expression or projection of thoughts via propositional signs (3.1ff.). Thinking is thus the assertion of possibilities, but it is not the assertion of the truth of those possibilities – it does not say “yes” or “no” to the proposition, which is all that is needed to “make it agree with reality” (4.023 (1)). Rather, such “yea-saying” or affirmation (bejahen) is what belief is – it is the specification of those thoughts (which could be true or false) that are true. We thus have a distinction between the assertion of a proposition (in the two-fold sense of my uttering a proposition that then asserts its sense) and the specification of it: there is (aus)sagen (the proposition’s assertion that things are as it shows them to be) versus bejahen (our indication that we hold the proposition to be true). It is a distinction between the proposition’s assertion of itself (that things do so stand) and our acceptance of it (as correct). Thus, while a proposition always asserts its

\textsuperscript{19} Also, this separation of belief and truth helps us to make sense of how false beliefs are possible: we want to avoid an account of belief that relies upon false facts, such that we say that my belief is false because I believe a fact that is false. Instead, Wittgenstein’s critical analysis requires that we see belief as a relation to propositions in their projective relation to facts, such that a belief is false only if we claim that a possibility is actualized when it is not. There need not in this case be a relation to false facts or a truth-function that is indifferent to the truth of its bases.
sense (it says that things do so stand), we can affirm (or not) the proposition, which is what we supposedly do in believing or judging a proposition. But we cannot give the proposition its sense: “Every proposition must already have a sense; assertion [Bejahung] cannot give it a sense, for what it [the assertion] asserts [bejaht] is the sense itself” (4.064). Instead, we can only affirm the sense of the propositions available to us, and so we are then dependent upon what our language enables us to say/picture and how well we see the world.

However, there is a problem with distinction between (aus)sagen and bejahen if we translate Bejahung as “assertion” (as Odgen does in 4.064): as we have seen, if a proposition asserts its own sense, then our assertion of a proposition seems no different than the proposition’s assertion of itself (such that the Fregean Urteilsstrich is meaningless). This anticipates a key point of the 5.54s: if I take the act of uttering the words “I believe this proposition” to be a form of asserting the truth of the proposition, then I am mistaking what I am doing. Such assertion is something that (logically and semantically) I cannot (according to the tractarian) be doing. Thus, an attempt to find a place for beliefs/judgments in terms of a distinction between kinds of assertion fails: belief-functions collapse back into the proposition asserting its sense; what is left over is whether or not we take the proposition to be true, but the proposition’s agreement with reality and our ability to see this agreement is a matter outside the assertion (although it depends on the sense of the proposition already being there). We can merely take what the proposition itself already asserts and then assent (or not). And although we can speak of this assent as “asserting truth,” this phrase is misleading if we think that we are saying anything (rather than showing or specifying something). Thus, when Wittgenstein says,
“assertion [Bejahung] cannot give [the proposition] a sense, for what it [the assertion] asserts [bejaht] is the sense itself,” what he means is that the psychophysical act of uttering a thought (of putting it out there as true) can work only if what is uttered already is a significant proposition. What is then affirmed just is what is asserted: what is asserted is affirmed as true. But it is still the case that belief, although it may be a kind of Bejahung, is nevertheless not a Bejahung in this propositional sense.

The other uses of bejahen in the Tractatus support this conclusion: propositions 5.124-5.1241 and 5.513-5.514 develop the notion of bejahen (as assertion) as built into the proposition and so offer further reasons for dismissing bejahen (as affirmation) as a way to “sneak” belief back into propositions. In those propositions Wittgenstein speaks of propositions asserting (bejahen) other propositions. “A proposition asserts (bejaht) every proposition which follows from it” (5.124). And at 5.514 he claims that in a fixed notation we have a rule “according to which all the propositions asserting p are constructed, a rule according to which all the propositions asserting p or q are constructed, and so on” (5.514). The idea here is that, once a proposition is said, it asserts all the others that follow from it (regardless of whether I as an individuated psychological subject intend to do this or believe this). There is thus some resemblance to the psychological act of bejahen, insofar as proposition always (so to speak) affirms as true everything that follows from it if it itself is true.

A claim from his 1913 “Notes on Logic” is even more telling with respect to the distinction between the psychological act of assertion and what a proposition itself asserts (so to speak). In the “Notes on Logic,” Wittgenstein says that “There are only unasserted propositions. Assertion is merely psychological” (96). The notes were dictated in English,
so we do not know what German word he had in mind for “assertion,” but it seems clear, given the context of this claim in the “Notes on Logic” (in particular the development of the bi-polarity thesis) and the way in which this distinction anticipates the 5.54s, that the notion of assertion under consideration here is _bejahen_ in the sense of “asserting a proposition as true.” Since propositions are bi-polar, meaning that they can be true or false (and cannot say of themselves which they are), then, if “assertion” is “specifying (_angeben_ as true),” it is clear that all propositions are in this sense unasserted. The notion of unasserted propositions is thus distinct from the “fact” that propositions always already assert their sense (and are already asserted by those propositions from which they follow and by the rule of the fixed notion according to which they are constructed). Assertion in this psychological sense is merely a matter of what actual individual humans utter (taking what is uttered as true), and this will be a psychological matter (regarding how the human mind works). The psychological act of assertion, then, is a matter of what propositions I actually utter and take as true.

In this psychological act of assertion, the thought is expressed perceptibly in the proposition. Thus, such assertion takes place in some material medium, whether the brain or speech or writing.\(^20\) This expression puts the thought into relation with an actual state of affairs. Prior to this, the thought would only picture a possible state of affairs. A general enough picture, such as “The cat is on the mat,” could pick out many possible facts. The proposition is only projected when I “aim” it at an actual state of affairs that will agree or fail to agree. Thus, one fact gets “hooked up with” another fact; the former

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\(^{20}\) Indeed, as we will see below, mere sound or written symbols are not enough for the projection – it must be thought, meaning that at some level the “fact” that is the propositional sign will be inscribed in the brain, and this in turn can be put into sound (when I utter the proposition) or writing.
receives “content” by being hooked up with a particular fact, i.e., with an actual state of affairs.

Thinking, however, is not thought – it is the expression of thoughts. As Wittgenstein states, “The thought is the significant proposition” (4). It “becomes” this when the propositional sign is “applied” to the world by being “thought” (3.5). Thinking is thus not the thought but the means by which a propositional sign, which contains the possibility of expressing some sense, actually comes to project that sense; i.e., this sense is “[w]hat the picture represents” (2.221) and this representation comes about – and a thought is then expressed – through thinking the sign in which the possibility of this sense is “contained.” The expression of thoughts (in language, at least) is thus done through propositions being thought, and “thinking the sense” is “putting” signs with possible sense into relation with actual facts. And if believing is (logically) simply saying (or else specifying the truth of what is said), then believing (and judging) requires thinking: it, too, is a matter of expressing thought, of saying “p” in order to say that p. But it would then seem that the affirming that is at work in believing is thus outside the essence of thinking: thinking is projecting the propositional sign; it is “holding it” up against reality and even a “holding up and out for affirmation,” but the affirmation is something else.

We might now insist that what is at work in asserting of the “yea-saying” sort is just this affirmation (what Frege wanted to display with his assertion sign) – it is a matter of determining whether the projected thought agrees with the reality at which it has been projected. But again, this agreement has nothing to do with thought or language. It has to do with how the world is (and perhaps with whether we have constructed our pictures
well so that they capture the propositions we wish to project). It has to do, in other words, with empirical matters (the facts regarding how the world is and how and what I have projected). When Wittgenstein speaks of judging, then, he is speaking of the way in which assertion puts language out to be tested, but not to how we actually test language. If this is so, then saying “Yes, it is in fact true” is, oddly enough, not an act of thinking, although (again) it requires thinking. This odd conclusion is nonetheless consistent with the claims in remark 5.542.21

Judging, then, is an act that opens up the question of whether the sign actually agrees with the world, a piece of which it (the projected sign) expresses as possible. What happens then – the verificationist measures we might take – is not of concern to tractarian philosophy; rather, only the consistency and “significance” of the mesh used will be of significance. This would then mean that projection and affirmation fundamental involve something psychological that is not thought: it is a matter of empirically putting forth propositional signs and then testing them. And the tractarian must, given the consequence that will be spelled out in 5.5421, avoid thinking that we can turn here to a simple subject to do the work of this projecting. Indeed, a temptation presents itself at this point: the temptation is to turn to the metaphysical subject, in spite of the “fact” that projecting (intending, thinking) is not something the subject can do (as 5.631 makes clear).

Such a temptation is at play in the first consequence that Wittgenstein wishes to draw from the logical impossibility of “belief functions” with respect to the subject and belief: neither subject nor belief enters into the sense of the propositions, and neither adds anything to them, but since it seems odd to us to think of belief in this revised fashion, it

21 I would argue that it is also consistent with 4.023: “The proposition determines reality to this extent, that one only needs to say “Yes” or “No” to it to make it agree with reality. [Die Wirklichkeit muss durch den Satz auf ja order nine fixiert sein.]”
will be difficult to let go of these old, familiar notions. However, what the propositions is (what it says or asserts) is already contained within it, regardless of whether I ever utter the proposition, let alone believe it, and a recognition of this “fact” might seem to diminish the importance of my own subjective sense of things. Further, my believing the proposition (my judging it to be true or taking it to be true) adds nothing to the proposition, which is (as it were) indifferent to the success of its claim (that things stand as it says they do). Humans, of course, are not always indifferent in this sense. But our lack of indifference (the concern we have for the truth of what we say) is a psychological (and perhaps ethical) matter, not a logical or semantic (or metaphysical) matter. And it is perhaps because of this engagement and concern with what we take as true and our reluctance to let go of the common understanding of the subject that we are reluctant to attend to the first consequence that Wittgenstein wishes to draw from 5.542.

The first consequence, as I said at the start of this section, is the “withdrawal” of the subject: “This shows that there is no such thing as the soul – the subject, etc. – as it is conceived in contemporary superficial psychology. / A composite soul would not be soul any longer” (5.5421). The withdrawal stems from the fact that the term “A” in “A believes p” cannot refer to a simple object. Thus, if we intend “A” to stand in for something, it can only stand in for something complex – for the thought that pictures the fact. However, contemporary superficial psychologists (and the ordinary person on the street with his/her so-called “folk psychology”) clearly take the subject/soul to be more than a thought, and since they would not accept such a reduction of the subject, they would be forced to admit (if they accepted the tractarian reflection on belief functions) that because we cannot talk (in the tractarian propositional sense) of a subject/soul that
believes (since no such object exists), the subject (as commonly understood) withdraws from sight. It disappears, vanishes, drops out as they realize that it does not exist. Or rather, since it never existed in the first place – since the subject was always already withdrawn and since what the superficial psychologist claimed to see was in fact an illusion – what vanishes is the illusion; in the wake of such vanishing, this person should come to “see” that there was nothing there where s/he had posited something.

This means only that a specific notion of the subject drops out: we lose the superficial notion of a simple entity that stands in relation to propositions in way that can be described in further propositions, such that (if there were such a thing) we would have an impossible object that stands in picturing relation to a complex and the description of which violates the truth-extensionality thesis. This point is driven home a few pages later in proposition 5.631: “The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing.” But the notion of the subject as such does not entirely drop out; a notion of the subject remains, although it has withdrawn from the sphere of what is describable – it is no longer a part of the world (according to the tractarian ontology, in which what is in the world must be a picture-able configuration of objects). However, this subject is also not a metaphysically subsisting entity, existing in (potential) separation from the world. As Wittgenstein puts it at 5.632, “The subject does not belong to the world but is a limit of the world.” It is subject that does not believe or think or represent, but it has a role to play in this world being what it is. The question then becomes, what is this role? What can the subject do if it cannot think or believe or present?

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22 This is a rather awkward translation of “Das denkende, vorstellende, Subject gibt es nicht,” which states simply that there is no thinking, representing subject.
In spite of Wittgenstein’s clear statement that the subject does not think or present, there is nonetheless a temptation to treat the subject in this fashion. The temptation arises when drawing a distinction between thinking and the conditions for the possibility of thinking. Drawing such a distinction does not require that we insist that the subject thinks or presents (not here, but from a metaphysical vantage), and so it is important to draw the distinction in a way that does not violate the claim of 5.631. The idea here is that although the subject does not think or (re)present anything, something must do it, and we (as biological entities) are not sufficient to account for such activity. We could not do it if we were simply biological entities. It is only in virtue of our also being “the subject” that we are able to picture the world because of something non-worldly that the subject makes possible in virtue of something that it does with respect to the thinking/presenting. However, what the subject does or enables is described in terms of presenting, such that we appear to have a presenting subject, but one that is not in this world. This requires that we read 5.631 as meaning by “no such thing” that there is no such thing in the world but rather elsewhere (at its limits or even beyond them).

However, this interpretation, I will argue, collapses either into the idea that there is in fact a presenting subject in the world or into a more substantive metaphysical claim that the subject actively presents but from a metaphysical distance that the tractarian would not accept.

Michael Hodges, for instance, describes the subject as a “representer pure and simple,” a “pure representer” (82). This terminology alone seems very misleading (since there is no thinking, presenting subject), but what Hodges seems intend by this

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23 In what follows, I treat “represent” (darstellen) and present (vorstellen) as synonyms with each other and thinking, as all three involve the making of pictures of facts.
seems plausible at first glance: he seems to mean merely that thinking could not happen without a subject. As he explains it,

if one fact (a sentence) is to represent another fact (a state of affairs), there must be a subject. A fact merely as a state of affairs and a fact as a representing sentence are logically distinct. Only for a subject can one fact represent another. Without subjectivity there would be merely an unarticulated totality of facts. Thus subjectivity is a logically necessary condition for the possibility of representation. (76)

This is all that Hodges says about this grounds for this condition, so we will have to wait to build a more complete argument for the point that Hodges is making. Further, the conclusion that Hodges draws from this succinct argument is questionable: from the fact that the subject is necessary if there is to be representation it does not necessarily follow that the subject is thus a “pure representer.” The claim that the subject is condition for the possibility of representation seems to say something different from the claim that the subject is a pure representer. For we might say that the empirical subject (the biological entity that a human is) is sufficient to do the representing, but what is needed is some assurance that there will be picturing. Further, there is a deeper problem with respect to facts that picture and facts that are pictured: if they share the same number of (logical) objects in the same configuration, how do we know which fact is the picture and which is the pictured? The problem here goes deeper than the problem of presenting – it points to a problem that is logically prior to presenting, since the thought that is projected must already be distinct from what it will picture prior to the projection. I will argue that the subject is to be found at this deeper, logical level. Placing the subject at the level of projection is too late, as it were: projection is a matter of what is actual (of what I am actually thinking) and so is an empirical/psychological matter. But the temptation to think of the subject as somehow presenting remain.
The temptation can persist here because the act of thinking seems insufficient for what it needs to be. It needs to be a method of projecting a propositional sign into a relation with something in the world. The proposition cannot do this itself, so we must do it for it. Thus, believing collapses into saying, and saying is just thinking, and thinking is projecting, and yet the proposition cannot project itself. So someone must do that, but since no complex subject can be said to do this, it seems that the simple subject must do it. Let us look, then, at how thinking, projecting, and judging are related. We can then see if the notion of projecting is successful as an attempt to bring back some active, external relation between subject and language.

The crucial propositions at this point are 3.1 and the four comments on it:

3.1 In the proposition the thought is expressed perceptibly through the senses.

3.11 We use the sensibly perceptible sign (sound or written sign, etc.) of the proposition as a projection of the possible state of affairs.
   The method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the proposition.

3.12 The sign through which we express the thought I call the propositional sign. And the proposition is the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.

3.13 To the proposition belongs everything which belongs to the projection; but not what is projected.
   Therefore the possibility of what is projected but not this itself.
   In the proposition, therefore, its sense is not yet contained, but the possibility of expressing it.
   (“The content of the proposition” means the content of the significant (sinnvollen) proposition.)
   In the proposition the form of its sense is contained, but not its content.

3.14 The propositional sign consists in the fact that its elements, the words, are combined in it in a definite way.
   The propositional sign is a fact.

Proposition 3 (on which 3.1 is a comment) tells us that “[t]he logical picture of the facts is the thought,” and 3.1 then comments that “[i]n the proposition the thought is expressed
perceptibly through the senses.” We do this by using a “sensibly perceptible sign (sound or written sign, etc.) of the proposition as a projection [Projektion] of the possible state of affairs, and “[t]he method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the proposition” (3.11). This sign through which the thought is expressed is the “propositional sign,” and this proposition just is this sign “in its projective relation to the world” (3.12). However, the proposition – the perceptible sign in a projective relation to a possible state of affairs – contains not its sense but only “the possibility of expressing it” (3.13; emphasis added), meaning that it contains the form but not the content of the sense (3.14). This echoes 2.202 and 2.203, where Wittgenstein states that the picture both “represents a possible state of affairs in logical space” (2.202) and “contains the possible state of affairs that it represents” (2.203), and since “[w]hat the picture represents is its sense” (2.221), the sense just is this possible state of affairs.

This distinction between form and content, possibility and actuality, is what drives Hodges to move from speaking of conditions for representation to a metaphysical representer. The idea seems to be that the biological entity could not possibly take the thought and put it into relation to the world. The assumption here would be that if the biological entity were doing it, then it would be something in the world, and so it could be pictured, and since we cannot picture projecting, it must be that the biological entity does not project. This assumption, however, is dubious: as we saw with belief, the “fact” that we cannot treat beliefs as logical operations does not mean that there are no beliefs or that we cannot deal with them using language. It means instead that we make a mistake when we attempt to describe beliefs in “I believe that …” statements. If this is the case, then it does not seem that the psycho-physical acts of thinking and speaking (of
presenting and projecting) are something that the sciences cannot attempt to investigate. The required reform of the theory of judgment thus does not require that we attribute some aspect of projecting to something metaphysical.

This temptation can persist even if one acknowledges that the biological entity (the human) can make pictures of facts and that science can come to understand this. A clear example of this is provided by Brockhaus: Brockhaus, in his account of belief and then projecting, leaves the subject of contemporary superficial psychology intact, and he then offers us a projecting metaphysical subject, violating both 5.5421 and 5.631. Brockhaus’s argument on these issues begins with his discussion of the method of projection from 3.11: Brockhaus notes that while the aim of the method is clear (to hook names/propositions up with objects/facts), what is unclear is how this method hooks the proposition up with its sense (163). He further notes that we cannot say that the thought enables this to happen, since the thought is “likewise a proposition” (163), and so we would still need to ask how it gets hooked up with its sense. Finally, citing 3.326, he notes that the method “cannot be contained in the sign itself” (163). In doing this, he is focusing not on the way in which projection puts a thought in relation to the world but rather at the way in which projection at the same time also puts a sensibly perceptible sign into relation with a sensibly imperceptible sense. If we assume that the biological entity is not capable of “hooking up” the physical and non-physical, we must then ask

24 It is not clear to me that Brockhaus is correct here: the thought is not identical to the proposition as its possible expression; rather, the thought is the significant proposition (4), and the significant proposition is one that already contains its content (3.13) and so is already projected. However, in the Blue Book Wittgenstein speaks of the proposition as being “an utterly dead and trivial thing” if it is “[w]ithout a sense, or without the thought” (BB 4), such that turning to the thought to explain this “hooking up” is no different in essence from turning to the sense for explanation. Further, the thought is a picture (3), too, and so it presents possible facts (2.202-2.203); the proposition is also a picture (4.01). Thus, in either case we would have to face the problem of how something imperceptible (the sense) gets connected not just with the world but with something perceptible (signs) that shows the connection of the sense with the world.

25 3.326: “In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must consider the significant use.”
after where the “method” for doing this is to be found and how this method enables us to give a thought its sense.

Brockhaus’s answer is that such projection is “as it were an act of ‘pure intending.’ This intending being a sort of willing, it requires a willing subject” (164), and Brockhaus equates this willing subject with the metaphysical subject discussed in the Tractatus: “behind the empirical ego [which makes pictures of facts] must stand a metaphysical subject, a willing subject whose active intending turns dead signs into ‘living symbols’” (277-278). This subject is a “necessary condition for language” and so “it cannot be represented in language, and is thus ineffable” (278). With these claims of a “pure intender” that is also a condition for the possibility of representation, we have a set of claims similar to those made by Hodges: there is a plausible claim about the conditions of representation and a questionable one about the subject’s role in this. With Brockhaus, however, we are at an advantage, as he articulates his stance much more fully.

We can begin to assess Brockhaus’s account by looking more closely at his interpretation of 5.542. He gives the following account of the observation offered there: “A asserts p = df A makes the sounds x-y-z and these sounds mean that X-Y-Z” (276). A is to be construed as a “philosophically uninteresting person,” “a psycho-physical complex” (276). How A “produces” the propositional sign is left out, according to Brockhaus (following Black 298-299) because it is so “obvious (and uninteresting)” (276). For Brockhaus, the interesting thing is “the connection of the signs in the utterance with the elements of sense (277; emphasis added). Brockhaus is here making a distinction between utterance and projection, as the utterance, but not the projection, is an empirical matter. His reason for making this distinction seems to be based on the fact that not all
utterances are assertions (significant propositions), such that, for an utterance to actually be an assertion, it must have a sense, meaning that something physical (signs) must be hooked up with something nonphysical (sense or meaning), and what he wants to know is how these to two things can be connected.

Brockhaus’s answer is straightforward: an inorganic element is needed to project the propositions. As he explains:

The signs themselves are “dead”; they need to be projected, meant, intended in order to become symbols. It is crucial to note that mental as well as physical signs need such projection; Wittgenstein flatly denies the Russelian claim that mental images mean “on their own,” that they need no interpretation or projection. Thus there will also be an inorganic element in assertion, one not amenable to investigation by the sciences. (277; emphasis in the original)

He takes the term “inorganic” from page three of Wittgenstein’s Blue and Brown Books. There, Wittgenstein (speaking, it seems, of his earlier view) uses the term “organic” to describe the “mechanisms” of understanding and meaning and interpreting and thinking, while the “inorganic” is the actual “handling of signs” (3). Strangely, Brockhaus misquotes the passage, inverting “organic” and “inorganic,” such that he treats the organic part as the inorganic and focuses his interpretive efforts on the organic part, even though he claims that something organic “will be wholly explainable in terms of the natural sciences” (276). His error aside, his focus is warranted, as Wittgenstein himself highlights the strangeness of the organic part: he refers to activities of the organic part (activities such as thinking) as taking place “in a queer kind of medium, the mind; and the mechanism of the mind, the nature of which, it seems, we don’t quite understand, can bring about effects which no material mechanism could” (3). The organic mental processes are what are needed to “bring life” to the proposition, and a few paragraphs
later Wittgenstein claims that “it seems clear that no adding of inorganic signs can make the proposition live” (4). Thus, Brockhaus’s concern is legitimate: regardless of the terms Wittgenstein uses (inorganic/organic; dead/living), the point is that something inexpressible (because it is beyond the perceptible/empirical realm of natural science) is said to be at work in thinking, and thus thinking seems queer to someone who wishes to express what thinking is.26

Brockhaus seeks both parts (organic and inorganic) in “A believes p.” He takes “believes” and “judges” to be a matter of assertion and so regards “A believes p” as “A asserts p.” He then takes the proposition “A asserts p” to be equivalent to the proposition “A says ‘p’ and ‘p’ means p” (277), and he treats the former as organic (and uninteresting—the mere handling of signs, which Wittgenstein calls “inorganic”) and the latter as inorganic (and interesting). For Brockhaus, the uninteresting (organic) part is a matter of a “psycho-physical entity/structure” being “in a certain state,” and Brockhaus calls this structure the “knowing subject” (following Schopenhauer’s distinction between the knowing/representing and the willing subjects), an entity that “contains” beliefs as “component parts” (277).27 What is ineffable is the queer part: the “fact” that propositions must mean. In other words, a proposition must mean its sense, and Brockhaus claims that it does this through a willing, metaphysical subject intending it.

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26 Brockhaus thus treats the distinction as one between something empirical/physical and something metaphysical/non-physical. However, for Wittgenstein, the distinction is one between mere signs and actual thinking. The inorganic is that which cannot “bring things to life,” in the way that adding the physical mark “*” to a written proposition does not add anything to it. Thus, the “inorganic” is not metaphysical but (merely) physical. If there is a metaphysical/physical distinction, it must be drawn within the organic, which is what Brockhaus does.

27 This way of speaking about beliefs shows that Brockhaus has failed to attend to the consequences of 5.542. If belief is not a matter of describable facts but rather specifications, then there is no “psycho-physical entity/structure” that contains beliefs as parts in way that can be described by the propositions of natural science. Perhaps Brockhaus’s failure here is a result of his having failed to understand the way in which the organic part is in fact the queer one.
However, if the account of “A says p” that I offer is accurate, then Brockhaus’s two-part interpretation of 5.542 cannot be correct: A does not in fact say ‘p’ and cannot say ‘p’ unless “A” is simply a picture. And A cannot be, as Brockhaus claims, a complex unity that is in relation to a fact. Brockhaus does note that a tractarian account of belief must allow us to distinguish between utterances that we actually believe and those that we are merely “entertaining” (275). However, the tractarian, as we have noted, can do this with the notion of specification. But in Brockhaus’s account, the distinction between believing and entertaining gets lost, insofar as belief is reduced to thinking on the one hand (believing is just a matter of “p” saying p) and left as a describable fact on the other (since Brockhaus maintains that beliefs an be described and that that are said by A).

Further, Brockhaus treats belief statements (but not “entertained statements”) as something that can be singled out as philosophically interesting. He does this, I suspect, because he claims that believing (but apparently not entertaining) requires something “inorganic” (metaphysical). But it is not clear what “A” does when “A” is merely entertaining as opposed to believing. What does “A” add? Brockhaus never says, beyond saying that the difference is that in the case of a believed as opposed to an entertained utterance, A actually believes the utterance (A “must believe it” (275)). Put this way, things do seem strange. But given that the real mystery is the projection of thoughts, and not our belief of them, entertaining should, on Brockhaus’s terms, be just as mysterious.

Let us look at an example: I can listen to Jones when Jones makes an argument and then fail to believe his/her argument. Nonetheless, I could be said to give him/her the benefit of the doubt and entertain what s/he says. (I might even understand it and still not find it convincing). I could later repeat the argument, asking someone else to entertain it
but insisting that I don’t believe it. The question is: Am I thinking in both cases (entertaining an argument offered by another and offering it to another to entertain, while not believing it in either case)? If so, then am I also meaning in both cases? It would clearly seem that in both cases I am using propositions to picture facts. When I am “entertaining but not believing” an argument, I am still (if I am truly entertaining the argument and giving it a fair chance) testing it for consistency and reference (and truth). In order to do this, I must be thinking. If this is so, then the distinction Brockhaus wishes to make between belief and entertaining has nothing to do with thinking (and meaning and projecting) since both involve thinking. And in any case the real question for Brockhaus is, in essence, how do I think? How do I hook up signs with sense?

Brockhaus’s answer, as we noted earlier, is to turn to a notion of the metaphysical subject. As he puts it, “the metaphysical ego” just is “the willing subject whose intending function turns signs into symbols” (278). The reason offered for this attribution of activity to the subject is not clear: he seems to have been bewitched by the organic/inorganic metaphor that Wittgenstein offered over a decade after the *Tractatus*. Further, Brockhaus has not fully thought through the consequences of 5.542 for the subject: there is no subject that thinks or presents. When this is combined with a proper tractarian account of thinking and presenting, it is clear that a subject cannot do this. Thus, instead of attending to our relation to language he simply removes much of what we do from the world – and from us – and puts it in the hands of a mysterious entity.

So the subject doesn’t “do” anything. Or, if it does, it is in an important way of no interest to us: we can do more about the world than we can about this mysterious subject. And so the task for someone who posits such an entity would be trying to see how we
should act in a world in which we are subject to something so mysterious and beyond our control. Imagine this: I choose to read a book, say *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford. To read this book, I will need a certain background (such as an education in which I was taught to read) and certain physical capacities (such as the ability to correctly process written signs). But when I do read, it is not as if I *will* myself to mean the words.

Brockhaus wants to say that they are dead and then come alive when a willing subject means them – when it puts them in connection with an inorganic realm. But this is not the picture the *Tractatus* offers. Signs are not dead or alive; they are signs. When I read them, I get a certain picture. This is what signs do: they give pictures when understood (when projected; when thought). If I am partially brain-damaged, my mind may not be able to project the signs. Also, if I do not know how to read, or if I do not know English (and try to read the original), I will not be able to read the book.

Brockhaus hardly seems to be suggesting that we should turn to the metaphysical will for guidance in such cases. But assuming everything is in order with my physical capacities and training, what then? Would I need the metaphysical subject to *do* anything – such as will the meaning – in order to finally come to understand the text? An odd situation could arise: I could fail to understand the book because there is a problem with the subject (which is yet me). But when this happens, I don’t try to will harder, or see if perhaps I wasn’t willing when I thought I was. Rather, I reread the sentences. I look words up in the dictionary. I check to see if the signs are really in order (perhaps there are simple typographical or grammatical errors in the copy I’m reading) or if all the terms actually refer to something. Perhaps the sentences rely upon a mesh and principles that I do not share. But the problems are explicable in terms of a personal history and a present
context, and the best response would be one of more activity. Thus, frustrated by the fact that I cannot understand the sentences, I attempt to remedy the situation. I don’t try to will harder in some other realm.

So who – or what – does the projecting? No one? Certainly no subject. But one can see what Brockhaus is after: a book is not thinking – it is not projected. It is as if it were “thought waiting to happen.”28 But it seems that if something fails to happen, there is something wrong with the actual person – not morally wrong, but they are not doing something that is possible. (It is perhaps more a matter of health.) But what I think happens is that the actual person projects. Or: projection “happens.” When I read, signs are projected by me as an actual person. They are projected in this world. I then look to see if the world is as they claim it to be. Invoking the metaphysical subject as a condition or ground for such activity (something Wittgenstein never does in the Tractatus) does not seem to offer us anything helpful at this level of the tractarian account of thought in relation to the world. Further, in the attempt to resolve one mystery (How do physical signs get hooked up with a sense?) it raises another: How does a non-worldly subject do this? The clear answer is that it does not – we do not need the subject to “do” anything. A better question would be not “What does a subject do?” but rather “Why is a some notion of a subject needed?”

The suggestion here, which I take from Dale Jacquette, is that the subject is needed for the unidirectional relation of world and thought.29 The problem arises from the

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28 This metaphor highlights another problem with Brockhaus’s reading: it makes it seem as if the metaphysical subject is subject to causes or motivations – as if I need only give the subject a this-worldly object in order to make something happen in the world that would not happen if something not in the world (but also not beyond it) did not do something.

29 Cf. Jacquette, 2002. I take Hodges 1991 to have intended a similar point, but the few sentences he gives in explanation of his interpretation of the need for the subject and his labeling it a “pure representer” leave things unclear. Jacquette, however, offers a full account of why the idea that facts picture facts is
simple say/show metaphysics of the *Tractatus*. According to the *Tractatus*, thought is able to picture a possible world because both world and thought always have something in common: they have a shared logical form. However, this logical form is not itself a thing in the world that can be pictured. Instead, it can only be shown. This simple metaphysics seems to present a pressing question, one which has epistemological implications: what ensures the unidirectional nature of this logically grounded thought-world relation? As Jacquette points out, “Logical isomorphism between a picture and what it pictures is a necessary but not sufficient condition” (163) (for reasons we will see in a moment). And the necessary condition that would provide this sufficiency cannot be an empirical matter, since empirical investigation deals with facts, and while facts can picture other facts, there are not facts *about* other facts (*p* may be true, but this is not a fact about *p*) or facts that put other facts into relation with each other (since facts are configurations of objects and can picture other facts (and, as propositions, “assert” all that follows from them) but not “do” things to other facts). Thus, the necessary condition we seek is not empirical and it is not (as we will see) found in the necessary logical isomorphism.

With respect to the unidirectional nature of the logically grounded thought-world relation, the problem is that the picture that presents a state of affairs is a fact, while the state of affairs presented is also a fact. Thus, in picturing, we have a fact-fact relation. However, if left as it is, there is nothing in this relation to tell us which fact is the picture and which fact is the state of affairs. The absurd possibility of taking the world as a

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insufficient to account for the representational relation between picture and pictured and why this means that a notion of the subject is therefore needed.
picture of thought arises. This cannot be so, and, as Jacquette points out, Wittgenstein “seems to recognize that the pictorial relation must be unidirectional and involve chosen facts to stand in thought or language as pictures representing other designated facts” (163). This recognition is present in remark 2.1: “We make to ourselves pictures of facts.” Jacquette rightly speaks here of “making to ourselves pictures” as a matter of choice: I can make a picture of something (such as a cat on a mat) by choosing to utter a proposition with the right sense, thus projecting it onto the world. Here, the concept of “choice” is an ordinary psychological concept; it need not invoke anything more than the empirically observable phenomenon of my successfully using some facts as pictures of others. But again, how is it that I “know” what to choose, and how is it that my choices work – that I do in fact succeed in picturing some facts with others?

If thoughts were to have something in them that ensured this unidirectional relation, it is not immediately clear what it would be. According to tractarian semantics, a thought must have the same mathematical multiplicity as the state of affairs that it pictures, and so there could be nothing additional in the picture that provided or ensured this relation. There is, of course, the logical form of the thought, which is not a part of the thought’s multiplicity, but this form is a matter of the internal relation of the members of this multiplicity. This form gives the thought its sense, but this sense is “independent of the facts” (4.061). It is only put into relation with the facts through the method of projection, which is “the thinking of the sense of the proposition” (3.11). The thought then becomes, via the propositional sign (the written sentence, for instance, or the firing of neurons) through which it is expressed and which is itself projected, the proposition, which is “the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world” (3.12). It is this

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30 This possibility, with its schizophrenic implications, is discussed in Sass 1994.
projection, which is not itself part of the thought, that puts the thought into relation with reality. The thought itself is independent of the facts and cannot put itself into a truth-asserting relation with them.

Note, however, that the unidirectional relation must precede the projecting. Prior to projecting a propositional sign (which is simply the expression of a thought) we have the thought itself, which is a logical picture of the facts, and so it already “represents (darstellt) […] its sense” (2.221); it already “represents (stellt dar) a possible state of affairs in logical space” (2.202) and “agrees with reality or not” (2.21); it “presents (stellt vor) the facts in logical space” (2.11); and it does this (re)presenting prior to any projecting. The unidirectional nature is there from the start – it is not as if there is some confusion about the direction until we project. The reason we wish to say that the subject does the projecting is that it seems as if the thought were somehow inert on its own – it is only in relation is if it seen or used as such. So someone must see it or use it in its unidirectional relatedness. However, given the account of belief-functions that follows from the thesis of extensionality, it is not clear why it is not the biological entity that sees and uses it in this fashion. The problem, then, is not found in the projecting of thoughts but in the representational relation inherent in thoughts themselves – in the “fact” that they are there, ready to be projected by an agent wanting to do so.

So even though we must make a distinction between projecting and the representational relation, this does not answer our question, “What ‘secures’ the unidirectional relation?”: on the one hand, we know that the subject does not project (since it does not think), and even if it did, the relation in question must precede such projecting; on the other hand, there is also nothing “extra” in the thought that provides the
necessary relation. But perhaps all is not lost – perhaps the notion of the presentation of a thought is more complex that it seems. Again, given the strict multiplicity rule, there cannot be anything “extra” in the picture that accounts for its orientation. Yet Wittgenstein does speak of the thought as already in relation – as already world-oriented: “According to this view the representing relation which makes it a picture, also belongs to the picture” (2.1513), and “The representing relation consists of the co-ordinations of the elements of the picture and the things” (2.1514). Again, it is not clear how this coordination takes place. We might wonder, however, at the qualification that introduces this claim: “According to this view […].” The view under question is the metaphor of the picture as scale. This view speaks to what must be held in common for the picture to “measure” reality: there must be a shared form. The coordination (the presentation with which reality must accord) is there only in the sense, however, of a possibility arising from the shared form. But if the relation (the shared form, or the “fact” that a form is shared) that makes it a picture belongs to the picture, then what belongs to the picture is not just an internal relatedness (its form) but also a “representing relation” – a world-oriented relation (its form as something shared with something it pictures). This relation consists of a necessary orientation (in order to picture, the picture must picture another fact in the world), but the picture can only “contain” this relation insofar as the picture is inherently world-directed. Since, given the need for strict multiplicity, the objects of which the picture is constituted cannot provide this directionality, this directionality must have something to do with the shared form insofar as this form, while shared, is also marked by a crucial difference.
What might this difference be? In 2.15, we are told that the “connexion of the elements of the picture is called its structure,” and this is distinguished from “the possibility of this structure,” which is called “the form of representation of the picture.” This form is “the possibility that the things are combined with one another as are the elements of the picture” (2.151). This possibility/form is what “links” the picture with reality (2.1511) – it is what makes it possible to “apply” the picture like a “scale” to a reality that it will “measure” (2.1512-2.1513). The form is able to provide this link because it is what the picture and the pictured have in common (2.16-2.161). It might at first glance seem that the application is what is crucial, as if it is only when we apply a picture to the world that the picture’s representational possibility is made actual. However, this is not the case, since what is crucial is the form, which logically precedes the (actual) structure of an (empirically available) picture and which provides the picture with the possibility of its being a picture. Thus, there is the possibility of the picture (of a fact that is world-directed) before it is ever “applied” to the world.

So prior to the possibility of projecting is the possibility of (re)presentation. Without this, thought cannot be in a relation with the world that is to be thought through the expression of thoughts. Thought, in other words, would not be what it is without this possibility, since a thought just is such a possibility. But something must mark the difference in what is shared, and this “something” is necessary not just to ensure the unidirectional relation of thought and world; it is necessary if there is to be the possibility of any meaningful relation between them at all. It would seem that the only candidate for this “something” is the metaphysical subject, which is not complex (5.5421) and which does not think or present (5.631).
But how could the metaphysical subject be thought to “ensure” the unidirectional relation. What sort of (non)thing is it that could respond to this “need” for thought to picture a world? Again, we must here resist the temptation to treat the metaphysical subject as an entity of some kind, such as a transcendental ego, and to attribute some kind of activity to it that is vital but not in the world (such that the subject that does not belong to the world is the very thinking, presenting subject that is not, with “is not” being read as “is not something in the world,” implying that the subject thinks and acts, but from an impossible distance – from beyond the world). The logical argument of 5.541 (and, by extension, 5.631) applies not to a this-worldly as opposed to an other-worldly subject but to any subject as such: a subject cannot be complex and so cannot be related to a proposition in the ways assumed by contemporary superficial psychology. The subject could thus no more project/present from a metaphysical distance than a physical one. The logical gap between our desire to speak of a believing subject and a belief function is insuperable. We are thus not dealing with where a subject does its thinking but with the “fact” that thinking does not work like this, and the need to which the insistence on a notion of the subject is a response is (in part) the need for a recognition of the necessity of this unidirectional relation.

Perhaps the troubling word here is “metaphysical,” with its sense of a subsisting nonphysical entity. The trouble can be removed if we take into consideration what “metaphysical” means for the tractarian. It does not speak to something beyond the world – to an entity existing in another realm – but to a boundary of this one, one that makes it possible. We can thus argue that Wittgenstein inherited the Kantian distinction between a dogmatic and a transcendental metaphysics: dogmatism leads to the kind of harmful
speculation that Wittgenstein seeks to avoid while what is transcendental are necessary features of human experience – in this case, the necessary features of thought, which we “experience” in thinking. The notion of such a distinction was first pointed out by Stenius (cf. 215ff.) and reiterated decades later by Hans-Johan Glock:

Like Kant, the Tractatus sets philosophy the task of drawing the bounds between legitimate forms of discourse – notably the “contestable sphere of science” (TLP 4.113) – and illegitimate philosophical speculation – what Kant and Schopenhauer call ‘dogmatic metaphysics’ and Wittgenstein simply ‘metaphysics.’ (Glock 2001, 428)

Wittgenstein can thus be seen as relying upon a Kantian distinction between “bad” and “good” metaphysics: between the dogmatic metaphysics of the neo-platonist or scholastic caught up with what goes on in another world and the necessary, transcendental metaphysics of one who plays close attention to what goes on in this world.

However, it does not seem that the term “metaphysical” in the expression “metaphysical subject” is quite the same as “metaphysics.” While Stenius and Glock may be correct that the noun is short-hand for dogmatic assertions, the adjective appears to function as synonymous with “transcendental.” Evidence of this can be found in the Notebooks, where Wittgenstein uses the words “metaphysical” and “transcendental” to refer to the “mark” of the person whose world is limited in a way that is happy. Perhaps we might take the use of these two words as synonyms to reflect a desire to acknowledge the dangers of such notions while also realizing their necessity. We may then have both the dogmatic and transcendental registers combined. The notion of subject is introduced, albeit in a slightly disparaging and precarious fashion. Aesthetically, this is quite

31 The term “transcendental” is clearly Kantian in its use the Notebooks, used only when Wittgenstein is speaking of what is not in the world and so of what is non-accidental. As Kant put it in the First Critique, “All necessity, without exception, is grounded in a transcendental condition” (A106).
32 Cf. Notebooks 30.7.16.
effective: it draws one’s attention to the notion in a peculiar way. For instance, I find myself searching for the need that this notion addresses while carefully on guard against the dangerous nonsense to which it can lead. I also find myself attending to this world while recognizing that that is shown in the world and (further) that the shown is, although ineffable, not beyond the world and (further still) that the world would not be possible without what it shown, such that attending to the world involves seeing more than I can say without nonetheless being carried beyond over to a platonic realm.

The answer to our question (what other way is there to understand the subject) thus seems to be that it is a transcendental condition for the possibility of determinate meaning.33 One such condition must be that pictures are pictures of the world, and this is ensured through the necessary orientation that takes place in any thinking (thinking thinks its world) and, prior to that, in any thought (a thought is always a picture of world). And, since neither world nor thought ensures this relation, there must be “something” else that does, and this is what the tractarian calls “the subject,” such that “[t]here is therefore really a sense in which in philosophy we can talk of a non-psychological I” (5.641). And since this subject cannot be a part of the world, it must, like logic, be something transcendental. In fact, if it were part of the world, it could then hardly do the work of “ensuring” this directedness; it would be something at which thought could be directed. And if it was a thinking thing it could also not do that work, as it would already be caught up in the assumption that its thought is world-oriented. So the subject does not do the presenting or the thinking, but it somehow speaks to a necessity that takes place in both.

33 This is, in essence, also the answer put forth by Jacquette (2002). However, Jacquette presents the answer in Schopenhauerian terms of representation and will. I will turn to Jacquette’s presentation of this answer in the next paragraph.
No effort – no activity on the part of a mysterious entity – is needed to make sense of
this. The orientation is immediate and “necessary.” It is unavoidable.\(^3\)

This does not necessarily tell us how a limit or boundary can, in marking what
something is by (at least in part) marking it off from what it isn’t, enables something to
be what it is and us to see that something as what it is. Jacquette has argued that the
(metaphysical) subject does this insofar as it is a kind of will: it does not picture (or
project or intend (\textit{qua} Brockhaus) or represent (\textit{qua} Hodges)); rather, it wills \textit{that} there be
picturing, and since we already know that embodied, individuated human agents make
pictures to themselves, we do not need this act of will for the picturing but rather for its
possibility. Jacquette begins with the insufficiency of pictures for picturing, which we
noted above: “A picture is chosen from among facts, delegated by thought to represent
other analytically logically isomorphic facts. Merely putting two logically isomorphic
facts up against one another in a mirroring of their internal logical structures by itself can
never be enough to make one fact a picture of the other” (Jacquette 2002, 166). The facts
and what we do with them is not enough. Thus, if physiological occurrences are to enable
us to (successfully) make to ourselves pictures of facts, we need a “concurrence of
scaffold-like alignments of the internal logical structures or analytically logically
isomorphic facts plus the will that one fact represent another” (167; emphasis added), a
will that Jacquette also refers to as an “act of will” (166). This will is, in Schopenhauerian
fashion, a “will to represent” (167) and “a property of the metaphysical subject” (167); “it
does not try to picture facts” but rather “will[s] that facts be represented” (167). Further,
this will is made manifest in the fact that we can indeed picture our world. Without this

\(^3\) Or rather, it is unavoidable unless there is something wrong with our physiology: Sass (in Sass 1994)
entertains the possibility that in schizophrenia this unidirectionality is not ensured.
directionality, it would not be possible for us to “make to ourselves pictures of facts” 
(2.1).

The notion of willing that Jacquette presents is not anthropomorphic (as in 
Brockhaus and Hodges, in spite of their intention to avoid such an error) and is truer to 
the Schopenhauerian conception of will that had the clearest (if not strongest) influence 
on the early Wittgenstein in these matters. This metaphysical will is not an aiming, 
intending will that is oriented at the world (as opposed to somewhere else). Rather, its 
“willing” takes place at the deeper level of pictures (the level of thoughts themselves) as 
 opposed to projecting/thinking. It is “raw” and “blind” (Jacquette 2002, 168). It is a force 
(such as gravity) rather than an activity (such as thinking). The end result of this force is 
that we are subject to thought and to thinking.

It is not entirely clear to me at this point whether it is necessary to speak of the 
subject in terms of such an act of will, especially as Wittgenstein intentionally dropped 
such terminology (excepting 6.423, which states that the will is the bearer of value). I 
discuss the Schopenhauerian influence on Wittgenstein in these matters in Chapter 5, 
where I attempt to assess the influence of the Notebooks 1914-1916 on the conception of 
will in the Tractatus. Wittgenstein never explicitly identifies the metaphysical subject 
with a will of some kind in the Tractatus, and in these initial chapters I am trying to 
incorporate as little as possible from outside the Tractatus, but at some point we must 
reckon with Wittgenstein’s closest early examination of the notions of the willing subject, 
the will as attitude, and the act of will. However, Jacquette’s motivation for turning to the 
notion a metaphysical will seems warranted. It stems from the need for something outside 
thought to provide a condition for thought that thought itself cannot provide: certain facts
must have a unidirectional relation to other facts. Having shown that the psychological non-subject cannot account for this relation and yet noting clearly that the subject does not think, a “willing” of some kind is the only activity available to such a (non)thing. Thus, the subject does not think or even will thinking; rather, it wills that thought have a certain relation to the world in thinking. This makes thinking possible: “By willing representation, the metaphysical subject makes it possible for finite consciousnesses like ourselves extrasubjectively to make to ourselves pictures of facts, whereby picturing facts are pictorially unidirectionally related to the facts they picture” (168). There must be something about what is in my mind that enables me to put it in the projective relation, and this something precedes the relation. Thus, it is at this level where we must look for the subject and our being subjected to thought, but again, it is not clear to me why we must frame this condition in terms of willing, i.e., it is not clear to me why the notion of the subject and “my world” is not sufficient, as Wittgenstein seems to suggest in the November, 1916 entries in his Notebook. It is thus worth wondering why Wittgenstein dropped the willing subject.

One danger for the tractarian is that there is something bewitching about the notion of the will, something that opens us to temptations and illusions. Wittgenstein will investigate these temptations and illusions in the November, 1916 Notebook entries. But the main reason he will suggest for dropping the notion of the willing subject is ontological parsimony: the notion of the will does not do for us anything that is not already done by what can be seen in recognizing the conditions for my world. We might thus keep Ockham’s razor in mind here. Jacquette noted that Wittgenstein made use of this metaphor (stated explicitly at 3.328 and 5.47321) in cutting away the subject from
extensionality. We might now wonder if we should not use it to cut away the idea of will in connection with the subject. Of course, Jacquette’s most crucial points – both the problem he identifies (the need for unidirectionality and the insufficiency of facts and phenomenological, picturing humans in an attempt to account for this feature of thought) and his answer to it (the subject is what ensures this necessary condition for my world) – do not seem to be affected by whether we speak in terms of willing. Indeed, the word that I have used (“force”) says much the same thing. As I believe that we shall see, this will or force – whatever exactly it is to which we are subject when we find that we are able to use some facts as pictures of other ones – will ultimately be unassailable (unantastbar), like the Tractatus itself (cf. Preface 29).

One condition, then, of thought is that it is world-directed (i.e., able to be directed at a (possible) world), and another is that to be a biological entity capable of thinking is to be subject to thought – to the need to approach the world as one that is thinkable and to finding that at my disposable are some facts can be used to picture other ones. Thus, at the same time, the subject must mark a separation between us and the world. Just as thought must be directed at the world, it could also not be directed at the world if the two were not separate – if the world were not in some way the “other” of thought. Further, the possibility of such separation opens up the possibility of both “entertaining” (as when we think about what is possible without intending it as what we believe about the world (for example, when we speculate in science or when we write and/or read fiction) and of being wrong (since what I picture might not be accurate). As we will see, this lack of immediacy becomes a source of struggle: we struggle to picture the world and we struggle to do it right, but there are limits and illusions to which we fall prey.
Understanding these oddities of the relation between thought and world – that thought is always world-directed and yet also that what we think is at the mercy of the contingencies of the world (including those of our physiological capacities) – will be of great importance.

So then who does the thinking if not a subject (or how does thinking “happen”), and how, exactly, does the metaphysical subject provide a condition for such thinking without itself being reified as an active entity of some kind? The answer is, I think, that psychological agents do the thinking. However, they do not do it as subjects. In other words, there is thinking in the world, and there is no thinking subject. Wittgenstein is rejecting individual subjectivity as a philosophical problem in which philosophers try to get at the conditions for any possible thinking by speaking of an entity that is pure and that is beyond the world (Ishiguro). In the place of such subjectivity (and the problem it presents), he is accepting the possibility of getting at the conditions of thought by speaking of something that is not an entity – it is a limit. And while this limit is a condition for thought and thinking, Wittgenstein tells us very little about this reformed notion of subjectivity and the kind of subject-less thinking that it entails. It is thus to a fuller explication of that notion and what it entails that I now turn.
CHAPTER 2: OUT OF THE MADHOUSE:
The Unity of My World and the Sense of Solipsism

The ability to demarcate one psycho-physical entity as a unity is vital to our understanding of ourselves and others. However, the unity in question goes beyond that of the biological entity that the physically individuated human is; it is also a matter of the logically interrelated set of propositions that I use to present to myself the world, in the process laying claim to it as my world. The need for this unity is apparent if (returning to “Jones”) we see that Jones cannot, logically, say that he believes certain propositions to be true and others to be false (he can only specify this) and that Jones is nonetheless to be meaningfully viewed by a psychologist as a unique “source” of propositions. In other words, if what Jones believes does not in some sense matter (meaning that Jones’s belief claims are logical nonsense), then there must be some other way to approach Jones and Jones’s beliefs and, further, to approach Jones and not just any person or all people. In other words, why would the psychologist attend only to what Jones says? Why not do what the philosopher does and attend only to what can be said? What makes Jones both unique and unified, i.e., what makes the collection of things Jones says something discrete and somehow separate from what others say and yet worthy of attention in its own right?

We can claim that Jones – as a complex biological fact – stands as a cause of other facts, such as strings of signs that can be seen to have sense: neurons in Jones’s brain fire, leading to the projection of a “picture” that he thinks or utters (or thinks then utters). But we can actually go further than this: we can claim that Jones is a set of facts,
including not just the facts about the biological entity that he is but also the set of the
facts that make up what is the case for him (meaning the set of propositional claims about
the world that he takes to be true and those he takes to be false). The problem we then
face is determining more precisely what the notion of delimitation (with respect to the
subject as a limit) is supposed to capture with respect to actual individuals. A mere set of
facts, if it were simply a list of the facts that are true of Jones or believe by Jones (or
both), would miss the unity and structure that the facts of his/her world would have to
have in order to be meaningful. So the limit in question must provide us with a unity and
with one that is his, meaning not “his” as opposed to “mine” but rather but the world as it
can be seen and is seen by the subject from a vantage different from the one that other
embodied persons have on the world.

However, when Wittgenstein speaks of my world, he is not speaking of the
psychological ego:

5.641 There is therefore really a sense in which the philosophy we can
talk of a
non-psychological I.
The I occurs in philosophy through the fact that the “world is my
world.”
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.

We can thus talk of or speak about (reden von)\(^\text{35}\) the subject (a limit) because of the
“fact” that “the world is my world.” The world is limited in such a way that it becomes
mine. But how does this happen? Or rather, how are we to make sense of such a relation
to the world?

\(^{35}\) The phrase “reden von” or “Rede von” is translated variously as “to make mention of” (cf. 3.24, 3.33, 5.631, and 6.3432), “to talk of” (here at 5.641), “to speak of” (cf. Preface (2), 3.323, and 4.122), and “to speak about” (cf. 3.331 and 4.1211).
The notion of “my world” arises in the final comment on proposition 5. Proposition 5 states, “Propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions. / (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself.) Proposition 5.6 is the final comment on 5: “The limits of my language mean [bedeuten] the limits of my world.” The question is then, How do these notions of limit and “my world” offer useful commentary on the truth-functional nature of propositions? An answer to that question can be garnered from 5.61, in which Wittgenstein speaks of the limits of the world as a matter of possibility: we can think all possibilities (all the facts that could possibly be a part of the world), and beyond that we cannot think.

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. For that would apparently presuppose that we exclude certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case since otherwise logic must get outside the limits of the world: that is, if it could consider these limits from the other side also. What we cannot think, that we cannot think: we cannot therefore say what we cannot think.

Thus, if there is a possible state of affairs in the world, then it can be thought. However, the limit at issue here is not the limit of my world but of the world. The limits precede any actual world, including one that could be mine: they speak of what could be in it, but since logic is just the possibility of the forms that facts share, such that one can picture another, we cannot say in logic that there is something there in the world. We can only do that in language, as language provides us with a method for projecting thoughts and thus putting them into relation with the world as it is. This move from logic to language (as something sensibly perceptible) occurs in the final sentence: we cannot say (in a logically possible language) what we cannot think, since thinking is dependent upon thoughts, and
thoughts can only depict what is in the world, we can cannot speak of what is not (possibly) in the world.

In moving from what cannot say in logic (what there is in the world) to what we cannot say in language (we can say what there is in the world, but not what we cannot think), we begin to move from the notion of the limit of the world and what we can or cannot do to the notion of the limit of my world and what I can or cannot say. Indeed, the notion of language (and in particular my language) as a limit of my world (as opposed to the world) seems to involve a limit that is somehow different from the limit that is provided by logic. There is an empirical aspect to this: Language is, as Wittgenstein claims in 4.002, “part of the human organism and [no] less complicated than it. / From it it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language. / Language disguises the thought […].” Thus, there are aspects of language that serve no logical purpose and so do not fact play a role in our ability to say what we think. But we do have the capacity to get past such logically irrelevant “disguises” in order to clarify what we are saying and so reveal the logic at work in our (colloquial) language. This is the object of philosophical activity: “The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts” (4.112). It aims “to make propositions clear” (4.112). Presumably, the language that limits my world is the one that limits what I can say, so the liminal language at issue is the one that is (potentially) clarified by philosophical activity.

But are then all languages still equal upon logical clarification? Are they all equal in their capacity as a method of projection, such that what is thought in one can be thought in another? Much depends here on whether we are dealing with what is actual or with what is possible. For instance, although “[t]he world is everything that is the case,”
in 5.61 we are dealing with what *can* be thought – we are dealing with what is possibly
the case. But even if we are dealing here with the world of possible (and not simply
actual) experience, it might be that my language (the one that I understand) could fail to
accommodate all that is logically possible, such that what my language enables me to
project/think falls short of what I could actually experience in the world. My world would
be “smaller” than the world (whether the actual one or possible one) insofar as the
inadequacies of my language (upon logical clarification) keep my (in my thoughts and in
what I can say) at a distance from *everything* that is the case.

The crucial tractarian phrase at this point is found in the third sentence of 5.641:
“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.” We are not here speaking of
*my* language but rather of “the language which I understand [der Sprache, die allein ich
verstehe].” The “allein” modifies “Sprache,”36 such that the language in question is the
only one that I can understand. If we are this point doing philosophy, such that the “I” of
which we can speak is the subject, then the language in question is the only one that the
subject could understand. Thus, it is the logically clarified language in which every object
that I could possibly experience has a name and in which every possible configuration of
those objects could be pictured. Any additional limits to what I can think or say will not
be logical but empirical: they will be a contingent matter of the poverty (in terms of
names and logical precision) of the colloquial language(s) I know, how well I know that
language, and my neurophysiology.

36 The other possible interpretation – that the “allein” modifies “Ich” – was ruled out in corrections that
This interpretation of “der Sprache, die allein ich verstehe” is consistent with the claim that solipsism is to some extent a “truth” and “correct”:

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.
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.

If we take “der Sprache, die allein ich verstehe” to be synonymous with “my language,” then solipsism – that the world is my world – is shown insofar as my language limits the world as mine. But the “I” to whom this possible world belongs is the subject, not the human person, and the language understood is not the one that I understand in my psycho-physiologically limited way but language as it is logically possible. My world, then, is the world that is logically possible.

The danger here is that, if the world delimited as mine is no different from the logically delimited world (both are the world of what is possible and so of what we can think and say), then the two limits (language and logic) are the same. Further, there is a third limit, the subject, which appears in the “fact” that the world is my world, a “fact” that is itself shown in the “fact” the limits of my language mean the limits of my world. If the subject limits the world as mine, just as language does, then the added danger is that the subject, language, and logic are one.

I say “danger” here only because, if all these terms show something identical, then it seems that Wittgenstein has made things unduly confusing by giving the same “thing” so many different names. However, there are two useful and important distinctions that can be drawn between these three limits, and there is an important reason
that the boundary that they draw appears to be the same in each case. First, logic and language are not the same thing. Language is thought in its projective relation to the world, and this projection is possible in part because of the shared logical form of picture and pictured. Second, the subject is not the same thing as either the method of projection or the shared form of picture and pictured. Instead, the subject gives us the world-directedness of thought, such that thought can be projected onto the world in thinking our language. Yet although the subject, language, and logic provide us with three distinct limits, it is not surprising that all three delimit, each in their fashion, the same possible world (which is the world that can be thought), since there can be no other world for the tractarian philosopher.

It is in this sense that, in meaning my world with the language that I understand, “I am the world” (5.63) and that this solipsistic world in one of “pure realism” in which the I is simply “an an extensionless point” aside from which there “remains [only] the reality co-ordinated with it” (5.64). However, here a problem seems to arise, one that puts stress on the idea that the limit provided by the subject is the same as that provided by logic and a (possible) language: there is a potential discrepancy between the world delimited by the subject (if it in fact delimits an actual world) and the possible one given by logic and language. The problem arises with the notion of a coordinate reality and with the notion of experiencing a world. In both cases, it appears at first glance that what is at issue is what is actually the case (and not merely what is possibly the case). If this is so, then the what the subject delimits is contingent (since it depends on what happens to be the case. It does not seem that this can be so, since the contingent limits I (the human
person) encounters are a matter of what is empirical and assayable by the natural sciences, whereas the subject is something transcendental, and so it is non-contingent.

Reality is, according to the tractarian ontology, “the existence and non-existence of atomic facts” (2.06).\textsuperscript{37} Thus, what is coordinate with the subject is not just possibilities but existence (or lack thereof). But what is coordinate with the subject is not what the subject delimits; rather, it is what remains in the world once the subject has been “removed” (once it has been seen to withdraw and to not be what we thought it was). Wittgenstein could mean by “the reality co-ordinated with [the subject]” merely the existence and non-existence of atomic facts \textit{as such}, i.e., the reality (whatever it happens to be and whatever it could possibly be). Thus, reality (what exists) will vary from moment to moment, but whatever it is, it \textit{that} that is co-ordinated with the subject. Such reality need not exhaust my world, insofar as I can think about not only what actually exists at the moment but what could possibly exist at the moment (even if it doesn’t) or at some future moment. Thus, the “fact” that a proper understanding of the subject shows that it is not something in the world but merely an extensionless point with which what is actual is coordinated does not mean that the subject delimits this reality. This reality is simply what remains when the subject “disappears,” and it is what is there for us when we attempt to test the truth of that which we think.

The notion of experience (found at 5.631) is a bit more troubling, although it brings us closer to the issue at hand (how all this should reform how we think about ourselves). The notion of experience is troublesome because it does in fact seem to involve treating the subject in terms of actual experience. To some extent, this is the same

\textsuperscript{37} The word used at 5.64 is \textit{Realität}, but elsewhere Wittgenstein writes \textit{Wirklichkeit} (with 2.06 being the first use of the world). I take \textit{Realität} to be a synonym for tractarian \textit{Wirklichkeit}. 
problem presented by the notion of co-ordinate reality: I can only experience what is real, and so if the subject is co-ordinated with reality (the one that can be thought to be the case at the moment), it would seem that the subject delimits an actual world and not a possible one. We have just seen that this is not a problem if we understand the reality as what “remains” as thinkable (in the sense of what can be specified as true at a given moment) and a something that can be “coordinated” with a subject is not what the subject delimits (since what that “remainder” is, i.e. what is actually the case, is not up the subject). However, the idea of experience seems to preclude such a distinction. Experience is a matter of what I (the human person; the biological entity) undergo. It is a matter of that limited sets of “what is the case” that I actually encounter. This is only a small part of the world, and the entirety of the world (everything that is the case) is coordinated with me only in the limited (logical) sense of being potentially described by me and/or inferentially connected to what I say and think (even if I am not aware of those connections).

Nonetheless, Wittgenstein brings up such a notion of experience in his comment on the claim that “I am world.” He writes,

5.631 If I wrote a book “The world as I found [vorfand] 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 [Rede] could not be made.

Since the subject is something that we can talk (reden) about in philosophy, this book is not a book of philosophy. Instead, it treats not of the limits or conditions of the world but of what one can “find” within it. The verb vorfinden speaks not simply of finding but of coming across or stumbling upon: it is a matter of what happens to be there. There is thus
not a sense of my looking for something that I wish to find but rather of my being at the mercy of what I find (of the reality coordinated with “me”). All that I could say or describe as found in my world is that which is sayable: facts. Such include such mundane events as lifting an arm, and to “obey my will” here refers to the ordinary empirical phenomenon of being able to intentionally move my own arm in a way that I cannot move the arm of another.

But does not this notion of “my world (the one I find)” limit things too fully? For if “my world” includes those things that obey my will, then it seems that my world is different from yours: your body does not obey my will, so the world as you find it will be different from the world as I find it, and thus it might seem that we have different worlds. But if the world is my world because it is limited by the language possible for a subject, then it would seem that the subject offers up different worlds (or that there is a different subject, one for each individual). At the same time, given that the “I” that is being talked about in the 5.6s is the subject, and given that this I is the world, it would seem that there cannot be different worlds given by the subject, which merely enables thought to be world-directed.

Severin Schroeder has argued that what is at issue here is not the different worlds that individuals experience but rather the inaccessibility of the experiences of others. This, he argues, is the point or extent of the tractarian solipsism:

Wittgenstein’s idea is that the apparently common-sense view that others have experiences like myself cannot really be imagined or expressed in language. Language does not allow the ascription of mental life to others; and since the boundaries of language reflect the boundaries of the world (TLP 5.6), others cannot have a mental life. (Schroeder 96)
In saying that “others cannot have a mental life,” he means that “one cannot make sense of another person’s experience” (96). Schroeder interprets Wittgenstein as offering a two-step argument for this, and only the first step “is (fairly) explicit” (97). The first (fairly explicit) step is the 5.63s, in which Wittgenstein presents the subject as not being in the world (a step that is consistent with what we learned in the 5.54s). The second step is to recognize the implications this has for a logically proper notation: if the “I” is not an object of experience, then we cannot say “I see a tree” but only “A tree is seen.”38 Thus, just as we cannot say “I believe the tree is green,” we cannot say “I see a green tree.” The result is that we cannot distinguish among reports of the experiences of different people, such that I am left with only my experience. Since I could not possibly encounter the experience (the mental state) of another person, others are (as subjects) inaccessible to me, whereas I am accessible to myself. Thus, Schroeder argues that tractarian solipsism results in a “semi-behaviorism,” in which we reduce the psychological states of others “to dispositions to show certain patterns of behavior” whereas we do not apply a similar reduction to ourselves, treating (for instance) pain not as a (mere) pattern of behavior but as something “really felt” (99).

His interpretation of the first step begins with remark 5.261, according to which “[t]he world and life are one.” According to Schroeder, “That is to say, the world is only the world one experiences in life: objects and events exist only as a part of person’s experiences” (97). In other words, “The world is the world one experiences.” He then extends this to an interpretation of 5.63 (“I am my world.”), which immediately follows 5.261 (although it is not a comment on it), obtaining “I am the world of my experiences”

38 Schroeder cites 4.002 for the point about a proper notation; the “A tree is seen” example is taken from ML 309.
This conclusion seems prima facie to be dubious: Schroeder is mistaking the biological entity for the subject. Surely, we might say, it is the person, not the subject, that has experiences? Schroeder, however, would question the word “has” here. We might, he notes, “expect ‘I have (or experience) the world of my experiences,’” but this is not in fact the case, since the philosophical I “is not an object […] that could stand in a possessive relation to its experience” (97). The point he makes here echoes our earlier conclusions regarding mental states such as belief, judgment, and thinking: there is no object that could stand in a relation of “believing” to propositions, and the relation that we do call “belief” is not a fact that can be described.

Nonetheless, we did not conclude that we do not “have” beliefs. I have beliefs, and so does Jones, but this is something we specify, not something that we can say or describe: I need only say “yes” or “no” to indicate this (cf. 4.023), and the I can do this as a biological entity. Of course, it would not be possible for me to do this if I could not think, and since thought is not possible without a subject, and since there would be nothing to believe without thoughts, there could be no believing or judging without a subject. In this sense, the subject is a necessary but not sufficient condition for belief, and the subject is not my beliefs. We might expect to find something similar with experience: the subject is a necessary but not sufficient condition for beliefs, and the subject is not my experiences.

This is not, however, the sort of route that Schroeder takes in his account of tractarian experience. Instead, making no mention of the tractarian encounter with mental states in the 5.54s, he moves from the claim that the subject is a condition for the possibility of experience to the conclusion that the subject is its experiences. He writes
that “it is a logical truth that without a subject there could not be any experience” (97).

However, no argument is forthcoming in support of this claim, although we have just seen that it is a plausible one. More troubling will be the identification of the subject with experience.

Schroeder does not offer an account of the tractarian notion of experience (Erfahrung), and the notion is not very developed in the Tractatus. We know that experience is not needed to understand logic (5.552), it cannot decide matters of logic (5.553), and it cannot contradict logic (6.1222). Further, experience cannot be a priori and it can always be otherwise (5.634): it is a matter of what is in the world, which is contingent and accidental. It gives us that with which our science must harmonize (6.363). Experience, then, is a matter of the “What” (5.552) – a matter of what is the case. Thus, experience is experience not “that something is” but rather “that something is so” (5.552). It is our undergoing how things stand as they stand as far as we are able. It is, so to speak, our access to what is the case.

But is it the case that we must think what is the case in order to experience it, i.e., could we have access to without or prior to thought? If experience is simply a matter of my awareness of what I “stumble” (vorfinde) upon, it would seem that I need some means of becoming aware of what exist “apart” from me. Take, for instance, my experience of the cat being on the mat. I am able to experience this visually: I see it. But, in simply seeing this fact, am I thinking – am I making a picture of it, one that could be considered the projection of a thought, which is a significant proposition (4)? Put in terms of propositions, the claim that experience is thought seems too strong. Cats experience the world, in the sense that a cat has perceptual experience: it could see another cat on the
mat. But cats do not have ability to put forth significant propositions. But it is not necessarily the case that thoughts occur in words (although they must have the possibility of being projected): Wittgenstein insisted, in a letter to Russell, that a thought does not consist of words: “Does a *Gedanke* consist of words? No! But of physical constituents that have the same sort of relation to reality as words” (CL 125). Such mental pictures need never be projected in language and so expressed as sentences. Yet this still does not tell us whether perception requires pictures – whether it is a kind of thinking.

Hacker took the early Wittgenstein to believe that perceptual experience is a kind of thinking, insofar as it involves making pictures of facts, which in turn leads to a conceptual problem in the rudimentary tractarian epistemology. For instance, one thing about which Wittgenstein appears to show no concern is how we justify our claims about the world. According to 2.222, a picture is true only if it “agrees” with reality, and we see this agreement by “comparing” the picture with reality. The picture is thus “like a scale applied to reality” (2.1512). The only claims we get that speak to this issue are the 2.15s and the 3.1 with the notion of applying or projecting picture (on)to reality. The pictures at issue here must be elementary propositions, since more complex propositions are truth-functions of them. Thus, it must be possible to compare pictures with reality to see if they both agree.

The problem that Hacker sees is that this “[a]greement of picture and pictured, as a paradigm of cognition, presupposes what it is meant to explain” (Hacker 53). In other words, to see if a picture (a score or a model, in the examples from the *TLP* that Hacker uses) is “accurate,” we “must already be able to judge how the facts which it models are” (53). The word “accurate” is used since, with these pictures, the question is not so much
one of truth as with whether the picture is an accurate on with respect to the facts it pictures. If thinking simply is a matter of making to ourselves pictures of facts, the issue is then how we get non-thinking access to facts such that we can judge the accuracy of our thoughts. Further, if have this access and it is reliable, we might well wonder why we then make inaccurate pictures to ourselves.

With respect to a musical score or a scale model of a building, we have to have perceptual access to both the score and performed tune (in the first case) and the building and its model (in the second). In order to judge the accuracy of the pictures, we must then compare what is perceived as the picture with what is depicting, and we need a criterion for comparison. Hacker here makes no mention of the criterion, but it seems clear that it would be a matter of a shared mathematical multiplicity and an isomorphism: the picture must have enough “names” for what is depicted and they must be put together in the same form. Thus, we must be able to “think” what is perceived in order to compare it to the perceived picture. But this then seems to be mean the perceptions involve “perceptual propositions” (53) that depict (accurately) what is depicted so that we can compare it with the picture (the score/model) that also attempts to depict. How, then, do we judge that our “perceptual proposition” is accurate?

Hacker extends the point to the judgment of propositions, using the example from Moritz Schlick of verifying that a cathedral has two spires. When I say, “The cathedral has two spires” (and then specify that this is true), I do not verify my truth-claim by comparing the propositional sign (the sensibly perceptible sign of the proposition) with the cathedral. Rather, in order to verify the proposition, “we must observe the cathedral, look at is spires, and judge that it has two” (53). Hacker’s claim is that, to do this, we
must again have a “perceptual proposition”: we have a perceptual picture of the fact. When we verify our asserted proposition, we then compare it not to the fact but to this other proposition. This seems redundant: comparing one proposition to another does not address the issue of whether the perpetual proposition is true. But this must be the case, Hacker argues: no proposition can “stand in an ‘immediate’ relation to reality and [be] verified by acts of comparing” since this “requires that we be able to conceive facts without bringing them under concepts, and that we be able to ‘sense’ the sense of a proposition” (53). More simply stated, “[A] proposition cannot be compared with a fact” (54). We could not ‘think’ the fact, drawing out its content and form in order to see if the it matches that of the picture; drawing such a thing out would be a matter of attending to its sense, but this can only be done with propositions. Therefore, “What makes a proposition true cannot be what justifies asserting it” (54). If I see two spires and then say that it is so, it will not be possible to then turn back to that initial perceptual experience.

If what Hacker says is true, then the question is not whether the subject *is* its experiences, but whether experience of the world is possible at all, since our experience is either non-propositional and so cut off from propositions, or it is propositional and so cut off from the world. In either case, we could not verify what we thought or said. Further, the tractarian semantics seems to be thrown into question: if the aim of this semantics is to establish the conditions for the possibility of determinate meaning, and if the sense of the proposition just is what the proposition depicts (saying the proposition has a sense is saying that it represents (vorstellt) a state of affairs (4.031)), it would be odd if we could not determine whether the proposition does in fact depict what it depicts. Thus, we must
ask if Hacker is correct: is the tractarian semantics incompatible with a possible epistemology?

As a means of approaching an affirmative answer, I wish to look at a version of this problem (the disconnection between perceiving and thinking) that Wittgenstein would have encountered in Schopenhauer’s critique of Kant at the end of *WWR I*. Schopenhauer criticizes Kant’s separation of perception from understanding, arguing that Kant’s mistake here is

that he gives no theory of the origin of empirical perception, but, without more ado, treats it as *given*, identifying it with mere sensation to which he adds only the forms of perception, namely space and time, comprehending both under the name of sensibility. But still there does not arise any objective representation from these materials. (*WWR I* 445)

Schopenhauer argues that in treating such perception as “given,” Kant dismisses and thus overlooks a crucial issue. The problem as Schopenhauer sees it is that an objective representation arises only when the sensations are subsumed under the principle of causality: only then do they become objective, and so perception requires understanding or it “remains always subjective” (445). It is this knowledge of the causal nexus that enables me to take the manifold of experience (the “given”), such that “my understanding, in spite of the variety and plurality of the effects, still apprehends the unity of the cause as a single object exhibiting itself in just this way in perception” (448). The understanding – and the unity of experience – is thus already at work at the level of perception.

Since Kant did not realize this, his philosophy becomes at this point becomes caught up in “great obscurity” and a “mysterious method” (450), as he must account for the connection between perception and understanding and does so with his notorious
notion of schemata in the imagination. Kant is forced to recognize some connection, however, as

every now and then we attempt to go back from abstract thinking to perceiving [...] in order to really convince ourselves that our abstract thinking has not strayed far from the safe ground of perception, and has possibly become somewhat high-flown or even a mere idle display of words, much in the same way as, when walking in the dark, we stretch out our hand every known and then to the wall that guides us. (449)

In other words, we take this “fleeing, retrospective glance at perception from which our concepts are taken, in order to assure ourselves that our thinking has real content” (450). The problem with this is that such a glance “necessarily presupposes that the concepts which occupy us have sprung from perception”: the glance is “a mere glance back at their material content, [and so] in fact a remedy for our weakness” (450). (The “weakness” here is our failure to have faced the problem of the connection between perception and understanding more fully.) For Kant, the schemata (the “fleeting phantasm” (449) and “a monogram” (450)) in the imagination is what is supposed to enable us to recall perceptions so that we can “only tentatively and for the moment” go back to these (originating) perceptions. But for Schopenhauer, the purpose of the schemata (to hook the understanding up back up to perception) is not needed when we realize that “when an empirical perception comes from [pure intuition], it is the sensation on the one hand, and knowledge of causality on the other,” and that later knowledge is a priori and “just the form and function of the pure understanding” (451). The understanding is already at work and must already be at work if perception is to be possible.

While Wittgenstein would reject the principle of sufficient reason, Schopenhauer’s notion of perception as a kind of understanding (or rather as already involving understanding) seems to provide a means of understanding how Wittgenstein
can avoid the dilemma that Hacker has explicated. One the one hand, we want access to the world that will enable us to compare our pictures with reality – an access that it itself not involved in pictures that require comparison. On the other hand, this access must provide us with the what would verify the accuracy of the picture – the kind of thing that can be the object of a judgment (meaning that it gives us access to the form/objects that constitute the state of affairs, such that we are able to specify propositions as true (when they are) with some measure of accuracy). If we follow (and if Wittgenstein followed) Schopenhauer’s lead here, then the solution would be found (for Wittgenstein) in the tractarian ontology: the world is already subject to logic, such that it is composed of objects in logically possible configuration; it is thus already accessible to picturing. However, perception, while it generates “pictures,” does not generate propositions or thoughts. Rather, it gives us access to the world so that we can compare our pictures with it, a comparison that is possible (for the tractarian) given the tractarian ontology.

Thus, the projection of sense onto the world is not the same thing as perceiving. Or rather, perceiving is not a kind of thinking, although the conditions for the possibility of thought (a world composed of objects in determinate configurations) is already at work. When I claim “The cathedral has two spires,” I verify that it is true by looking at the world to see if the cathedral has two spires. The perception is not, as Hacker claims, a kind of judgment. It is, as the latter Wittgenstein would say, a matter of looking and seeing. There could be something wrong with our physiology; this might become obvious is someone always obtained inaccurate verifications based on faulty perceptions. However, this physiological side of things is not of interest to tractarian philosophy. Further, in perception we do not, in Hacker’s Kantian way of putting it, “conceive of
facts without bringing them under concepts” (53). Perception is a matter of the “passive”
reception of how the world is, not the active projecting of a sense onto the world. Nor is it
clear why comparing a proposition to a perceived world involves that “be able to “sense”
the sense of a proposition” (53). I take Hacker to mean that (to compare propositions to
facts) we would have to intuit the sense directly (sans a propositional sign in which it is
expressed) and then compare the sense (the possible state of affairs) with the actual state
of affairs. An ability to grasp a sense without explanation is vital to the semantics (4.02-
4.021) and our ability to communicate new things (4.03). The tractarian thus need only
premise our oft-exhibited ability to understand what another says, the sign of which
would be our looking at the world (which perception enables us to do) in order to see that
it is as the other says it is. Hacker seems to make the mistake that Kant did: he treats
experience as being something given (for Wittgenstein) and then structured as pictures,
when the structure in question is already present at every step of the epistemic process: in
the fact that is known, the perception of it (when our physiology and/or instruments are
not faulty), and the thinking of what we experience. Thus, what makes a proposition true
is, for the tractarian and contra Hacker’s account of the TLP, the very thing that justifies
our saying it: if I assert a proposition, and then state of affairs is seen to obtain, then what
makes the proposition true (that things are so) is what leads me to affirm the proposition
as true. Without the possibility of such experience, determinate thought would not be
possible. And so, for the tractarian, perception is not thinking, but it is subject to the same
condition to which all experience is subject: the world, meaning that all experience is
experience of configurations of objects that can be depicted through the thinking of
propositions with sense.
Let us return to the question of the subject and experience. In order to obtain the conclusion that the subject is its experiences, we still need to further refine the notion of experience. We can distinguish between experience as simple Erlebnis (as something that I have, such as encounters with the facts upon which I happen to stumble, facts that anyone can describe) and as something more like Erfahrung (as the ongoing experiences that I undergo and from which I learn and draw meaning and build a sense of self).

Schroeder never refers to the German terms and so does not make these distinctions, but they make sense of the unarticulated move he makes from “subject as necessary condition for experience” to “subject as identified with (its) experiences”: he argues that if there is no object that is “the subject” and that can be in a possessive relation to experiences, we cannot speak of having experiences; however, if there is nonetheless a subject (necessary for experiences) and there are experiences, the subject, if it cannot possess the experiences, “must be identified with its experiences” (97). In other words, I do not have (a world of) experiences; I am them. But why, if the subject cannot have experiences, should we then conclude that it is experience – or rather its experiences, opposed to other possible experiences? If we think in terms of Erlebnis and Erfahrung, we can make sense of this move: I do experiences the world, and I experience only my experiences and not those of another, and I experience my experiences with a unity across space and time. Thus, what is at stake in claiming that a subject is its experience is not the possibility of having pictures of the world but of the unity of what I picture – what Kant calls the “unity of apperception.”

For Kant the unity of apperception is the “fact” that my experiences are united in “one consciousness” (B 133/153) and are “all mine” (B 134/154). This unity is
represented in the expression “I think” (B138/157), which must be able to accompany all of my representations (B131/152), although in this “I think,” both act (B137/156) and representation (B138/157) of pure apperception (“the transcendental unity of self-consciousness” (B132/153), “nothing manifold is given” (B138/157). It represents no “thing” that could be found in experience. Insofar as this pure apperception is a unifying, non-object limit, it fits with Wittgenstein’s use of the subject.

Yet it does not fit perfectly, insofar as for Wittgenstein there is no “I think.” There is no expression or representation such as “I think” that we can attach to other representations, as the 5.54s made clear. Thus, there is no thinking subject. The same point is made in Schopenhauer: the “I think” of pure apperception is the knowing subject (WWR I 452), the theoretical ego (WWR II 251), not the being-in-itself that is without object and not itself an object, beyond being known and yet made manifest in thinking (cf. WWR II 273-274). The unity that Kant wishes to stake out is thus still found at the experiential level, whereas the notion of subject in Wittgenstein is beyond all experience. Or rather, it is co-ordinated with all of it, not simply what I (an individual human) experiences.

The example on which Schroeder relies is the experience of pain, although any bodily experience could suffice. Based on the contingency of bodily experience (that it could be otherwise), Schroeder argues that something non-contingent is needed to unite such experience across (logically possible) contingencies. The full argument, including this point about pain and the Schroeder’s two-step tractarian solipsism, can be presented as follows:

1. “The fact that my perceptions and thoughts are lodged in this particularly body is merely contingent.” (97). Thus, it could be otherwise, which
Schroeder takes to me that my same self could find itself in a different body tomorrow, but still be the same self.

2. If I then look for this self in my mind, I will not find a subject.

3. The subject cannot be found because it is not a phenomenon, a datum, but an a priori condition of thought, since it is an a priori truth that experience depends on a subject, and a priori truths cannot be otherwise and cannot be learned from experience. (The first step)

4. This means that the subject cannot be represented in language.

5. This means that there is no way to distinguish my experience from yours in language – there are simply the facts that can be experienced. In other words, “we cannot make sense of the idea that there might be different people having experiences” (98; italics removed). (The second step)

6. We must then conclude, “There is only this experience” (98), and not “my experience” as opposed to “your experience” and “his experience” and so on.

7. Semi-behaviorism is true: only my experiences are really felt by a unified consciousness, while yours are only observed phenomenon.

This inability to make sense of the experience of others is what, Schroeder argues, the solipsist means. It is “the dismissal of other minds” (95). This position that other minds exists is one of two positions that the solipsist can reject. The other is that the material world exists independent of (my) mind, the dismissal of which leads to idealism.

Schroeder thus argues that Wittgenstein inverts Schopenhauerian solipsism, rejecting the existence of other minds but not a mind-independent reality (cf. 95-96).

It is not entirely clear what Schroeder means when he claims that Schopenhauer endorsed the dismissal of a mind-independent reality, but Schroeder rightly notes (on 96) that Schopenhauer did regard the dismissal of other minds as madness. Schroeder refers to the passage on *WWR I* 104: Such solipsism, which he calls “theoretical egoism,” is as “a serious conviction […] found only in madhouse”. However, it is not clear that this egoism, which Julian Young calls “empirical solipsism,” or “the view that the only “I” that exists is the embodied, human self” (Young 260), is not also rejected by Wittgenstein. In fact, Wittgenstein clearly rejects such a view: the world is full of embodied, human selves, which are an object of natural sciences, including psychology.
Further, it seems that Wittgenstein *does* endorse a form of metaphysical solipsism, according to which there is only one subject. The adoption of such a metaphysical solipsism does not require that we deny the experiential reality of others, and, as we will see later, it may well be vital to the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus*.

Given that Wittgenstein would share Schopenhauer’s critical reading of Kantian apperception, it seems odd that Schroeder did not acknowledge the possibility that Wittgenstein was again following (or at least in line with) Schopenhauer on the question of solipsism. Indeed, the very question that opens up the problem of experience as presented by Schroeder is found in Schopenhauer. As John Atwell phrases it, the key question is this: “Can the recognition that one’s own body is both representation and will be reasonably extended to other “bodies,” that is to intuitive representations (as they are usually called) or perceptual objects external to one’s body?” (Atwell 1995, 94)

According to Atwell, Schopenhauer doe not believe that “logic or reasoning […] demands an extension of what we recognize about ourselves to outer objects,” but he does believe that “if we do not carry out this extension, then we shall have to acknowledge certain very unfortunate (and even deeply disturbing) theses” (95). One such thesis is theoretical egoism, or solipsism with respect to other minds: such a thesis requires me to treat only myself as “real” (as both representation and will) and all others (“everything else,” in fact) as “fundamentally unreal” (meaning devoid of will) (Atwell here quotes *WWR I* 104). Further, the solipsism in question is not the denial of (knowledge of) other minds but rather the denial of reality (= will) to everything else. The question, Atwell observes, is: May I attribute will to other objects?
The answer in §19 of Volume 1 seems to be negative, insofar as Schopenhauer writes that such solipsism is “the last stronghold of scepticism” and this “fortress is impregnable” and “can never be refuted by proofs” (104). However, Schopenhauer also claims that we need not worry about it, as “the garrison can never sally forth from it” (104). Further, as a condition for the madhouse, it “would then need not so much a refutation [which it will not admit] as a cure” (104). The rest of §19 investigates the “double knowledge” I have of myself as real (as representation and will), as this offers the “key to the inner being of every phenomenon in nature” (105). This sets up the proof of the will as thing-in-itself in §20.39

So what, then, is the cure that saves me from the madhouse? Both Atwell and Young have noted that the “cure” is to be found in Schopenhauer’s ethical philosophy.40 A hint of this is found in the passage on 104, as noted by Atwell: “Theoretical egoism entails practical egoism, according to which “a man regards and treats only his own person as a real person, and all others as mere phantoms,” and that doctrine, Schopenhauer holds, expresses the fundamental stance of an evil man” (96; quoting WWR I 104). In denying “reality” (will) to others, we are denying the basis of morality, insofar as the denial of the reality/will of others is to “deny the possibility of compassion” (96). Thus, as Atwell rightly notes, to endorse theoretical egoism “has truly momentous ethical ramifications” (96).41

39 I will take a careful look at this proof in Chapter 4.  
40 Hacker (1972) seems to have missed this possibility: he refers only to what he calls “Schopenhauer’s glib dismissal of solipsism” and claims that “one would not expect a purist such as Wittgenstein to rest content with [it]” (71). Schroeder, who is clearly deeply indebted to Hacker’s interpretation at points, is perhaps following his lead too fully here.  
41 In this context, Atwell quotes the necessary ethical credo offered by Schopenhauer in Volume II: “We can therefore set this up as the necessary credo of all righteous and good men: ‘I believe in a system of metaphysics.’” (WWR II §17, 175).
Young also argues that Schopenhauer has ethical reasons for attributing reality/will to others. In fact, Young claims that Schopenhauer has here a refutation, found in his refutation of practical egoism as “based on a metaphysical illusion” in Volume IV (Young 70). Young’s claim is grounded in Schopenhauer’s “doctrine that the real self is non-empirical, not an object in the world of experience, and that it is identical with all other real selves,” and Young calls this doctrine “metaphysical solipsism” (180). This doctrine is vital to the move from egoism to altruism. Thus, Young seconds Atwell’s claim that Schopenhauer has reasons for affirming the attribution of reality/will to others, and that this attribution involves a recognition of the significance of the metaphysical subject.

We can now apply these insights from Schopenhauer to elucidate more fully the “meaning” of tractarian solipsism, and what we find is not in fact a semi-behaviorism or any other dismissal of other minds. As Jacquette puts it,

> The world may be “my” world, as Wittgenstein states in *Tractatus* 5.641, but it is not mine as opposed to yours.42 The world does not belong to any particular personal empirical subject of superficial psychology, but to the impersonal undifferentiated extraworldly transcendent subject, the metaphysical, not the phenomenological “I”, at the limit of the world. (Jacquette 1998, 106-107).

Thus, Schroeder’s move from Step 6 (there is not a world of experience that is mine but not yours) to Step 7 (I experience things but you do not) is not justified. We have grounds for concluding only that the world “belongs” to the metaphysical subject, which I (the embodied human person) “am” only in the limited sense that I have a world that I experience. But if the subject *is* its experiences, then that subject is *all* that is experienced, and all this experienced goes beyond what I (the embodied human person)

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42 This is Step 6 in my reconstruction of Schroeder’s argument.
experience. This is the same thing as saying the subject (the I) is the world. This then does not provide me (as opposed to you) with some special epistemic or phenomenological status with respect to what I experience. The fact that I cannot experience what you experience is a contingent matter, due to the fact that I am in this body, with its contingent limits. And while I have no access to an object that is “you” or “your experiences (beyond your ability to put them into propositions),” there is no object that is “me” either. And finally, the same unity that is found in “my” world – the unity that is shown in what I say – is also shown in what you say.

The real lesson is then this: My experience is no more propositionally real than yours, but I can see that you, like me, are subject to a unified world of experiences that you attempt to think. And since the world is composed of your experiences, understanding the world involves understanding your experiences, which are available to me only in language. Likewise, I exist for you only in this manner. Thus, for the tractarian, language is crucial to our encounters with each other. Schroeder makes the mistake of treating the tractarian subject as the knowing subject or theoretical ego – as a mind – and then treats a single embodied self as having a mind. In this manner, he endorses empirical solipsism, which the tractarian would reject.

So how then do we approach another?

Returning to Jones, we can now make two claims about what the notion of the subject as limit entails with respect to our approach toward Jones: one is that Jones is a “locus” of unity; a second is that Jones is a “source” of propositions. If these claims are true, then is Jones being reduced (by and for the tractarian) to a set of facts coordinated more or less successfully (but perhaps never perfectly) with the world? Do these claims
justifies or necessitate (on tractarian terms) this reduction? In saying that Jones is subject to a world that is just a portion of the world possible for a *the* subject, does we lose something of Jones?

The notion of subject here is such that the tractarian cannot say that Jones is a subject (let alone *the* subject). *Jones* is not a limit of the world; he belongs to it as a biological entity. What Wittgenstein is claiming here is that thought does not simply require orientation toward a world; it also requires language – it requires a *means* of being projected toward the world. However, any language I use will have at least two constraints. The first has to do with what counts as elements within it, which is a contingent matter insofar as we must provide names for the objects that happen to be in the world (5.5571) and is a necessary matter insofar as what counts as elements is discovered by the application of logic and so will fall within limits of logic (5.557). The second has to do with the assertions that can be built from those elements, which is a logical matter. Without this connection with the contingency of the world and this internal unity, thought would not be possible: thought must take place in language, and that language will be subject to necessity that is (within the arbitrary sphere of what the elements happen to be) logical and regular.

This leads us back to the crucial feature of thought given in the 2.15s and the 3.1s: thought is only put in touch with an actual world when it is projected in a language. Any actual language will have contingent limitations, but within those limits, it will be subject to logical regularity. The world of one who is subject to this language will be limited by what the language allows as a possibility. Further, in being subject to language, I (the

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43 It would also seem that the notion of individuation as applied to the subject does not make sense: “As in Schopenhauer, we can probably assume at least as a working hypothesis that Wittgenstein will not imagine a *principium individuationis* to apply to the metaphysical subject” (Jacquette 2002, 169).
biological entity) am subject to having a world that I can picture. And I (the biological entity) cannot help but be oriented to this world within and by my language. Thus, when the psychologist approaches me, the philosophical notion of subject that should guide him/her will direct him/her to attend to the language to which I am subject and the world in which I make pictures to myself. But the psychologist will be investigating these people and their pictures, not something that s/he could rightly call “the subject.” The notion of the subject simply marks our dual subjection to an orientation to the world and to a world that is both unified and delimited by the means with which we put that thought to the test. But it also marks our potential separation from other persons and the world and, in doing so, it separates us from the withdrawn self or subject of the world, the philosophical I or transcendental ego through which I (an embodied person) am able to experience a world in the first place. Insofar as I can think and can encounter the thoughts of others, I can strive to clarify what is being said and so bring us closer to each other and to the world (or: to the world that we are).

It is here that we begin to see the impact these considerations have for epistemology. They are twofold. The first is that epistemology, which is the philosophy of psychology, will have to deal with thinking and how it empirically takes place. Or rather, it will deal with thinking about thinking: it will deal with the thoughts (organized in a system) by which we think how it is that thinking (the making of propositional signs that are projected) takes place in this world. How the psychological theory itself comes about is not important; it will most likely rest on inductive means that have no logical foundation (6.3631). But the task of such psychology will be to account for the causal means by which we make pictures to ourselves and then test them against the actual
world we picture. However, in doing so, such a theory will not be able to rely upon the traditional superficial notion of the (Cartesian) subject, nor will it need to. This would then be one of the tasks for philosophy with respect to psychology: it would have to correct any possible psychology when it attempted to speak of a subject. Removing this temptation is a way of overcoming the tendency to think of each other as ultimately inaccessible.

Second, epistemology will be in large part a matter of the investigation of language, since the world that I attempt to know/think is given to me as thinkable/knowable only in language. It is this investigation that points to a positive dimension for philosophy: by analyzing the language with which we think the world, we can come to see its inadequacies and be moved to find better means of expression that overcome these inadequacies. It is by no means clear that “better means of expression” is confined to logic. An attempt to better express (or describe or determine) the life of another may be better done through literature or experimental ethnography than something more abstract. I will deal with this more in the final chapters. For now it suffices to say that it is the movement towards a better expression that is crucial, and it seems to me that any successful philosophy will be engaged in that search. Thus, the investigation is not only a matter of a reflective practice that looks for error but a practice that seeks new ways of speaking. It is a way of overcoming the tendency to think of my access to myself as not requiring a fuller encounter with others, as if my embodied condition is sufficient for an encounter with what is it to be subject to a world.
CHAPTER 3: NO NONSENSE, NO PERSPECTIVE

The Impossibility of Judging Nonsense and Seeing the Same Fact Differently

There are two other consequences to 5.542 upon which Wittgenstein remarks: a proper account of “belief propositions” “must show that it is impossible to judge a nonsense” (5.5422) and it will show that there are not multiple subjective perspectives on the same fact but only different facts (5.5423). Reflection on the consequence for judging nonsense shows that nonsense is a form of failed speaking in which the failure of which is not immediately apparent. A proper grasp of the (pseudo) sentence will show that there is nothing there to judge. However, this does not mean that the will cannot react to nonsense, such that nonsense may be put forth not for judgment but in order to get people to focus on the world in a certain way. And, as the consequence for perspectives shows, focusing on the world in a new way is not a matter of seeing the facts differently but of seeing different facts (most likely ones that we had previously overlooked or ignored).

Both of these consequences require that we continue to reevaluate how we think about ourselves and so will have implications for the ethical purpose of the Tractatus, as will become apparent in Part II. At present, we can note two things. First, these revisions will lead us to put emphasis on what I believe but on what is the case, what is possible given what is the case, and thus on what can I and/or do I do. Second, this will help us to overcome our tendency toward the fractured worlds that arise when my picture of the world is at odds with how it is. Further, these revisions continue to lessen our susceptibility to the notion of a mysterious subject and free us to attend more fully to seeing my world as it is.
The Second Consequence of 5.542: There is no asserting nonsense

Given the tractarian account of belief, we can anticipate how s/he would deal with false beliefs: such beliefs are (logically) just a matter of specifying as true a proposition is false (that says something is the case when it is not). But what about nonsense? Can we believe nonsense? It seems that belief would be the perfect notion here: it would refer to something in my head that moves me but that, while believed, could not possibly be true. For instance, we might say, “Jones believes in God.” But if God turns out to be a nonsense (however important) then Jones, according to the tractarian philosopher, cannot actually be said to believe this because he cannot be said to say it. This seems quite straightforward. If the belief-function can be dismissed, such that belief propositions are really just a matter of a proposition stating a fact (that is then specified as true), then the proposition could not be nonsense: it must have a sense to be what it is (something that could be specified as true by one who believes it). In other words, if what I claim to believe is not something that can be said, then I cannot really be claiming to believe it. This is the second consequence of 5.54: “The correct explanation of the form of the proposition “A judges \( p \)” must show that it is impossible to judge a nonsense” (5.542). This is consistent with the elimination of the belief-function from the construction of propositions, and it prevents the possibility of a proposition that contains nonsense (since if I could say, “A believes (nonsense),” and then specify this as true, a pseudo-proposition that has no sense and can be neither true nor false would (per impossible) be a bases for truth-functions).
The danger of the possibility of believing a nonsense was a consequence of Russell’s theory of judgment. Again, this is the primary target of the 5.54s. According to Russell’s theory of judgment, when I judge that “A loves B,” I cannot be in relation “such a thing as ‘A’s love for B’, i.e. unless A loved B i.e. unless the judgment were true” (Russell 1910, 155). However, if I claim to believe that this “thing” is true and it is not, then we have the oddity of my being in a relation with something that does not exist. Thus, Russell argued that the relation is not between men and that “thing” but between me and the “terms with which the judgment is concerned” (ibid.). In this fashion, we obtain a relation between me and these terms that “does not involve any [actual] relation between its objects A and love and B” (ibid.). One of Wittgenstein’s objections is that this “purchased the possibility of false judgment at the price of allowing nonsensical judgments,” since there is nothing to ensure “the preservation of logical form between the elements of the judgment” (Hacker 60-61). Since it must be impossible to judge a nonsense, Russell’s theory is inadequate. Wittgenstein’s semantics, however, preserves logical form in what can be believed, and it does so by recognizing that there is no object “me” (or “mind”) in an “obscure relation” with “the unco-ordinated terms of the judgment” (Hacker 61).

How are we to understand the radical implications of this consequence for how we think of ourselves? Imagine a situation where I am asked to judge a proposition in order to see if I believe it. How might we talk about what happens, knowing we cannot legitimately (on tractarian terms) say “Jones believes it”? What do we do? What does – or what can we think that – Jones does? Let us take three examples of things propositions that we might possibly judge: a string of symbols with sense (“It is raining”), one that is
senseless but not nonsense (\(\neg(p. \neg p)\)), and one that is nonsense (‘‘God told Abraham to kill Isaac’’). With respect to the first proposition, Jones can be thought to do three things when s/he claims that it is raining: s/he can decide in a flash (for ‘‘no reason’’), s/he can look outside, or s/he can infer from what s/he knows. The proposition is there to be judged, since it has sense – it refers to possible facts. The judgment – the specification of the truth of the proposition – matters only in ‘‘building’’ the world of Jones. What is ‘‘outside’’ an internal relation to this proposition is the causal history of Jones and a scientific account of Jones as psycho-physical complex; both the history and the account would help to explain why Jones makes the judgment he did, but the judgment is not itself a picture-able fact. And in our scientific (psychological) investigation of Jones, we cannot bring this history and account into relation to this proposition: the proposition as a thought connected with other propositions is a separate matter from the way in which the propositional sign that projects the thought comes about. For Jones, however, the world (as he experiences it) is limited to the propositions he specifies as true. It would thus seem that the proposition is caught in two meshes at once: it is caught up in internal relations with a present mesh that Jones uses, but it must also (as a projected sign) be caught up in another mesh, which is the one that the psychologist uses to build the life of Jones. Further, if as Jones changes, the second mesh would have to account for movement between meshes as Jones’ ability to picture the world developed: there may be something wrong with Jones, or Jones might grow and develop or have an epiphany of sorts that leads him/her to view the world very differently. In each case, a possible world (which may overlap with much of the actual world) would correspond to what Jones thinks of as his world.
A different insight follows from judging \(\neg(p \land \neg p)\). This is a tautology – a logical proposition that is true in any possible world. What would it mean to say “Jones does not believe it.” In other words, what if Jones claims that a logically necessarily true proposition is false? This is simply another example of the sort of non-truth-preserving “function” that Wittgenstein reveals to be illegitimate. One could perhaps specify this tautology as false, but this would merely reveal that there is something wrong with the person, as s/he is specifying as false a proposition that can only be true. What is the danger here? In this case, the danger is simply that Jones’ world must include this fact, so Jones is somehow “distant” from his/her world. If this kind of “distance” from the world is a source of unhappiness (as some commentators and Wittgenstein’s Notebooks have suggested), then such a condition is worthy of scientific investigation.

Our third proposition (“God told Abraham to kill Isaac”) seems to be straightforward nonsense. It seems as if it would be quite valuable to be able to speak of “belief” here, in order to be able to talk about how Jones might be related to a pseudo-proposition such as this.\(^4\) We might well want distance between such claims and their truth-conditions in order to protect the “integrity” of what we believe from mere agreement with what is the case. But Wittgenstein, if he does intend for nonsense to have an unworldly or immaterial function, seems to make the task of understanding what is going on here even harder, since it would seem that the psychologist must “think Jones,” yet Jones involves a nonsense, which the psychologist cannot think. At the same time, Wittgenstein seems to be even more honest in his assessment of such propositions. He

\(^4\) I take the proposition in question to be nonsense and so “pseudo” because I take Wittgenstein to regard propositions in which the term “God” occurs to be nonsense. I here follow Nielsen in Phillips and Nielsen 2005, where Nielsen develops possible options for possible meanings of “God,” all of which (he claims) fail. However, for the purposes of the point here being made, any piece of nonsense could be used.
lets them be what, in a certain sense, they are: a matter of something beyond science and thought.

Note that this does not mean that I (the embodied human person) cannot be in a relation with nonsense. The will as a phenomenon involves our capacity to react to external stimuli, which in themselves have no propositional content – they literally have no meaning (neither reference nor sense).\(^{45}\) If the will were to spontaneously react to such stimuli, any attempt by me to “say” what I was thinking when I act would be nonsensical, since it would involve an attempt to picture an absence of sense: the whole point of such a reaction is that it is not conscious. There is no state of affairs about which I was thinking at the time. A further consequence of this is that I cannot say that I was thinking of “a nonsense” (such as what God told me to do or the moral law) when I perform an action. I cannot claim to believe such things, and so I cannot claim that have been consciously motivated by such things. If such nonsense really did move me, it can only be due to my capacity to react to stimuli devoid of content. Scientists could observe this, stating that whenever I am told that God told me to do something, I do it, but this does not mean that it makes sense to speak of a nonphysical, omnipotent, omnibenevolent being who gives commands from a vast metaphysical distance. There cannot, on tractarian terms, be such an experience (in terms of a “this-worldly,” describable experience).

Simply put then, the tractarian notion of “nonsense” is a proposition without sense or logical form: it is a pseudo-proposition with enough similarity to language such that

\(^{45}\) Of course, a person could take an outside stimuli to be a sign of something else: intense, burning heat could be said to “say” that there is danger nearby. However, this seems to work only as a metaphor – the only things that can “say” in this sense are propositions, which must be projected, and external stimuli are not the kinds of thing that we can project.
we might possibly fooled into thinking it has sense, but which upon investigation is seen to have no sense (and so it is not a significant proposition) or even a logical form (and so it is not a logical proposition, which, although it does not have sense (and so it senseless) is nonetheless a properly formed proposition). It is “failed” speech, the failure of which is not immediately apparent, and the appearance of the failure will be an empirical matter (a matter of our diligence in investigating what we say and our ability to do this and to then recognize what is there to be seen). Until recently (meaning until the early or even late nineties), most commentators agreed that there are “kinds” of nonsense and that nonsense can “show” (according to the tractarian) “show” something.

Recent debate has focused on whether or not there are in fact kinds of nonsense and whether this is something that such nonsense shows. Proponents of what is called “the New Wittgenstein” argue for what they call a “resolute” or “strict” interpretation of nonsense, according to which all nonsense is the same (it says nothing) and no nonsense shows anything. They label the traditional and more common interpretation of nonsense the “ineffablest” conception of nonsense, as it regards some nonsense as capable of expressing things (which are not facts in the world) that cannot be said. There is ample textual evidence to support the ineffablest position, and Hacker has recently (2001) offered a list of what (according to the tractarian) is nonsense of the sort that can be shown but not said:

i. The harmony between thought, language, and reality.
ii. Semantics.
iii. Logical relations between propositions.
iv. Internal properties and relations of things and situations.

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46 The most prominent representatives of the New Wittgenstein are Cora Diamond and James Conant; many emerged from a Wittgenstein reading group in Boston attended by students and faculty from Harvard and Boston College. The problems with the New Wittgenstein interpretation have been well-documented (cf. Hacker 2000, Proops 2001, Koethe 2003, Hintikka 2003, and the final section of Costello 2004).
To take “strict” approach would be to claim that there is no intrinsic distinction between these transcendent aspects of the world and mere gibberish or gobbledygook. However, if the will as a reactive capacity can respond to nonsense, then it would make sense to speak specifically chosen bits of nonsense not in order to get someone to believe or judge something but in order to get them to focus on the world and attend to it in a certain way. Again, this capacity is quite natural and the tractarian can speak of it in terms of the phenomenal will, although insofar as the tractarian notion of experience is a fact in the world that be stated in a proposition, there is no experience of what nonsense can show.

Nor, as we will see in the following section, can nonsense or a pseudo-experience of it be a matter of perspective, as if I have one view of the facts (or of what can be a fact) and you have another, with our competing perspectives being a kind of inexpressible nonsense. There is no possibility of our seeing the same fact or set of facts in different ways; there is only seeing some facts but not others, such that the other can be brought to see those facts that they ignore if they’ll only look.

The Third Consequence of 5.542: There are no subjective perspectives

Closely associated with the idea of belief is the idea of “seeing as.” We might wish to claim that, even if we cannot say something such as “Jones believes that God is in the world” is nonsense, we can say that Jones sees the world as if God were there. Or we might wish to say that although it is not raining, Jones sees the world as if it were so (i.e.,
the proposition says how things stand if it is true, and it says that they do so stand … and Jones agrees with the (false) proposition. Belief, then, would simply be a matter of different perspectives on the world. In the secondary literature on the *Tractatus*, we sometimes encounter the idea that there are still psychological subjects who have different perspectives, or even that we are all metaphysical subjects who differ only in the orientation we individually, as subjects, take on the world. Given the preceding arguments, these stances are not possible: there is no subject in this world or the next that has a perspective on the world, let alone a multiplicity of distinct subjects, each with its own perspective. At best, we can speak of the world delimited by “my” language (which is simply the possible world of experience), and we can perhaps speak of embodied human persons being oriented one way or another (i.e., at some facts but not others) within that world. But we do not all see some one thing as many possible different things. We see facts as they are or we fail to see them as they are, but there is not then some other actual fact that we are seeing.

Thus, if we do not carefully exorcize the superficial view of subjectivity from our speech, then we are likely to once again bring the subject back into the world with the notion of “seeing as.” For instance, we might wonder what happens when I shift my attention from one way of seeing the world to another. It might seem as if I have done

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47 Cf. Edwards 42, 49-51; Mounce 97 (and Freidlander’s discussion of Mounce at Friedlander 197-199); Friedlander 118, 121, 164, and 196; Hodges 67, 74; to a limited extent, cf. Stokhof 208, 209, 213. Only Mounce treats these attitudes of the subject as perhaps a matter of individuated persons: he writes, “The facts do not solve ethical problems; they can only give rise to them. The solutions are found in the attitudes one adopts towards the facts.” (Mounce 97). However, I would argue that Hodges, in speaking of the will as a perspective on and attitude toward the world, makes a similar error. Friedlander and Stokhof also speak of the subject as a matter of (one kind of) a perspective that one can take up (Friedlander 199 and Stokhof 209). Further, Stokhof speaks of the “our will” and “our wishes” in a way that is misleading. He claims that “our will” (speaking of the metaphysical will or “noumenal, ethical will” (209) but potentially implying that it varies from person to person as our wishes do) “puts whatever facts that make up the world in a certain perspective” (208). Further, “our will” is treated as equivalent with “our ethical attitudes” (209).
something mysterious here. However, “seeing as” is explained at 5.5423 not in terms of a subject doing something or even a shift in perspective but in terms of different facts:

To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are combined in such and such a way.
This perhaps explains that the figure

![Diagram of a cube]

can be seen in two ways as a cube; and all similar phenomena. For we really see two different facts.
(If I fix my eyes first on the corners $a$ and only glance at $b$, $a$ appears in front and $b$ behind, and vice versa.)

We do not see one and the same fact now one way and then another. Rather, we see two distinct facts. If I see the side formed by the $a$ corners as the front of the square while you see the side formed by the $b$ corners as the front, we are not seeing the same fact differently but seeing two different facts, precisely because we are putting the constituent parts into different relations, but both sets of relations ($a$ front with $b$ back and vice versa) are possible. The different relations here are a matter of the focus on the individual observer, but this subjective difference is irrelevant insofar as either observer could, with a bit of effort (with respect to the visual part of the world) see what the other is seeing. We might wonder at the mechanism by which we put effort into seeing things differently, but we might plausibly entertain the idea that it has to do with perfectly natural, physical mechanisms: we focus our vision, which is a quite natural act. And we might be said to do this because of some desire: we desire to see if we can see the $a$-fronted square as a $b$-fronted one, and we might desire this out of simple natural curiosity. Wittgenstein thus seems to attempt to move our focus away from a supposed mechanism that explains the
shift (with a world that shifts in accord with a subject who alters) to a simple shift of focus from one fact to another (from one part of the world to another). It is a physical shift of attention or perspective, not something mysterious.

Why remove focus from the mechanism of the shifting and focus instead on the fact that is before me? The problem is that, for the tractarian, nothing is or can be gained in philosophy by focusing on such a mechanism, since there is no “truth-function” that explains fixing my eyes now on the corners of a (and so seeing it as “front” to the alternate) and the fixing them on the corners of b. The only functions – or transitions – that interest the tractarian are logical. And this is a key point in the 5.54s: that there are no other functions, such as ones involving beliefs or seeing as, as we must resist the temptation to posit them.

We must also resist the temptation to say that there really is some such function, only it is elsewhere. Here we have an example of the tension between what I take myself to do and “the world” – my attention shifts in this world and the shift makes a difference in this world in that seeing a fact I had previously missed can lead me to act differently, and this in turn can lead to different states of affairs. But saying that there is something going on “beyond the world” is misleading here. Can we not simply say, “His attention shifted – he first saw one fact and then another”? It is not as if this shift is in a mysterious beyond. And its cause could be quite innocuous: someone may have brought something new to my attention. Nothing is gained by speaking of a metaphysical subject here, especially insofar as it makes it seems as if we have control over these things and so are then to blame one for not shifting his/her attention when it is demanded yet not easy to do
(as certain people find when they investigate logic or higher mathematics – they do not always recognize what is said to have been brought to their attention).  

Conclusions: How to Speak About Jones

So how could a psychologist talk about these things in a way that would not draw the ire of the tractarian philosopher? When s/he studies a person, who (or what) judges or believes in the study? Who affirms or denies, or recognizes or remains clouded? Who or what stands ready to alter propositions, and who is likely to remain steadfastly behind a false belief (or even nonsense) despite what science claims and logic shows?

The essence of what is done in the 5.54s is the removal of beliefs and the subject in order to prevent interference with the truth-preservation of a logical system. It is as if we must no longer be trusted with the judging of thoughts – it is as if the process is removed from us entirely. We also find that the set of capacities through which we picture ourselves has been put into question and even in some sense removed. Further, we are subject to immediacy as never before: although we are distant from the world (we must work to picture it to ourselves) we are less able to fail to take responsibility for what we say (to keep some distance by saying “Well, that’s just what I believe … what more can I do?”). Thus, while we cannot gather immediately the logic of our language (4.002) and while our language lacks an immediate relation to the world, such that there is a gap between us and the world that (metaphysically speaking) we are (and so a gap between me and my self), we nevertheless cannot fall back on that distance to excuse ourselves. I am responsible for my world, as it is mine.

48 I return (in the context of ethical value) to the mistake of endorsing the possibility of two people seeing the same fact in two different ways in Chapter 7.
At this point, we are speaking only epistemologically, although there will be ethically consequences. But for now we can say that nothing is gained with respect to the facts by hedging our sense of the world when the facts are right there, meaning that, if I believe something, I need merely assert it, and must then await to be shown if what I assert is not so (or, in lacking a reference for a name or a logical form, turns out to be a nonsense). If I honestly don’t know the facts, I can remain silent, or I can seek them out. Or I can look at what can possibly be inferred from what is the case right now. But there is a way in which attempts to hedge what I wish to say with shading of “perhaps” and “it seems” and “so to speak” and “as it were” express an irresponsibility of sorts: they are acknowledgements that we haven’t got the facts straight or perhaps even that the facts are not the end of the matter. But the latter is, of course, something that can only be shown. It is, as we will see in the next chapter, the unassailable, and it has an important role to play in both turning us to the facts and then, as Wittgenstein has said, showing us “how little has been done” at this point (as he says about the results of solving the problems of philosophy in the Preface (29)) and how “the problems of life have still not been touched at all” (6.52), since once we know the facts, we ought to see that they “all belong only to the task and not to its performance” (6.4321). If the facts gives us the “task,” whatever that might mean at this point, then getting our picture of the world right is paramount and, perhaps, the first tractarian duty (or rather pseudo-duty, if laws expressing moral duty are nonsense, as 6.422 strongly suggests).

At this point, then, our main task is to look at what we say and see if it agrees with the world, and psychology can help us to see where things go wrong in our perception of the external world and on the physical side of the method of projection (as
when our neurons don’t work or we have a speech impediment or a impairment such as dyslexia). Further, as we thus struggle to see this order in the world that our language enables us to think, we must do this within language that is also subject to contingency: it is built from what counts as elements and it is at the mercy of the ever-changing state of things. Indeed, one of the forms of immediacy to which we are subject is quite simply what is before us, whether we “believe” it or not: we must deal with that upon which we stumble (and all with which it is logically connected). And the struggle to put this “stumbled upon” world before ourselves and others (a struggle that dominated Wittgenstein’s life) is precisely that which is so vexing (a vexation involved in the determination of the Tractatus itself).

This is how psychology must change, if it has not done so already: it must grapple with this struggle and with how it accounts for what we do and how we are, and so it must also grapple with its philosophical dependency – its dependency on a theory of meaning. To start with, “removing” beliefs gets our focus off the subject. And this is done to preserve the extensionality of truth. But it also means that we must focus instead on the propositions that describe our world – we must focus on our language. And this in turn helps to better set the task of approaching ourselves: if believing is trying to describe the world, then we must attend to that description and how it takes place. That is where (from a philosophically point of view) the emphasis should be.

So then how are we (not the subject, but we actual human beings who do science and are the objects of science) related to language? We know that we ourselves are responsible for the projection: we do it when we make pictures to ourselves, which we do when we “take up” language by trying to do something, even if we are not responsible for
the “fact” that language must be projected and is always already oriented toward a world. It is in this sense that we do not need to be too radical in what we hand over to a mysterious subject: we can understand our relation to language in one sense through what we do – through trying to say things.

The questions at issue with respect to our “task” are of a different order and perhaps assayable only by psychology: Why do we sometimes fail to see what’s there? How do we see that we’ve failed – or how can another tell? How do we manage to recognize what is there to be seen? These are, I believe, not non-philosophical questions of the sort with which the tractarian need not or cannot deal and which s/he can leave to the psychologist. Instead, these are the kinds of questions that we must address if we are to take 6.53 seriously, ones that seem to lead us on a ceaseless path of frustrating the contentment of others. There, Wittgenstein claims,

The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying [unbefriedigend] to the other – he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy – but it would be the only strictly correct method. (6.53; emphases added)

If we wish to do philosophy right, we must do two things. First, we must do something that has nothing to do with philosophy: we must say nothing except what can be said. But the possibility of this seems to be precluded by what we must always do: we must do something that would be discontenting for others, insofar as we must demonstrate to him/her that certain signs point to nothing in the world. We must demonstrate to such people (of whom we might surmise there will be an endless supply) that they have failed to see something that is there (or rather that it’s simply not there and our insistence on its
being there can keep us from seeing what is there to be seen). Further, doing so would involve some sense of why people experience such failure and illusion (ones that presumably leave them content). It would also a kind of vision, insofar as the tractarian philosopher must be able to recognize the failure (the illusion) of the other person and in particular s/he must be able to recognize what it is that the other person has failed to recognize so that s/he can demonstrate in a fashion that is both discontenting but has some hope of success.49

Thus, given that tractarian philosophy is in large part a matter of showing people that they’ve failed to see something, these psychological issues are also vital to philosophy. And much of the “magic” is removed from this process once we see that the failure to assert or to mean can never be a failure of language, and so it cannot be a failure of some subject “behind things” simply willful choosing to not assert when I so badly want to. I want to assert a description of the life of Jones, but I cannot. What is the limit here, then? Does the psychologist throw up his/her hands and say, “We cannot know – we’re at the mercy of the subject and there’s no understanding its ways?” No: There is much that can be said before we throw up our hands, and recognizing the withdrawal of that subject can in part encourage this attempt to say more and to say it better insofar as we are encouraged to attend more fully to the uniqueness and datum of the life that is Jones as s/he appears in word and deed.

But new confusions open up in the wake of recognizing the withdrawal of the subject. In fact, some uncanny possibilities seem to open up. I am now somehow

49 Cf. Schopenhauer: “If, as has often been said, the refutation of an error is complete only by our demonstrating psychologically the way in which it originated, then I believe I have achieved this in what I have said above with regard to Kant’s doctrine of the categories and of their schemata” (WWR I 451). It may be that Wittgenstein’s method is more dependent upon psychological insights than here cared to realize early on – a realization over which he took some care in his later thought.
separate from myself: this happens when I take myself to believe something that cannot 
(logically) be believed or when I take myself to be thinking when I am not. These 
experiences are not rare, either. The uncanny nature of the first is not so much a matter of 
its mixing of the worldly and unworldly (it may not seem strange that a person in the 
world believes something that cannot be a part of it); rather, it is due to the fact that, since 
this nonsense cannot be “hooked up” to either world or language, it means that there is no 
telling what this person might do or mean. There’s no complete mesh in or with which to 
fix him/her.

Another perplexing idea is the (pseudo)possibility that I might utter a proposition 
(one with sense) when I in fact fail to understand it (such that I could not be projecting 
the proposition with the sense that it has as a possibility (cf. 3.13)). For example, imagine 
that I say “I believe that lipids burn differently after prolonged exposure to trans-fats.” 
Here, I am in fact uttering a proposition, one that refers to a possible fact of the world (a 
fact that speaks to all lipids and all trans-fats). But what happens if I utter it and claim to 
believe it (I specify it as true) when at the same time everyone can tell that I haven’t the 
slightest idea what I’m saying? It could be clear that, in spite of what I say, I don’t know 
how this proposition hooks up to other propositions and I don’t know the picture of the 
world it presents. I could thus not go see if it actually did agree with reality (which I 
should be able to do through testing the mesh of which this proposition must be a regular 
part or testing the world with which it is said to agree). Have I here *uttered* a proposition 
with sense yet failed to *assert* it? Does it in fact fail to be a “significant” proposition 
because I haven’t *really* projected a sense to go with it – because I’d have no idea at what 
to “aim” it for it to be possibly true? (Do I then say that while my empirical ego is
asserting the propositions, my metaphysical ego isn’t? If I am my ego, why do I resist myself like this?)

The only thing we could (on tractarian terms) do here is what earlier concluded we must do: we must put ourselves (as much as possible) into language (or other pictures) and then we must put that language to the test. In the case of my utterance of the lipid proposition, we could see that I cannot see the state of affairs with which it must agree (I’d be able to offer no way to test it) and I could not follow the propositions that led to or from it. It is a matter of putting assertion (what is said) to the test. This assertion puts propositions in touch with actual state of affairs, and if it state fails to match the sense, then the proposition is false. But this is a matter for the empirical sciences. The point of philosophy is to enable us to see this division between the empirical and the non-empirical, which implies a split between what we say (the sounds we utter and react to) and what we say (the part of that that actually has sense). We have no control (logically) over what falls into what category. And we cannot identify a distinction between assertion and utterance in the present moment, although this is not because the asserting subject is “hidden” but rather because the “asserted-ness” of the utterance is shown through my ability to do the right things, and this can only be seen over the course of time. Here we see how the idea of the person as a biological entity subject to thought and language contains within it kernels of the later philosophy and ways of making sense (and use) of tractarian insights that are not simply a matter of logic and semantics.

The task then is to account for “failed assertions” in which the failure is on the part of an actual human person. The tractarian insight is here is that I have not actually asserted anything: the proposition, while potentially true, is not actually doing its work. It
is not actually “hooked” up by me to the world or to other propositions (although others could take what I say and understand it). Thus, in terms of characterizing my world, the psychologist would not want to count this uttered proposition among the facts that constitute “my world,” the world in which possibilities are available for me and frustrations limit me. In this case, I have not made a picture. This may tell us something about how I go about making pictures – perhaps I mimic people, or say things to impress people without understanding them. None of these motivations have anything to do with the sense or truth of what I say. But if someone wished to help me, then getting a sense of what is thought in my world and where I run into frustrations can be of great use.

The challenge, then, is to think the person non-belief-functionally. This means that we must think the person as subject to sense. The key here is not so much what the person asserts as what the person recognizes as true. And the “space of recognition” will not be the world (all that is logically possible) but his/her world (that among the possible to which s/he has access) – the world as s/he (as I for him/herself) stumbles upon it. The relation of the person to language is then only one of handling signs (the “organic” work of putting physical units together to picture his/her world). My relation is to this world, and it is this world and this relation (my “building pictures” and my “handling” of the world through signs) to which both the philosophy and the psychologist must each in his/her way attend. But my world includes not just what I say (or “what is said in it”) but what I do. It also includes what I recognize and what I fail to recognize, but this can only be seen (even by me) in what I do.

The non-belief-functional approach also enables us to begin to understand the role of nonsense. I cannot believe nonsense, insofar as I cannot even assert it. Yet, it would
seem, all of us go around “believing” in nonsense and “asserting” it all the time. If “believe” is not a truth-operator that can generate possible propositions, how do we then represent Jones, who believes God is here on the table? Jones cannot say “I believe God is here on the table.” Or rather, he can utter whatever he wants, but (tractarian) reflection will show this to be nonsense regardless of the grammatical object of the belief because “believe” cannot generate truth-statements. The “I” drops out and we have just “There is a God here on the table” just as we have “There is a book here on the table,” and then our investigation would turn to the meaning of the terms as we try to find the fact/object to which the term “God” refers. And if this “I” drops out, then what we have is not a person doing something (believing); we have a world, one that, as possible, can (with effort) become ours. But the person does things within that world – s/he acts in it. And we cannot understand actions without motives. And “God” is, for some people, a motive, one that perhaps can be “translated” into significant propositions. I suggest that in the non-belief-functional approach the true statements are generated only by objective observation while the “belief” statements function as clues for the former. The concern is not the truth of what Jones says s/he believes, but “making sense” of Jones: getting a sense of his/her world, learning to predict what s/he might do, and helping him/her if s/he is in need (in which case the first two would be of great importance). Further, in terms of action, the emphasis will then be not on what I believe but on what is possible and what is true and what can I and/or do I do. I believe that this marks quite a shift in how we approach the person. We attempt to build very strange worlds: they must, given the

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50 I believe that Diamond is correct to argue that the logical positivists misrepresent this project, in that they take this to be a matter of pure (reductive) science. However, I also have yet to make sense of Diamond’s alternative, insofar as the so-called “resolute” reading of nonsense is inconsistent with the Tractatus and on its own terms.
conditions for a world required by the *Tractatus*, be somehow unified, delimited, and whole, but they will also be fractured worlds, ones in which we seem to be at odds with the world we should be able to picture for ourselves and with what others can and do picture.

The end result of all of this is thus to *lessen* the grip of a mysterious subject while at the same time making it ineliminable. It is not that such a mystery has no grip on us according to the tractarian, but rather that attributing aspects of our activity to it does not seem warranted. There is a mystery, but it is not here in thought. As I will argue later, I believe that attribution of activity to the subject paves the way for the quietude – the pessimism – that has so far always been a conclusion of those offering such an attribution (in spite of its elimination after the *Notebooks*, on which such commentaries heavily rely).

I am subject to a limited world that is given to me in language. Within that world, I struggle to picture it and to realize certain aims. Within my efforts, I am subject to that among what I utter that actually says. Without this unity, thought would not be possible: thought must take place in language, and that language will be subject to necessity that is – within the arbitrary sphere of what the elements are – logical and regular. The task is not so much to *intend* this world – I cannot intend any other – but to *recognize* it. This process of attending to my world – of attending to what can be intended within it – is an empirical process. What might not be empirical is its chance of success, but that has as much to do with the contingency of the world as with some mysterious, recalcitrant willing subject. In terms, then, of understanding the subject and its relation to thought, the mystery is not in another realm but right here.
PART II: WILL AND VALUE:

From the Subject to the Ethical
The Route from the “Early” Part of the *Tractatus* to the “Mystical” Part

Moving from a discussion of the notions of belief and the subject in the *Tractatus* to a discussion of its ethical views is not an easy task. The *Tractatus* often appears to be a “split” text, insofar as it may seem *(prima facie, at least)* that there cannot be any connection between the “early” parts of the work, which lay out the tractarian approach to semantics, logic, and ontology (and in which we find the remarks on belief and the subject), and the “mystical” parts of the work at the end, which deal with inexpressible issues such as ethical value and God. Given that the tractarian semantics is quite explicit in its claim that we cannot say what we cannot say (such that we must be (logically) silent about it), it does seem odd that the tractarian approach would then seem to demand and even endorse some means of expressing what we cannot say (insofar as Wittgenstein does mention these “mystical” (pseudo)things). The apparent incompatibility seems at first glance to mark a cognitive dissociation of some kind or even a split personality, as if the tractarian were schizophrenic.

To say that the *Tractatus* is a schizophrenic text may be a bit much. Schizophrenia refers to a split between thinking and perception and involves (as a result) disordered thinking. While such a disorder or split may at first glance appear to be present in the worldview of the *Tractatus*, the text hardly seems to be the result of disordered thinking. Other schizophrenic symptoms could be read into the work, such as delusions of being controlled by an external force (cf. the notion of the willing subject or God in the *Notebooks*, which is referred to as “alien will” that exerts force over me) or the feeling that my thought comes from somewhere else (cf. the notion of a pure
representing or intending subject), but such an interpretation of Wittgenstein’s early thought fails to take into consideration the way in which such an external force or source is always also internal: it is a sense of my self that is available to me as a result of attending to what logic shows.51

Perhaps we might then instead describe the *Tractatus* as a “schizoid” text. The schizoid is detached from the world, and is not interested in the experiences of others, is indifferent to their view of him/her, and is lacking in affective experience of his/her own. Ethically, such a person has little interest in rules and norms and is attracted to the mystical. When intense emotions or needs are present, this person is often cognitively cut-off from such experiences and unable to express them. According to Louis Sass, while the schizoid may display an “affectless exterior,” s/he may nonetheless, “in the innermost sanctuary” of his/her personality have “the most vulnerable sensitivity, which has withdrawn into itself, and lies there contorted” (Sass 2001, 107; he is quoting the psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer). Sass exemplifies this state with a “self-description from August Strindberg: ‘I am hard as ice, and yet so full of feeling that I am almost sentimental’” (107). Such a state of being could be said to describe the tractarian solipsist as Hacker and Schroeder present him/her: externally s/he is seen to merely state facts, saying only what the cool rigor of logic will allow, while internally (as “the subject”) s/he

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51 Nonetheless, Sass offers a compelling account of the “solipsistic interpretation of schizophrenic experience” that does have resonance with the thought of Wittgenstein, as he argues that this interpretation “can certainly account for many aspects of delusions that seem to be inconsistent with the traditional poor reality-testing formula” (Sass 1994, 51; cf. also 69, 82-83). If Hacker is indeed correct about the epistemological problems in a tractarian account of perception and justification, there may be warrant to such an interpretation (and, indeed, Sass notes that his discussion of the early Wittgenstein “is indebted to the treatment of Wittgenstein’s critique of solipsism offered by P.M.S. Hacker in *Insight and Illusion* (154)). In his 2001 essay, however, he analyzes the thought and personality of Wittgenstein in terms of the “schizoid,” being careful to distinguish it from “schizophrenic”: the former “does not imply a psychotic condition but, rather, a general style of character or personality that may be found to any degree and can be present in well-functioning and reasonably healthy persons. It is a style dominated by a certain hypersensitivity and vulnerability and by detachment from both self and world” (Sass 2001, 101).
is full of experiences that can never be expressed. Insofar as Sass follows (as does Schroeder), Hacker’s account of the tractarian solipsism, such a conclusion may seem unavoidable: the tractarian is a schizoid.

But we might well be suspicious of such a tidy treatment of the tractarian (and Wittgenstein), even though Sass pursues this treatment with some warrant. In (psycho)analyzing Wittgenstein in this way, Sass is “pursu[ing] the idea famously stated in Nietzsche’s _Beyond Good and Evil_, the notion that every great philosopher is, in fact, ‘a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir’” (99). This is an idea to which Wittgenstein himself was not unsympathetic, as Sass shows with a quote from Wittgenstein: “‘It is sometimes said that a man’s philosophy is a matter of temperament, and there is something in this,’ he wrote in 1931 (CV 20/17)” (99). A page later Sass then speaks of “the confessional nature of Wittgenstein’s style of philosophical writing” (99) and quotes Stanley Cavell’s observation that “in confessing, you do not explain or justify, but describe how it is with you” (100). This observation brings to mind the tractarian notion of the book, “The World as I Found It,” implying that it would be a confession, one that reflects the life and character of the author. It would be mere description, which on tractarian terms means that it would describe facts available to any thinking person. Such a potential connectedness to others, however, does not sound like affective withdrawal, and, as I hope to show in the remainder of this dissertation, such a withdrawal would confuse the “withdrawal of the subject” with actual withdrawal, and so would misread tractarian solipsism and thus its ethical solution and purpose.
Nor do we need to endorse a split between the “early” part (the logic, semantics, and ontology) and the “mystical” parts of the *Tractatus*. Hacker acknowledges that it is possible to connect them, and offers a “semantic route” for connecting them. He endorses a split between them only insofar as the two parts are not logically entailed:

> It is common to view the *Tractatus* as a complete and wholly integrated work, and hence to think that the so-called ‘mystical’ parts of the book are ‘a culmination of the work reflecting back on everything that went before’ [quoting Zemach 359]. This is, I think, at best misleading, at worst erroneous. It is true that they were of great importance to Wittgenstein. It is, however, false that they follow from the earlier sections of the book, that one cannot accept the semantics without embracing solipsism, ethical non-cognitivism and aesthetic ineffabilism. (Hacker 1972, 78)

Hacker thus rejects what we might call a “logical route” from the early to the mystical parts, since the former does not entail the latter. But while Hacker does not see a close connection of entailment and integration between the early and mystical parts of the work, he nevertheless does not dismiss the idea that there could be some connection. After he again stresses the importance of the mystical “doctrines” (as Hacker refers to them) of the early Wittgenstein, he writes that “the fact that the two strands of thought could be interwoven thus may well have struck Wittgenstein as partial confirmation of each” (82; emphasis added). This means of interweaving the two strands, which Hacker calls the “semantic route,” is tractarian solipsism. It is, Hacker claims, the only way to make the connections between the two parts tighter. The route is provided by “the manifestation of the inexpressible but correct solipsism” (78).

We have seen some sense of what this route might involve, although in the preceding two chapters I largely limited myself to the “early” part of the *Tractatus*,

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52 A recent attempt to argue for a closer relation along the lines of entailment and integration is provided by Stokhof 2002, who offers what we might call an “ontological route.” For a review of this work, cf. Armstrong and Morscher 2006. The ontological route does not at present succeed.
focusing on the consequences of the tractarian notion of subjectivity for how we think about ourselves and others in the context of a reform of how we speak of ourselves and others (and so in the context of semantics and natural science, and in particular psychology). What remains is to understand how this fits in with the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus*. While I agree with Hacker that this solipsism provides a route to the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus*, I also believe that Hacker maps this route insufficiently. The mapping he offers is much that same as what Schroeder offers: the form of all experience is “I have x,” where x could be a pain or a sensation. The self (the I) cannot appear in the proposition, such that we can have only subject-less ascriptions of “experience” (meaning facts, such as “there is a toothache” or “there is a red house”) (81). Hacker does not spell out the implication that Schroeder does (that I cannot make sense of the idea that another person has experiences), but he does note that the analysis of such “experiential” propositions does reduce them to elementary ones (80), with the implication (given his account of justification) that we verify them through perception. Hacker thus focuses on the realism entailed by solipsism. The way in which this provides a “route” to the mystical part of the *Tractatus* is unclear: he says only that “the analysis of such propositions [those that the solipsist wishes to say in order to convey what s/he means] will manifest the transcendental truths that cannot be said” (81). In this manner, solipsism seems to show us the possibility (and perhaps the necessity) of language that can show without saying.

While I agree with Hacker that this is so (i.e., that solipsism can show us this possibility), I also believe, as I suggested in the previous chapter, that the connection between tractarian subjectivity/solipsism, insofar as (following Schopenhauer)
Wittgenstein could see ethics as providing a way for overcoming the distance from others entailed by the tractarian notion of the subject and perhaps even as a necessary way of dealing with others who can be clearly seen to have experience in a world that is (for them) unified and limited. If this is so, then what we say will be crucial to our encounters with each other and our expression of our selves. The danger, then, of Hacker’s (and Schroeder’s) approach is that it makes the mistake of treating the tractarian subject as the knowing subject or theoretical ego – as a mind – and then treats a single embodied self as having a mind. In this manner, they endorse empirical solipsism, which the tractarian would reject.

What we now need to do is develop the tractarian notions of will and value and to then get some sense of the tractarian ethical purpose in action. If we can get this purpose right, we will likely have an insight into the aim and nature of Wittgenstein’s work that will carry over into the later work. Indeed, Hacker suggests as much when he notes that, while the tractarian approach to semantics, logic, and ontology is later rejected by Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein does not give up the ethical views:

> With the collapse of the logical independence of elementary propositions, the bulk of the doctrines of meaning in the *Tractatus* went down like a row of dominoes. With them when the peculiar form of solipsism and the implicit transcendentalism that accompanied and supported it. It is, however, of interest that, in 1929-30 at any rate, the ethical theories were retained in the *Tractatus*, the ethical views received slender support from the semantics and metaphysics. In the transitional period the same doctrines appear to be completely free-floating. (83)

Hacker refers to the ethical views as “a romantic existentialist ethics of the unspeakable” (85). A possible implication is that this ethical view provided additional (if unarticulated or perhaps even subconscious) impetus for the rejection of the tractarian approach, as it proved to be inadequate for the ethics (or view of ethics) that Wittgenstein took to be
true. There is no evidence that such an impetus was ever a conscious motivator. The evidence (if we can call it that) is simply the persistence of these views as Wittgenstein’s thought in other areas of philosophy changed. This understanding of the continuity of Wittgenstein’s ethical views is perhaps most explicitly presented by James Edwards. He argues that “the fundamental intention of Wittgenstein’s work – in both its incarnations – was the transmission of the sound human life. One can see now how this is true for the *Tractatus*; and in its attempt to manifest its moral vision, that book makes use of several notions that are important for the later philosophy as well” (Edwards 72). (The notions Edwards offers are the say/show distinction, the “intellectualist picture of rationality-as-representation” (72); and the notion of nonsense.) He also suggests that the tractarian account to of world and language inhibits an adequate development or expression of his ethical intentions (cf. 42).

My concern in this work, however, is simply to lay out the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus* and the possible notion of such a purpose within the constrains of the tractarian approach to philosophy; it is not to investigate the ways in which the tractarian hampers his/her attempt to do this or whether the tractarian would find a kindred ethical spirit in the ordinary language philosopher of the later work. Such investigations lay outside the scope of this work. And in order to get the ethical purpose right, it will be important to see where previous commentators have gotten key elements of the issue wrong. To this end, I take up the following task in the remaining chapters.
The Possibility of an Ethical Route:

But before I turn to Anscombe, I would like to suggest another possible route from the early part to the mystical part of the *Tractatus*; this is a route that is never explicated by Wittgenstein and that may not have occurred to him, but it is one that was suggested earlier in the idea that ethics is the “cure” that saves us from the madhouse of accepting solipsism at face value. This is an ethical route, and my presentation of it relies upon Wittgenstein high admiration for Ibsen and anticipates the issues that I will discuss in the context of Ibsen’s *A Doll House*.53

The route first appears upon asking a rather Ibsenian question: How would the tractarian philosopher deal with trolls? Trolls were a recurrent figure in the work of Ibsen, as they enabled Ibsen to throw the human into clearer relief. The clearest example of this is found in Ibsen’s fantastical play *Peer Gynt*. In the play, the title character encounters a kingdom of trolls, and the troll king explains to Peer the difference between trolls and humans as follows: trolls adhere the motto “Be enough for yourself!” while humans live by the motto “Be true to yourself!” The idea, as the trolls enact it, is that one should be able to call filth “clean,” big “little,” ugly “beautiful,” and imprisonment “freedom.” In this manner, the troll is able to be content with whatever s/he happens to have. However, there is more to it than this: humans are no different than (Ibsenian) trolls in their ability to (in essence) call “good” bad, and there is much human disagreement

53 We know that Wittgenstein held Ibsen in high regard: for instance, in a 1921 letter to Engelmann in which Wittgenstein disparages a play by Radindranath Tagore (an Indian poet popular in Austria at the time) and contrasts him with Ibsen: “Perhaps I don’t understand [Tagore’s] tone; to me it does not ring like the tone of a man possessed by the truth. (*Like for instance Ibsen’s tone.*)” (Monk 1990, 408, quoting a letter to Engelmann from 23.10.21). Severin Schroeder even suggests a connection to *Peer Gynt*: Wittgenstein was attracted to the work of the Viennese write Otto Weininger, who wrote a long essay on *Peer Gynt*. Schroeder cites this essay as a likely influence on Wittgenstein’s developing moral outlook and says that it “must have greatly appealed to Wittgenstein” (Schroeder 2006, 11-12).
over value judgments, in particular since the use of words such as “beautiful,” “clean,” and “little” (and so on) are so often relative to particular individuals and contexts.

But the point behind the troll king’s explanation of the difference between trolls and humans is not simply a matter of value judgments; it also a matter belief, which can involve judgments of a different sort. Thus, the troll, in order to find what s/he has as enough, must also be able to call dirt “gold” and black “white.” While standards of what is clean or large or beautiful or free may vary, dirt and gold are not the same thing (if each word refers to a substance with a specific chemical structure) and black and white are not the same thing. However, to live by the troll’s motto, one must be able to insist that what is not the case is really in fact is what is the case. If the troll is to do this, then the troll must have the ability to accept falsehoods as truth.\textsuperscript{54}

If this is the case, then a description of the troll (or a human in a troll-like state) requires that we describe what s/he believes to be true even when it is false. However, for a tractarian, such description is not possible, since if it were possible, it would violate the tractarian truth-functionality thesis. The truth-functionality thesis is given at 5.54: “In the general propositional form, propositions occur in a proposition only as bases of truth operations.” In other words, there cannot be a propositional form generated by performing operations on simpler propositions in a way that fails to preserve the truth of those simpler propositions. For instance, “The statue is gold” and “The statue is white” can be combined through conjunction to give us “The statue is gold and white.” But, as we saw earlier, a problem seems to arise for the tractarian with respect to beliefs, since it

\textsuperscript{54} It is not clear whether the troll realizes what is the case and then treats it as what it is not or immediately takes what is the case as what it is not, entertaining no sense of the difference. Also, it is worth noting that humans also have the capacity to accept falsehood as truth; what perhaps distinguishes the human (and so Peer) from the troll is an inability to find peace in such conformity, although this would then mean (for Ibsen) that many humans live like trolls.
seems as if we can build a complex proposition out of simpler propositions in way that has no logical relation to the truth of the simpler propositions. The example here would be, “Peer believes that the statue is black” when in fact the statue is gold. It seems, *prima facie*, that Peer may well believe this to be so even though it is false. Thus, the seeming truth of this proposition has no internal relation to the truth of a component proposition out of which it is built. In order to avoid this, we must recognize that there is no belief-function; Peer is simply specifying (through words or dispositions) his taking the false statement to be true. Or rather, we might more properly say that Peer displays a *willingness* to take the false statement to be true. The trolls offer this empirical possibility – taking the false for true – as a means of obtaining happiness: we can come to accept the world as it is (as sufficient) by claiming that it is what is not; i.e., we can become happy by exercising our will in a certain way.

Wittgenstein’s reflections on belief and the subject from the “early” part of the *Tractatus*, however, only enable us to observe the mistakes (logical, semantic, and ontological) at work in thinking that propositional attitudes can described in propositions or that such attitudes are “belief functions” that we can use to build complex propositions. Thus, Peer and the trolls might seem to provide examples that reveal a flaw in Wittgenstein’s account of the preservation of truth throughout the application of logical operations; however, as we have seen, the idea that such counterexamples reveal a flaw is a mistake. Wittgenstein traced this mistake to its source in thinking that a fact can be related to an object. The object in this context is the subject (“A”), and the problem with such a “belief proposition” is that we (or at least some contemporaries of Wittgenstein) are inclined to think that a subject (“A”) is put in relation to a proposition
and that the truth of the proposition believed is logically irrelevant to the truth of the "belief proposition" as a whole. Wittgenstein argued (or perhaps we should simply say he observed or remarked) that the mistake here is thinking that an object can be put in relation to a proposition (of which it is not a part). He also claimed that the subject could not in any case be an object.

In doing this, Wittgenstein was engaging in a classic example of tractarian philosophy as exemplified in 6.53: he was showing that no meaning has been assigned to a name. In this case, the name is "A," which, as the name for an object in purported "belief propositions" refers to an object that cannot, given the tractarian logic and semantics, exist (since it attempts to denote an object (the "subject") that can stand in relation to individual facts). However, while all this enables us to identify the logical and semantic mistakes involved in taking the example of Peer and the trolls the wrong way, it does not address the fact that Peer and the trolls can intentionally or habitually do what they did: they can take what is false as what is true. There is thus a question of the will and value at issue that the "early" parts of the Tractatus do not address. We can thus ask the question: What does reform of our thinking about belief and the subject have to do with the will and ethical value?

At the least, we might say that what Wittgenstein shows us is (strange as it may at first seem from a "superficial" perspective) intended to awaken us from a troll-like state of confusion. Thus, Wittgenstein himself was already engaged in an action that seems to bear ethical value. The hope in this case would be that while, like Peer, we might conform briefly to the "ordinary" or "superficial" way of doing and seeing things (provided by the trolls), we will, again like Peer, eventually find ourselves unable to not
speak the truth – unable to not say what we see is the case and affirm it as true. Indeed, shortly after Peer gives up his attempt to (in essence) specify as true what is false, he finds that the troll kingdom is simply gone, as if it were an illusion. My suggestion, then, is that getting the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus* right will reveal to us the need to get ourselves and other to see the world aright. It is precisely this struggle that Nora and Torvald will illustrate for us.
CHAPTER 4: THE TRACTATUS AS A WHOLE:

The Early Readings of Anscombe and Stenius

Anscombe:

I will first address Anscombe’s approach to the ethical notions of the Tractatus, as her work was published before the others and it also clearly establishes many of the key theses that will recur in the scholarship on the tractarian ethical notions and in particular among those who rely on the Notebooks in interpreting these notions. Since Anscombe’s interpretation of the ethical notions is closely intertwined with numerous other notions from the “mystical” part, it will be necessary to address Anscombe’s interpretation of this mysticism. Further, I will need to set aside for the moment the notions of belief and the subject developed in the first chapter, as Anscombe does not discuss belief in this context and her notion of the subject is taken less from the “early” part of the Tractatus and more from the Notebooks. Finally, the route she offers is of the “direct” or “logical” sort that Hacker rejects: she believes that the ethical and other mystical notions follow from the say/show distinction of the “early” part of the text: as she puts it in the chapter in which she discusses these issues (her final chapter, “Mysticism’ and Solipsism”), the chapter (along with her preceding chapter on knowledge and certainty) is “about some general philosophical consequences which Wittgenstein drew from his investigations into the philosophy of logic” (Anscombe 20). To be more exact, she argues that the notions of subject, limit, and the will follow from the say/show distinction that Wittgenstein
believed to be “the cardinal problem of philosophy” (quoted from Wittgenstein’s letter to Russell on Anscombe 161).

Anscombe’s interpretation of the consequences of this cardinal problem leads directly to her account of the ethical notions of the *Tractatus*. The move she makes here provides the foundation of the “ineffablist” interpretation of the *Tractatus*, a chief tenet of which is that ethical value somehow exists and can be somehow experienced. Her interpretation of the say/show distinction – the one that leads to ineffability – is as follows:

But an important part is played in the *Tractatus* by the things which, though they cannot be ‘said,’ are yet ‘shown’ or ‘displayed.’ That is to say: it would be right to call them ‘true’ if, *per impossible*, they could be ‘said’; in fact they cannot be called true, since they cannot be said, but ‘can be shewn,’ or are ‘exhibited,’ *in the propositions* saying the various things that can be said. (161; emphasis added)

In other words, although things such as ethical value are not objects or even configurations of objects – and so cannot be said – they nevertheless have some ontological status and can be communicated through the use of propositions in some non-referential capacity.

Anscombe immediately stresses the importance of the things that can be shown, stating that “the things that would be true if they could be said are *obviously* important”

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55 In claiming that there is a “logical route” from the early to the mystical part of the *Tractatus*, Anscombe’s position seems to be at odds with Hacker’s. However, insofar as both ultimately rely upon the tractarian claim that it is possible to make the inexpressible manifest (since it can be shown), their routes are ultimately similar with respect to this crucial point. Also, it is worth noting that Anscombe treats the subject as part of the “mystical” part of the text, even though it arises in the “early” discussions on logic and semantics. Her reasons for this seem to be that she equates the subject with the will as the bearer of value which is mentioned at 6.423.

56 The emphasis on “in the propositions” is made for reasons that will become clear shortly; basically, however, my aim is to draw attention to a key difference between Anscombe’s position and that of both Hacker and Stenius (among others): while Hacker and Stenius accept the idea that nonsense can be made manifest in pseudo-propositions, Anscombe’s claim is that the showing occurs by means of actual propositions.
(161; emphasis added). It is not clear why this should be so, but (perhaps because she finds it to be obvious) Anscombe offers no argument to support this claim. She might mean simply that it is obvious that such things were important to Wittgenstein. However, it is still not entirely clear why Wittgenstein takes up the issue of value: is it because, anthropologically speaking, it is an important issue that he must (if he really is to solve all the problems of philosophy) take up or because it is in fact a consequence of his theory (or both)? Anscombe also fails to address the fact that it is quite plausible (given the tractarian account of logic, ontology, and semantics) for one to think that the tractarian should conclude that there is no ethics, especially in the transcendent sense put forth by Anscombe (and Stenius). Anscombe essentially states that these things are so, largely because she believes that Wittgenstein had stated (or believed) that these things are so.

Anscombe also makes a distinction between two kinds of showing: there are logical propositions that make no attempt to say anything but that do show logical form, and there are significant propositions that exhibit or show those things (subject, will, and value) that we would make an attempt to say if (logically) they could be said (i.e., such propositions attempt to show something but what they show is not (a) form). It is worth noting that logical propositions just do show their form (and that they point to nothing) and they are explicitly discussed by Wittgenstein in this way (in the 4.46s), whereas Wittgenstein never explicitly speaks of ethical propositions as showing something and, in fact, says that there are no such propositions. Furthermore, Anscombe makes a distinction between propositions which just do show versus those that are part of an attempt to show (insofar as what they show is not themselves but something else to which they
supposedly point). While Anscombe gives careful attention to the question of how logical propositions can show, she gives no account of how regular propositions can do the work of extra-semantic and extra-logical showing that they presumably do. Thus, while we can make sense of the tractarian claim that the (logical and representational) form of a proposition can be shown and the content said, it is not clear how something that is not a matter of form can be shown. Anscombe simply moves from a discussion of logical truths to “the most notorious of the things that Wittgenstein says can be ‘shewn,’ but cannot be said” (166; this “most notorious thing” is what solipsism means) without precisely explicating the difference between the two or why the latter warrant a place in the tractarian approach.

57 Granted, Anscombe speaks of the “thing” shown as being immanent (it is “in the propositions”). But insofar as she talks of what is shown as something that we might like to say more directly, she evokes the idea of the possibility of constructing propositions in order to show that something that is inexpressible and yet not form and yet that can be shown, even if it must be shown in the proposition. Further, why must the propositions be significant ones? Again, it seems as if Anscombe is blatantly ignoring 6.42: “Hence also there can be no ethical propositions. / Propositions cannot express anything higher.” Saying that a proposition can show but not express value seems to be unnecessarily subtle (a case of what Frank Ramsey called trying to whistle what we can’t say) and in violation of the say/show distinction. What is shown is form, and form is “in” (internal to or immanent) the propositions, but what Wittgenstein says of value seems to clearly involve a notion of externality: there is a (perhaps metaphorical) sense that is not in the world and so not possible within a proposition. Wittgenstein does say that the inexpressible (the mystical) shows itself (6.522), but again, it is not clear why significant propositions are necessary for this. If this were so (and I do think that what Anscombe claims is plausible, although not the entire story), then it seems that all propositions are necessary for this – the inexpressible is shown in the world as it is presented to me in language. This would be consistent with the claim at 6.41, which discusses ethical/aesthetic value (the value of value) in terms of the der Sinn der Welt, a holistic approached also supported by 6.43 (which speaks of value changing the limits of the world as a whole) and 6.521 (which addresses the problem in terms of der Sinn des Lebens; it is worth keeping in mind the tractarian claim that world and life are one (5.621)).

58 The idea that something “meant” can be shown here seems to mean what Anscombe is talking about: an attempt to say something that cannot be said but that we would say if we could. However, solipsism is ultimately, as Hacker has shown, a semantic issue within the Tractatus: in dealing with the possible language in which I can think my world, it is in essence dealing with the form of what can be said. Form can clearly be shown, and we can see the implications of such “showing” for how we think about ourselves. However, this is not prima facie the case with value. It is for this reason that Hacker argued that the connection between the early and mystical parts is tenuous. What I wish to suggest in consequent chapters is that there is what we might call an “ethical route” between these parts, one that overcomes the problems of Anscombe’s failure to attend to value properly while not giving into Hacker’s dismissal of a closer connection.
In the case of the will and value, this is problematic (especially given the fact that her exegesis of this complex topic takes up just three pages). She addresses these notions in her discussion of what mysticism might be in the *Tractatus*. She argues that Wittgenstein’s use of the term “mysticism” follows Russell: it is simply the feeling that when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the real problems of life have not been touched at all (cf. 6.52). This does not mean that there is no “meaning to life” or no sense of things that would help us to address these problems. Rather, Anscombe takes the fact that Wittgenstein speaks of people “to whom after long doubting the sense of life [der Sinn des Lebens] became clear” (6.521) as evidence that Wittgenstein believed there is such a sense, but it simply cannot be said (and yet can be shown in significant propositions). Anscombe’s claim that there in some sense is something to be shown in this respect is clearly supported by 6.522, where Wittgenstein writes, “There is indeed the inexpressible. This shows itself; it is the mystical.” But, again, Anscombe still gives us little sense of how all this works or how precisely the *Tractatus* supports this.

Anscombe attempts to support her reading by simply quoting 6.41 (the proposition in which Wittgenstein introduces his notion of value, which may be either transcendental or transcendent as far as we know at this point), saying that Wittgenstein’s idea (about mysticism and the meaning of life) is “made clearest” there. Her exegesis is a bit unclear, but it seems that she takes Wittgenstein to be speaking of value as a non-accidental feature of certain facts. To understand this, we must first have 6.41 and Anscombe’s exegesis before us. According to 6.41,

The sense [der Sinn] of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. In it there is no value – and if there were, it would be of no value.
If there is a value which is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. For all happening and being-so is accidental.

What makes it non-accidental cannot lie in the world, for otherwise this would again be accidental.

It must lie outside the world.

Anscombe offers the following (condensed) gloss of these claims:

And: “God does not reveal himself in the world” (6.432) – i.e. it is not in things’ being this way as opposed to that that God is revealed.

This follows from the picture theory; a proposition and its negation are both possible; which one is true is accidental. Why then, having said that whatever is the case is accidental, does Wittgenstein speak of “what makes it non-accidental”? To understand this, we have to understand what he says about the will. (170-171)

The immediate turn to a quotation of 6.432 would seem to be a non sequitur, unless Anscombe takes “God” to be equivalent to “the meaning of life” and “the sense of the world” and perhaps even “value that is of value.” No argument for this is forthcoming.59

However, if God is identical to the value that is of value, and if it is not revealed in the world, then it is hard to understand how something in the world (such as what we say) could reveal this value that is not in it. Further, Anscombe treats “non-accidental” as a feature of what is the case: she treats the “it” in the sixth sentence of 6.41 as referring to “all happening and being-so” and not to “a value of value.” It would seem that Wittgenstein means to say that such value is not accidental (and is therefore outside the world) but not that accidental happenings have a necessary, non-accidental feature (a value).60

59 However, we will encounter the necessary argument in the next section (on Zemach), and so the identification is at least plausible for the moment. This is one of the “meanings” of the term “God” that Nielsen dismisses as nonsense in Nielsen and Phillips 2005, 313, which glosses his Nielsen 1989, 172-189.

60 It will turn out to be the case that Anscombe takes “accidental happenings” to mean “the world” (since the world is what is the case), although Wittgenstein speaks (and stresses) that these happenings are not the world but are events found in it. It is thus not clear that we can equate the accidental with the world as the value-bearing whole. Further, value is found in the action itself (6.422), but the world is not an action. An attempt to render the world as an action is offered by Stokhof (at Stokhof 215-217).
Some further light could be shed on this if we take into account Anscombe’s claim (in a footnote two pages later) that “Wittgenstein thought that the world is good and independent of my will; good and bad willing are attitudes toward the world as a whole. The goodness of the world, however, is not anything in how it is, but in its being at all; and lies outside all being-this-way-or-that” (172). Again, no argument or evidence is provided to support these claims. But the claims that underlie Anscombe thinking here (that what happens to be the case is good) will be a central feature of interpretations of these ethical notions in ensuing scholarship on the issue (and it will be underscored with passages from the *Notebooks* (in spite of the existence of contrary passages in the same work)). I will refer to this as the “good world” thesis, according to which the world, however it happens to be, is good.

Anscombe’s answer to her question (of why Wittgenstein speaks of what makes “it” non-accidental) mostly involves further quotations from the 6.4s. Her basic argument seems to be that since the “action itself” in which ethical value is found is beyond the world (with the implied supposition that there are non-worldly actions), the will that performs this action must also perform it beyond this world, and so therefore there is a transcendental will that is essential to ethical action: ethical action just is transcendental willing. This, like the claim that “the world as it is” is good, will also be a recurrent feature in future scholarship, and it too will be bolstered by citations from the *Notebooks*.

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61 The way in which one might provide such an argument will be shown by Zemach, but Jacquette 1997 clearly shows that this “good world” thesis cannot be correct. One need not rely on the *Notebooks* to make the counter-argument to the “good world” thesis; however, the defense of such a thesis relies entirely on the *Notebooks*, in spite of the fact that on 2.8.16 Wittgenstein writes, “The world is then, in itself, neither good nor evil.” That claim is consistent with the *Tractatus*, as Jacquette shows.

62 Stokhof 2002 is the most prominent example.

63 Zemach and Stokhof each attempt to defend such a thesis.
I will refer to it as the “willing subject” thesis, according to which there is a metaphysical subject that acts as a transcendental will and that this provides the source of value.\(^{64}\)

Anscombe ends her brief and partial exegesis of the tractarian ethical notions by observing that “[i]t is this part of the *Tractatus* that seems to me most obviously wrong” (171). This is because the actions of which value would be predicated should (on Anscombe’s reading) be happenings in the world, but the tractarian account “does not allow this to be so” and instead invokes “a chimerical “will” which effects nothing in the world, but only alters the “limits” of the world” (172). She does not attempt to develop what this might mean: since she believes that actions must be happenings in the world, the notion of an action that is not a happening in the world seems to strike her as pure and simple nonsense (and not the revealing kind of nonsense that she claimed this must be).

A final source of confusion in Anscombe’s exegesis of these matters can be found in her approach to 6.43.

> If good or bad willing changes the world, it can only change the limits of the world, not the facts; not the things that can be expressed in language.
> In brief, the world must thereby become quite another, it must so to speak wax or wane as a whole.
> The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy.

Although she already finds this notion of willing wrong, she nonetheless offers an interpretation of what it means for the world to “wax or wane as a whole.” She claims that this speaks to the fact that “Wittgenstein saw the world looking at him with a face: logic helped him to reveal the face” (172). She notes that “a face can look at you with a

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\(^{64}\) Again, both Zemach and Stokhof will defend this thesis, too. Also, as we will see in the next chapter, this thesis can only be combined with the good world thesis by assuming further that the metaphysical will is identical with God, so that “the world as it is” is in fact what I have already willed (insofar as and if my will is ultimately identical with God’s will). It is perhaps worth noting that Zemach makes no mention of Anscombe’s work and Stokhof makes no mention of Zemach and no mention of Anscombe on these issues.
sad or happy, grave or grim, or good or evil expression, and with more or less expression” (172). However, we must again observe that if ethical values such as good and evil are beyond the world, it is not clear how they can appear in a state of affairs (as an “expression”) and yet not be described in a description of that state of affairs or shown through the logical mimicry of the form in a picture. Certainly they cannot be used as predicates to describe the state of affairs (a point that Anscombe herself makes with respect to ethical action). Yet even more confusing is her claim that the world is also said to have such an expression: this means that the world can have an evil expression, but if this so, it is not at all clear how the world can be said to good, however it may be. Thus, Anscombe is in need of a way of reading of 6.43 while claiming that the world (however it may be) is good.

Stenius:

Stenius takes a slightly different approach to these notions, but reaches a similar ineffabilist conclusion. Although his book’s subtitle states that it is “a critical exposition of its [the Tractatus’] main lines of thought,” it is not a general introduction, as Anscombe’s book is: as Stenius explains in his introduction, he “concentrated on the semantical and metaphysical aspects of Wittgenstein’s theory” because the parts treating of formal logic and mathematics had (by the time Stenius wrote) either been “assimilated into the general view of present-day analytical philosophers” or are of mere “peripheral” interest (Stenius ix). Further, Stenius does not deal with those propositions that he does not understand (since, as he notes, he cannot estimate their value without such understanding) or those that, though understandable, “give an indeterminate and obscure
impression” and so are “impossible to either accept or reject” (ix). Many of the difficult issues encountered in the 6.4s and 6.5s are thus not dealt with, but Stenius never elaborates on what discounts that with which he does not deal, i.e., it is not clear whether he fails to understand some (or all) of this material or if he understands some (or all) of it to be obscure.

Nonetheless, like Anscombe, Stenius does address many of the ethical notions, and he does so in a final chapter in which, having treated “the author of the Tractatus as a logician and a semanticist,” he offers “a short analysis of Wittgenstein’s philosophical system” (214). It is here, in the context of a purported tractarian system, that Stenius approaches the notions of subject, will, value, and ethics. More specifically, he argues that “Wittgenstein was in essential respects a Kantian philosopher” who “transformed the system of Kant and thus created a Kantianism of a peculiar kind” (214), and so he treats the notions that are of concern to us in the context of this Kantianism.

More specifically, Stenius focuses not on the epistemological aims of Kant but rather on “a purpose which was still more fundamental to his philosophical outlook,” namely, the attempt “to make a dichotomy between what belongs to the genuine province of “theoretical reason” and what does not belong to it” (citation). He then describes the motivation for this purpose (in Kant’s efforts) as a response to the erroneous, dogmatic metaphysics of Leibniz and Wolff:

The error in Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics, which Kant called ‘dogmatic,’ was that it applied the forms of theoretical reason to questions which do not belong to the province of theoretical knowledge – as questions about God, the immortal soul, the universe as a whole, the free will, morals, and so on. All those questions belong to the province of ‘practical reason’ and can be answered only by methods proper to it. We can thus state as a fundamental line in Kantian thought the dichotomy between questions belonging to the provinces of theoretical and practical reason. The same
distinction – though certainly interpreted in a different, more mystical way – is found in the very title of Schopenhauer’s main work *The World as Will and Idea*, where the ‘World as Will’ corresponds to the province of practical reason and the ‘World as Idea’ to the province of theoretical reason. (215)

The suggestion, which Stenius develops in the rest of that chapter, is that this dichotomy between theoretical and practical reason – a dichotomy that protects the moral free space of practical reason from the encroachments of a theoretical reason that can (since it cannot actually answer these practical questions) only act dogmatically in such a space – maps onto the say/show distinction. He also keeps a Schopenhauerian option in mind, although, he does fully develop the consequences of the difference in approaching the say/show distinction in terms of practical reason as opposed to the (world) will.

In order to map this dichotomy onto Wittgenstein, Stenius offers his interpretation of the method of theoretical reason and the transcendent/transcendental distinction in Kant. Theoretical reason establishes the form that all experience must a priori have. Investigation of such reason then “shows the limits of all possible experience and thus also what kind of questions lie outside this limit” (216). This gives us what is transcendental (the form of any possible experience) and what is transcendent (i.e., “the *Ding an sich*, a “thing” which exists independently of the form of experience” (216)). Stenius then presents two ways of viewing our access to this *Ding an sich*: intuition and postulation. Thus, there is Schopenhauer’s claim that “the mind has access to the *Ding an sich* through the intuition of the will” (216), which goes beyond Kant, for whom there could be no knowledge of the transcendent; Kant’s claim is that the “principles of practical reason cannot be known by any special faculty of intuition but only postulated as necessary conditions for the existence of a moral world order” (216). The implication
seems to be that we can view the tractarian as inheriting one of these two views: either we can intuit transcendent entities, or we must be able postulate them (if ethics is to be seen as possible).65

Stenius then argues that, in order not to confuse Kantian *Anschauung* with Schopenhauerian *Anschauung*, we should translate the former as “imagination.” His reason centers on the notion of method used in investigating theoretical reason. Kant requires us to arrive at knowledge of theoretical reason through analysis of *Anschauung*. However, treating *Anschauung* as intuition might make it seem as if we can proceed by intuiting transcendent entities, which Stenius claims is the case for Schopenhauer. But, Stenius argues, the positing of such intuition is not necessary for what it aims to accomplish, which is to give us a means of proceeding in our philosophical investigations without any actual reference to physical sensations; imagination is sufficient for this task.66 Using the example of geometry, Stenius explains this as follows:

we cannot even imagine a world in which the theorems of geometry were not valid, and since the real world, in so far as it is capable of being perceived, must be an imaginable world, the theorems of geometry must necessarily hold true in the real world. A world which is ‘possible’ in terms of our theoretical reason must be an imaginable world. Thus an investigation of what is imaginable to us shows us what is a priori true with regard to perception. In the same way an investigation of what is intelligible to theoretical reason in other respects gives us additional a priori knowledge of the world of experience. (217)

It is thus not necessary to posit an intuitive capacity that gives us some direct access to what is possible; instead, we need only the simple ability to investigate what we might imagine. Stenius then argues that only one modification to this Kantian method is needed to generate the tractarian system. We must treat “imaginable” and “intelligible” as

65 It may be worth stressing this “if.” At 6.41, Wittgenstein speaks hypothetical, saying what a value of value must be if there is such a thing.

66 Cf. Chapter 2 for the trouble that Schopenhauer has with Kant’s approach to perception and imagination.
“thinkable”, and then – since the thought that is thinkable is itself a logical picture of reality, i.e., “that which can be described in a depicting language,” and since all language is depicting language in the tractarian system – what in the Kantian system is imaginable/intelligible “is identical with what can be described in meaningful language” (218). In other words, to be possible for theoretical reason is to be describable in language.

With this modification in place, we can then see the task of the (tractarian) philosopher as one of indicating the limits of what can be said, and the method that corresponds to this is “the investigation of the ‘logic’ of language” (218). In this manner, Stenius claims, the logical analysis of language accomplishes the aim of the transcendental deductions. Stenius notes that this fits with Wittgenstein’s statements regarding philosophy at 4.113-4.115, in which he claims that philosophy limits (scientific) discourse by limiting the thinkable through the clear presentation of what can be said. We can add that this also fits with the tractarian account of method given at 6.3: “Logical investigation [Erforschung] means the investigation of all regularity. And outside logic all is accident.” The German Erforschung can also mean “exploration,” and so we have the sense that we must explore the regularity (the logical connections) among all those things that we can possibly say. To a large extent this will involve imagining what can be said in order to have it before us so that we can see the regularity that runs

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67 Such a claim (that the thinkable is also the imaginable) is defended at length in Bradley 1992.
68 This would coincide with my account of the way in which the tractarian philosopher can aid the psychologist.
through the discourse, enabling it to picture reality. As with Kant, no experience
(Erfahrung) with a particular state of affairs is necessary.69

This Kantian account of the transcendental nature of logic accords with
Anscombe’s account, although it elaborates the issue more fully and clearly. Logic is not
something transcendent (as opposed to transcendental), nor something that we might try
to say. Instead, logical regularity will be apparent in well-constructed networks of signs.
To Anscombe’s argument Stenius has added a sense of how we might view this
“showing” from an anthropological perspective: our ability to investigate such regularity
will be limited only by our ability to imagine networks of signs and our ability to
recognize the connections among those signs. The regularity will not be off in some other
world, a world to which we need some special intuitive access. Rather, it will be right
before us in the facts and propositions that we experience in this world.

But this notion of imagination and the showing of the transcendental cannot easily
or clearly account for ethics and value. Stenius treats ethics and value as something
transcendent, not transcendental. In doing so, he makes the same mistake as Anscombe in
disregarding 6.42 and speaking of “transcendent propositions” insofar as he treats value
as something existing “apart” from the world (so to speak) which can nonetheless be
talked about within it.70 He seems careful to avoid this, speaking only of an analogy to
such propositions. But even this much seems dangerous and misleading, as can be seen
from how Stenius develops his argument with the notion of postulation.

69 Or rather, the experience that would be necessary would not be an experience at all (cf. 5.552). I develop
this notion of the “necessary” non-experience in the next chapter.
70 A different option – that ethics can “be talked about” (in the sense that we can “talk about the
philosophical I” (cf. 5.641) without value being a subsisting entity existing apart from (as opposed to a
limit of) the world – is not entertained. Such an option will be illustrated below in Chapter 8 via the
discussion in Ibsen’s A Doll House between Nora and Torvald regarding her duty.
He again proceeds from an account of the Kantian system:

There are also ‘transcendent’ propositions (e.g. propositions on God, the immortal soul, the universe as a whole, free will, morals, etc.). Such propositions cannot be known to be true by theoretical knowledge, but only ‘postulated’ by practical reason (Kant) or intuited by the will (Schopenhauer). The establishment of such propositions belongs to the task of practical philosophy. (217-218)

It would seem that this account of our relation to the transcendent could not be carried over into the tractarian system, since there could be no such transcendent propositions, postulated or otherwise: in virtue of their attempt to say something that is not in this world, they would fail to be propositions at all. Nonetheless, Stenius cites 6.522 (there is the inexpressible; it shows itself; it is the mystical) as evidence that the tractarian is committed to the transcendence of ethics in a Kantian or even Schopenhauerian fashion. 71 “Thus there is,” he concludes, “a domain of ‘practical reason,’ but this lies outside what is expressible in language” (222).

The analogy between the Kantian and tractarian systems seems to be stretched at this point. Some of the stretching is not terribly contentious: if ethics is inexpressible because it is a matter of the Ding an sich, then Wittgenstein should have concluded that ethics is transcendent. However, he claims instead, “It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed. Ethics is transcendental” (6.421). The claim “Ethics is transcendental” also occurs in the Notebooks on 30.7.16, and Wittgenstein claims earlier (on 24.7.16), “Ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic.” These citations seem to suggest that Wittgenstein meant “transcendental” when he wrote it. 72 There is some confusion in the passage on 30.7.16 when Wittgenstein, speaking of the “objective mark [Merkmal]” of a happy life, claims that such a mark “cannot be a

71 This commitment is developed and defended in Jacquette 1997.
72 This point was also discussed above in Chapter 1.
physical one but only a metaphysical one, a transcendental one.” It could be that Wittgenstein treats “transcendental” as meaning “metaphysical” in the noumenal sense. However, it is also possible that Wittgenstein used “metaphysical” as meaning “transcendental” in the sense of “conditions for the possibility of something,” such that ethics and the objective mark of the happy life are part of the “good” metaphysics of practical philosophy (and not the bad metaphysics of erroneous dogmatism). But Stenius argues that “Wittgenstein would rather have said ‘Ethics is transcendent’ if he had adopted the above distinction between ‘transcendental’ and ‘transcendent.’” (222).

While Wittgenstein did not explicitly adopt this distinction, it does seem to capture the different way in which logic and ethical/aesthetic value are treated. Anscombe, as we saw, came to a similar conclusion regarding the different kind of showing logic and value involve. However, absent an account of what it would look like if we took Wittgenstein at his word (when he says that ethics is transcendental), it is difficult to judge whether we should treat Wittgenstein as having made an equivocation of some sort here.74

A deeper problem arises when we begin to look at the kind of showing that would be involved in this notion of “ethics as transcendent.” Stenius offers an ineffableist account, just as Anscombe did, with the crucial distinction that he sees ethics expressed in nonsense, whereas Anscombe claimed that ethics is expressed in significant propositions:

In a logical empiricist’s vocabulary ‘nonsensicality’ means something purely negative. Wittgenstein’s identification of the inexpressible with the

73 It seems clear that Wittgenstein took himself to be doing the “good” sort of metaphysics, and if so, then the implication is thus that the peculiar status of the *Tractatus* (the fact that it seems to be saying what cannot be said) is due to its being a kind of practical philosophy.
74 In other words, I don’t believe that one can simply assume that when Wittgenstein uses the word “metaphysical” he is intending only the “bad” dogmatic metaphysics, a belief that I take the entry on 30.7.16 to support. However, whereas I treat “metaphysical” as the poorly chosen word, Stenius makes a similar but opposing move when he in essence claims that the word “transcendental” is the mistake.
mystical seems to show that to him ‘nonsensicality’ has a rather positive ring. The German word *Unaussprechlich* means not only ‘inexpressible’ but also ‘ineffable.’ Thus the identification in 6.522 of *das Unaussprechliche* with the mystical could be interpreted as a statement of the old thought that the mystical is ineffable. (223)

Nonsense of the ineffable kind entails that language can have communicative functions other than the presentation of thoughts as pictures of reality via projected propositional signs that say that something is the case and show their form. Again, Anscombe would agree that language can have this function, but that one need not resort to nonsense. However, we should be more precise: for Stenius this is a matter of pseudo-language, since nonsense, lacking sense, would not be language in the tractarian sense but rather would be a matter of putting words together in a way that does not lead to the construction of sentences with sense. Such activity can be used to convey a sense of something ineffable (something that ontologically speaking both “is not” (from the viewpoint of language and science) and “is” (from some other viewpoint)). Tractarian semantics is not violated, although commentators are often uncomfortable with the so-called “queer” ontological implications.

Thus, Stenius claims *not* that propositions convey value through extra-semantic means but rather that pseudo-propositions convey value through such means. Anscombe makes the opposing claim that it is actual propositions that do the showing through extra-semantic means. The difference between the two is ultimately a matter of interpretation of the say/show distinction: Stenius supports this notion of inexpressible but metaphysically meaningful nonsense in terms of “a distinction [which he introduced in Chapter X of his book] between two kinds of things that cannot be said: that which can be shown in language but not said, and that which can be neither shown nor said in
language” (223). Thus, he denies the possibility on which Anscombe relies when she claims that ethical/aesthetic value (the inexpressible) can be shown “in the propositions saying the various things that can be said” (Anscombe 161).

But even if this is so, it leads to further problems, ones that more seriously question Stenius’s Kantian reading: if there is a transcendent realm of value, how do we encounter it and how is it related to language and to reason? It may be that Wittgenstein wishes to claim or even argue that there is an ethical space, distinct from logical space, but it is not clear how the tractarian could define “reason” such that we can claim that reason is operating in this space. It is also unlikely that we could then argue that an adherent of the tractarian system would wish to speak of postulating ethical propositions, even as an analogy for what the tractarian does. There is no such things as an ethical proposition, and Stenius himself claims that an ineffable thing “does not reflect itself in language” in the manner that logic does. In fact, in 6.422 Wittgenstein attends explicitly to the problems with attempting to postulate something ethical.

In response to the question of how such a thing does in fact express itself, Stenius answers that he “believe[s] this is to be understood as a matter of feeling” (223). At first glance this would seem to be wrong. We might claim that a feeling is something empirical; it is an experience that we undergo and so something that can be pictured and thus stated as a fact. Jones can be sad, and we can say, “Jones is sad,” and it can be either true or false. It is not clear how the object or cause of such a feeling could be something that is not in the world. How can we have experiences of something for which no form of

75 I assess the issue more fully in following chapters but will state here merely that I think Anscombe is closer to the right track: nonsense is not, for the tractarian, language, and so saying that we use non-language to show something other than form seems more dubious (and less tractarian) than claiming that the totality of what can be said (by me in the language I understand) shows something other than form.

76 Chapter 8 is dedicated to an analysis of 6.422.
an experience is possible? We might then expect Stenius to invoke the Kantian notion of respect or even the sublime, but he instead turns to the distinction made in German between *Erlebnis*, which he defines as “emotional experience,” and *Erfahrung*, which he describes as “ordinary fact-stating ‘experience’” (223). This *Erlebnis*, he claims, is the feeling (*Gefühl*) found in 6.45, where Wittgenstein makes his final comment on 6.4 (the claim that all propositions are of equal value); in 6.45 Wittgenstein writes, “The contemplation [*Anschauung*] of the world *sub specie aeterni* is its contemplation as a limited whole. / The feeling that the world is a limited whole is the mystical feeling.” It is a feeling that, according to Stenius, points us toward “a symbol for the unreachable transcendent.”

Stenius does not further develop this notion of the unreachable transcendent or how we might experience it or how/why we might try to reach it. Instead, he merely offers this as potential motivation for why Wittgenstein starts the *Tractatus* with a (technically unsayable) proposition about what the world is. “What the world is” and “that it is” are notions connected in the *Tractatus* with the mystical (cf. 5.552, 6.432, and 6.44), whereas “how the world is” is a matter of indifference and of what happens to be the case. However, Stenius, in quoting 5.552, overlooks a potential complication: logic, he notes, is said by the tractarian philosopher to precede every *Erfahrung* (it precedes *how* things are) but it does not precede *what* things are. But in 5.552 Wittgenstein also claims that the understanding of logic requires an “*Erfahrung*” (the scare quotes are used by Wittgenstein) that is in fact no *Erfahrung* at all. The experience that is needed is “not that such and such is the case [how things stand], but that something *is,*” and this “that something *is*” is the very “*What*” or, in 6.44, the “that it is” that is identified with the
mystical. It is not clear if this “‘experience’ that is no experience” is in fact the Erlebnis identified by Stenius, although this seems possible (assuming we did not translated Erlebnis as “emotional experience”). But it is also not clear whether logic (which on Stenius’s interpretation must involve a different kind of showing) involves a different type of “experience” instead of or in addition to such mystical/emotional Erlebnis. For instance, we saw Stenius argue earlier for the role of imagination in logical research. Is an Erlebnis of some kind needed in addition to whatever imagination supplies? It is also not clear whether this notion of mystical/emotional Erlebnis is identical to or merely indebted to the Schopenhauerian notion of will.

This Erlebnis/Erfahrung distinction is nonetheless an intriguing and important one: without some sense of how exactly we could, as human agents, experience things such as “understanding logic” and “seeing transcendent(al) (ethical/aesthetic) values,” it is difficult to for us to judge the tractarian view of things and for the tractarian to make sense of human experience in the widest sense. Stenius’s Erlebnis thesis – his claim that the tractarian system requires two separate notions of experience – is promising, in that it addresses a central issue overlooked in Anscombe’s introduction to these issues. Surprisingly, there is little focus on this issue in subsequent decades, and it is not until Martin Stokhof’s book (Stokhof 2002) that we encounter it again, although in Stokhof the issue is largely consigned to footnotes and so a complete account of this issue still awaits us.77

For now, however, let us note the general theses and questions concerning the ethical notions of the Tractatus that we are left with after examining these seminal early

77 The remaining chapters of this dissertation attempt to develop such an account. For Stokhof’s limited remarks on the notion of tractarian “experience” or pseudo-experience, cf. 236, 242-243, 245, 297 nt. 43, and 300 nt. 76. For a critical analysis of Stokhof’s remarks, cf. Chapter 8 below.
exegetical works. We will rely on the background provided by these theses in the following chapters in which we will examine more robust and carefully formulated arguments regarding the mystical notions and the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus*. The main theses are as follows:

1. The ineffability thesis, according to which there is something such as ethical value, but it can only be shown either by means of actual propositions (Anscombe) or pseudo-propositions (Stenius).
2. The willing subject thesis, according to which there is a metaphysical subject that transcendentally wills and that this provides the source of value (Anscombe).
3. The world-will identity thesis, according to which the metaphysical will/subject and the world will/will of God are identical (Anscombe).
4. The good world thesis, according to which the world, however it happens to be, is good (Anscombe).
5. The God-value identity thesis, according to which the value/meaning that the world has is God (Anscombe).
6. The *Erlebnis* thesis, according to which a second notion of experience is necessary to account for how we encounter things such as value and the meaning of life (Stenius).

Stenius is for the most part careful not to commit himself to the theses to which Anscombe commits herself. Much of Stenius’s neutrality on these issues could perhaps be traced to his uncertainty regarding the extent to which Wittgenstein might go beyond Kant in a Schopenhauerian fashion. It could also be that he does not understand them or found them too obscure, since he chose to remain silent about those things he did not understand and/or found too obscure. However, his primary contribution to these issues – the *Erlebnis* thesis – is something that Anscombe’s reading requires.78

There are many questions that these theses raise and that we must address in the following pages:

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78 Stokhof accepts all the theses listed here (except perhaps 5), and he makes explicit (albeit largely in footnotes) the need for the *Erlebnis* thesis (although he does not refer to it in these terms, as he makes no reference to Stenius on these issues).
1. How is the second kind of showing possible? In other words, how do propositions or pseudo-propositions show something that is not in the world? How does something empirically available, such as language, orient us toward such ontologically peculiar entities (or pseudo-entities)?

2. Further, how do we experience or “see” these ontologically peculiar entities (and could we do so without the aid of language or pseudo-language)?

3. Why is such showing important? And, tied to this, why does Wittgenstein even address this second kind of showing? Why are things such as the mystical or (ethical/aesthetic) value not simply dismissed?

4. Is value supposed to be transcendent or transcendental? In other words, should we read the second sentence of 6.421 literally?

It is the aim of the next four chapters to address these questions. I begin to build an answer in the next chapter by turning to Zemach’s 1966 essay, “Wittgenstein’s Philosophy of the Mystical.” Zemach offers a fuller treatment of the mystical than either Stenius or Anscombe, and he makes fuller use of the *Notebooks*. He also gives the tractarian concept of God its due (and does so in ways that anticipate key elements of Stokhof’s interpretation of the mystical part). This concept, with its connection to what is unassailable, will be vital to an understanding of the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus*. 
The first attempt to offer a complete and systematic account of the ethical notions of the *Tractatus* is offered in 1966 by Eddy Zemach in his essay, “Wittgenstein’s Philosophy of the Mystical.” Zemach also goes a step further and attempts to explicate what a tractarian ethics would be. I say “a step further” since Wittgenstein himself never claimed to be putting forth an ethics and spoke (in his letter to von Ficker) only of the ethical purpose (*Sinn*) of his text. Indeed, one could argue that Wittgenstein attempted only to offer a tractarian account of ethical/aesthetic value, his purpose being to clarify this crucial ethical concept, not build an ethics upon it. Anscombe and Stenius treat the ethical notions in this fashion: they do not attribute any ethics to Wittgenstein but rather approach the material in 6.4-7 as offering certain preconditions for any possible ethics. Further, Zemach’s essay is also the first work on the tractarian notion of ethics to make comprehensive and systematic use of the *Notebooks*, which had finally been published in 1961. The “philosophy of the mystical” (which Zemach also calls the “mystical” part of

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79 Although he did not explicitly offer any ethics, the mystical part of the *Tractatus* does speak of a few ethical implications of the tractarian account of ethical/aesthetic value.

80 Anscombe and Stenius do both seem to believe that the ethical point of the *Tractatus* would in large part be oriented toward getting us to give up attempts to say what cannot be said (cf. Anscombe 170, Stenius 225-226). (If ethics is a matter of (attempting to be) saying what cannot be said, then, paradoxically, they are claiming that the tractarian ethics would have us give up ethics. In one sense, this is true, as the analysis of 6.422 in Chapter 8 will show.) However, if the showing of what cannot be said is inextricably or even very closely linked to what we say, then it is not clear how we could give up these attempts and yet still enjoy insight into the good. It might be that they would support a Platonic or Neo-platonic account of a possible tractarian ethics, according to which, in ladder-like fashion, language can provide a dialectic that enables a (nearly) unadorned vision of the good. Stenius seems to rule this out explicitly (at Stenius 224-225), and to suggest instead that the aim of the *Tractatus* is to enable us to stop doing philosophy (at least, as it has traditionally been done; if the *Tractatus* is, as Stenius’s interpretation seems to imply, a kind of practical philosophy, then it is not clear that we can or should stop). If Anscombe and Stenius are correct, then what is bad and a (or the) primary source of suffering is simply attempting to say what cannot be said and believing that one can understand it. But again, the troubling implication that we must give up ethics then arises.
the *Tractatus*) refers to “the metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics developed in the last sections of the *Tractatus*” (Zemach 1966, 359). Based on the remarks used in the essay, the “last sections” are 6.373 from 6.54, although he may have intended remarks 6.4-7.

Like Anscombe and Stenius, Zemach believes that the mystical part of the *Tractatus* follows from the ontology, logic, and semantics that precede it\(^81\):

The metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics developed in the last sections of the *Tractatus* are not an appendix to a body of thought already completed, a group of scattered remarks concerning various disconnected topics, or remainders that might as well be ignored. They are rather a culmination of the work reflecting back on everything that went before. (359)

It is thus necessary to understand the earlier tractarian notions if we are to understand the final sections. Zemach proceeds by building an interpretation of 1-6.3751 that supports a reading of the mystical philosophy which gives it content that is both positive and coherent. By “positive” I mean that Zemach, unlike Anscombe and Stenius, does not see the task of the tractarian philosopher as a largely negative one of simply correcting people when they try to express what cannot be expressed; it is also a positive one of showing people how to live in order to find the happiness discussed in the *Tractatus*.\(^82\) By “coherent” I mean that, for Zemach, the final propositions (6.4-7) all fall within the first of the four categories into which Stenius places the propositions of the *Tractatus*: they are “statements which I believe I understand and which I think are clarifying, stimulating, and important” (Stenius *ix*).

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\(^{81}\) Stenius, however, does hold out the possibility that, even if one believes that the logical atomism of the *Tractatus* is false, the ineffable ethics might nonetheless be separable from that doctrine and so still true on its own terms. Jacquette also raises this possibility (Jacquette 1997, 315). Also, cf. the discussion of Hacker on this issue in the Introduction to Part II (above).

\(^{82}\) This “happiness” is mentioned in remark 6.43; such a person might also be motivated to find the “ethical reward” mentioned in 6.422. It is most likely the case (as will be discussed in later chapters) that Wittgenstein intended “ethical reward” and “happiness” to be synonyms, as the waxing limits of the world that make for a happy world result from the value (the ethical reward) borne by the will in the action itself.
Zemach does not rely entirely on his interpretation of the propositions preceding the mystical part. He also relies heavily on the *Notebooks*, and he believes that there is nothing in the *Tractatus* to contradict what is in the *Notebooks*. This is problematic for two reasons. The first is that the *Notebooks* are not internally consistent: they can be read selectively to support different views (as will be shown in the following chapter). The second is that (again as we shall in the next chapter) there are elements in the *Tractatus* which seem to question the picture that Zemach imports from the *Notebooks*. In fact, Zemach uses the notebook entries on 2.8.16 to explicitly reject Anscombe’s good world thesis, which Anscombe had drawn from the *Notebooks*. Nonetheless, Zemach endorses all the other theses put forth by Anscombe and, in fact, he is able to reconstruct the good world thesis from these other theses, to which he adds one: the world-will independence thesis, according to which the will cannot change the world (cf. 6.373-6.374). Insofar as Zemach’s argument is much more fully developed and clearly supported than Anscombe’s, it is here that we can better see the possibilities and failings of her approach to the ethical notions.

Zemach’s argument hinges on his interpretation of the tractarian notions of God, world, will, and factuality. He argues that God *is* factuality and the totality of facts: God is the set of formal features that make facts possible and He is the totality of facts. Zemach supports this claim with a series of identifications in which God is rendered identical to logical space and to the general form of proposition (which gives the possibility of every specific state of affairs), and from this he concludes that God is “the ‘fact’ that the world is what it is, a totality of facts” (Zemach 364) insofar as He presents.

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83 These claims are developed in the following chapter, which is dedicated to the tractarian inheritance of the mystical philosophy of the *Notebooks*. 
this totality in virtue of delimiting the possible form all facts can take. God (and the
totality of facts or the world as what it is) is thus not actually any specific world (this
world as opposed to that one), but the possibility of any world as such. The mystical,
then, is simply the “feeling” of this limited whole. But Zemach also defines God as the
value or meaning of the world, and not just its possibility and/or the “fact” that it is what
it is. Thus, Zemach claims that the willing subject (taken from the Notebooks) is said to
give the world is value or meaning – a value or meaning which is God. But since this
willing subject just is (in one of its two aspects) God, the subject wills what God wills,
which is whatever limited totality happens to be present. This limited totality is not in
itself good or bad; what is good or bad is the subject (in its independent aspect) willing in
the presence or “face” (as Anscombe put it) of this world. We cannot alter this world, so
at most we can choose to affirm it or reject. Affirming it leads to happiness and is the
good action. Rejecting it leads to unhappiness, and is bad: the unhappiness is the
punishment that is found in the action itself (just as happiness is the reward of
affirmation). Since the world cannot be changed, and since the only good action is
affirming the world, it is easy to see how Zemach would then conclude (as Anscombe
and, later, Stokhof do) that the world in itself is good and/or the source of the good.

Zemach’s argument is quite detailed and technical. There is no need to recreate it
here in its entirety, and I wish instead to focus on the problems with his interpretation of
the tractarian notion of God and in particular those that follow from the use of the
Notebooks, especially since the Notebooks present serious challenges to the tenability of
Anscombe’s and Zemach’s version of the ineffability thesis.
Zemach’s argument rests most fully on three claims: that God is the world, that the world is independent of my will, and that my will is identical to the will of God. The first claim (that God is the world) rests largely on the 11.6.16 and 8.7.16 notebook entries.\textsuperscript{84} It is worth having these entries before us; I have numbered the sentences for ease of future reference. The first set of entries, on 11.6.16, is as follows:

1. What do I know about God and the purpose [Zweck] of life?
2. I know that this world exists.
3. That I am placed in it like my eye in its visual field.
4. That something about it is problematic, which we call its meaning [Sinn].
5. That this meaning does not in it but outside it. [\textit{Cf}. 6.41]
6. That life is the world. [\textit{Cf}. 5.621]
7. That my will penetrates [\textit{durchdringt}] the world.
8. That my will is good or evil.
9. Therefore that good and evil are somehow connected with the meaning of the world.
10. The meaning of life, i.e. the meaning of the world, we can call God.
11. And connect with this the comparison of God to a father.
12. To pray is to think [\textit{Das Gebet ist der Gedanke}] about the meaning of life.
13. I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will: I am completely powerless.
14. I can only make myself independent of the world – and so in a certain sense master it – by renouncing any influence on happenings.

This is the only set of entries from the month of June. It reads like a manifesto in which Wittgenstein declares all that seems to him to be the case in these matters. Of course, none of what is said here can “be the case” in the tractarian sense. It is all nonsense that at most can show something about the transcendental conditions of the world (or that which

\textsuperscript{84} The notebook entries on the ethical notions come in the last sections of the \textit{Notebooks}, from 11.6.16 until 19.11.16. Their placement in the notebooks is thus parallel to their placement in the \textit{Tractatus}. This would (in the case of the \textit{Notebooks}) seem to be a chance occurrence, as historical evidence suggests not that Wittgenstein had planned to turn to ethical and mystical matters after completing his logico-semantic system but that Wittgenstein’s experience of intensive fighting along the Eastern Front in the Brusilov Offensive, which began in June of 1916, led him to turn to these matters. A leave of absence spent in Olmutz gave him time to further pursue these themes. If Wittgenstein’s thinking on these matters did develop over the course of the \textit{Notebooks}, then Zemach’s heavy reliance on Wittgenstein initial thoughts could be seen as suspect: some clearly survived, but some may have been rejected.
transcends the world). Only two of these propositions will make it into the *Tractatus*. Some will make it in an altered fashion: the claim in sentence 3 will occur in 5.633, although it will not be treated as something “known,” while the claim in sentence 13 will be tempered in 5.1362 and 6.373-6.374, where the independence is described in logical, not causal, terms. Others sentences, such as 10, which gives the meaning of life the name “God,” will not make it.

Zemach never questions why Wittgenstein might have given up or altered some of these propositions. Nor does he address the epistemological assumptions on which they rest, such as an ability to know – presumably through some form of insight or intuition – certain pseudo-facts about transcendental and transcendent realities. (Zemach will thus fail to address the first set of questions we have for this ineffabilist approach: how is can we experience (let alone know) such unsayable extra-worldly realities?). Instead, he uses sentences 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13 as evidence in support of his argument. He uses sentences 7-8 to support his interpretation of value, sentence 13 to interpret the world-will independence thesis, and sentence 10 and 12 to support his interpretation of the notion of God.

Zemach argues, as noted above, that God is the general form of proposition, and as such is “the essence of the world, the world’s meaning and form,” since “the essence of the world, its form, etc., is nothing but *the general form of proposition*” (364). The claim here about the GFP is supported by 5.471 and 5.4711 (“The general form of

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85 In fact, the notebook versions of 6.373 and 6.374 begin the next set of entries, which are recorded three and half weeks later on 5.7.16. Here we see more fully that the independence is logical, not causal: in other words, the world and the will are logically independent, but this same independence applies to the fact that is called a “cause” and the fact that is called the “effect.” What connects them is the mesh through which they are described, not any causal nexus (cf. the 5.136s and the 6.363s); this provides the only internal connection. The rest is external and so accidental – a matter of Fate (6.374).
proposition is the essence of a proposition” (5.471) and “To give the essence of a proposition means to give the essence of all description and thus the essence of the world” (5.4711)). However, Zemach also quotes (without comment), proposition 4.5 and Notebook entry 1.8.16. According to 4.5, “The general form of proposition is: This is how things stand.” According to 1.8.16, “How things stand, is God. God is, how things stand.” This entry from 1.8.16 seems to solidify the identification of God with the GFP, and remark 6.372 in the *Tractatus* seems at first glance to support this.

6.372 is a comment on 6.37. In 6.37, Wittgenstein claims that there is only logical necessity. He makes this claim in the context of refutation of common notions of causality. He argues that there is no causal necessity and that there is only logical necessity. In 6.37, he follows out the consequences of this claim for how we view the world:

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

So people stop short at natural laws as something unassailable [*Unantastbarem*], as did the ancients at God and Fate [*Schicksal*].

6.372 And they are both right and wrong. But the ancients were clearer, in so far as they recognized one clear terminus [*Abschluss*], whereas the modern system makes it appear as though everything were explained.

6.373 The world is independent of my will. (6.373)

6.374 Even if everything we wished were to happen, this would only be, so to speak, a favour of fate [*Schicksals*], for there is no *logical* connexion between will and world, which would guarantee this, and the assumed physical connexion itself we could not again will.

6.375 As there is only a *logical* necessity, so there is only a *logical* impossibility.
Propositions 6.371 and 6.372 occur nearly verbatim in the entries of 6.5.16, less than five weeks before the 11.6.16 entries.\(^8\) (The only noteworthy change is that “explained” (eklärt) replaces “grounded” (begründet).) Propositions 6.373 and 6.374 occur nearly verbatim on 5.7.16 in the first set of entries after 11.6.16. The question I have is whether these propositions are sufficient to support the claim that, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein held that God is how things happen to be, i.e., is how things stand. If, when he says “God and Fate,” he means to equate the two as two possible “names” for the “one clear terminus” (or we might say “conclusion”), then, if Fate is how things happen to be (which requires us to take Wittgenstein’s turn of phrase in 6.374 literally), God would also be how things happen to be. But is this a legitimate conclusion?

The reason we might wish to question this reading is next remark about God (6.432) in the *Tractatus* seems at first glance to contradict it. This claim comes in the context of the tractarian discussion of ethical/aesthetic values. Wittgenstein writes, “How the world is, is completely indifferent for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world” (6.432). The notion of the “How” first appeared at 5.552: the “How” is “that such and such is the case”; it is what we experience. However, the “What” is “that something is; but that is no experience.” We encountered this proposition earlier in our discussion of Stenius and the difference between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. Here, the point is that the “How” is how things stand – how they happened to have fallen out and been arranged. It is what happens to be the case and it is what we experience and then describe/say in language. God (assuming that “what is higher” refers to God) is, however,

\(^8\) The fact that Wittgenstein was already contemplating these sorts of issues prior to the Brusilov offensive makes it harder to write off Wittgenstein’s mystical philosophy as simply a later, crisis-induced addition to the *Tractatus*. 
indifferent to “the how” and is not revealed in it. If, at the same time, God is “the how,” then God is indifferent to Himself, higher than Himself, and not revealed in Himself. To make matters even more challenging, we have proposition 6.44, in which Wittgenstein claims, “Not how the world is, is the mystical, but that it is.” If God is the mystical, as Zemach argues and which seems plausible, and if God is how things stand, which Zemach also argues and which (given a possible reading of the 6.37s) might also be plausible, then God both is and is not “the how.” But how is this possible?

There are two interpretative options available at this point: either we must find some other reading of the 6.37s (such that God and Fate are not the same thing) or we must account for how “the how” can also be “the what.” Zemach does not explicitly attempt to reconcile “the how” with “the what,” but he must do so in some fashion if his reading is to hold water (especially given the ethics to which he believes all this leads). The account he gives of how God could be the “meaning of the world” offers some insight into how such reconciliation might occur.

Zemach begins his argument with passages from the 8.7.16 notebook entries. He quotes (at various times) sentences 4 and 6-9, listed below. (I have also included the sentence five, of which he makes no use; it is in parentheses in the original):

4. The world is given me, i.e. my will enters into the world completely from outside as into something that is already there.
5. (As for what my will is, I don’t know yet.)
6. That is why we have the feeling of being dependent on an alien will.
7. However this may be, at any rate we are in a certain sense dependent, and what we are dependent on we can call God.
8. In this sense God would simply be fate, or, what is the same thing: the world – which is independent of our will.
9. I can make myself independent of fate. (8.7.16)
These sentences do not actually support Zemach’s interpretation. Here, as in 6.372 and 1.8.16, God is the world and is explicitly said to be Fate, and both are explicitly said to be the world. Thus, God (Fate, the world) are put before me (or us) as if by a will that is not mine (or ours), and, since the world is independent of my (our) will (a claim found earlier on 5.7.16 and repeated verbatim at 6.373), I (we) can do nothing to affect or effect this will. Instead, I receive the world (the facts) as they happen to be (and insofar as my language (the one I understand) enables me to do this) and however they happen to be, and I am dependent on how they are. But God is here not something higher than the world or simply the conditions for its possibility: He is not here associated with “the what” but is simply “the how” (the totality of facts that happens to be the case) (cf. 1 and 1.1).

Nonetheless, the opening sentences of this day’s entries (oddly enough omitted by Zemach) seem to tie this “God-How” identification to the question of the “meaning of the world/life” that lies outside the world:

1. To believe in a God means [heißt] to understand the question about the meaning [Sinn] of life.
2. To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter.
3. To believe in God means to see that life has a meaning. (8.7.16)

The first sentence immediately raises questions about what “belief” and “understanding” are (if we approach these sentences from a tractarian point of view). If there is no thinking, believing subject and if there are no propositional attitudes, what sense can it make to speak of belief in God? And how can we understand something that is nonsense, since it is not possible to judge a nonsense (cf. 5.5422) and since “the question about the
meaning of life” is not a question at all and should vanish for the tractarian (cf. 6.5, 6.52, 6.521)? Zemach offers no explanation.

For now, let us momentarily assume that it makes sense to talk of belief and understanding in this context so that we can try to follow what Wittgenstein is after. If we assume that, then we can take “belief in a God” to be a sign of understanding; it “shows,” so to speak, that we have seen something else that shows itself: “that the facts of the world [the how] are not the end of the matter.” To see this – to see that “the how” is not the end of the matter – is to see that life has a meaning. All of this fits quite well with 6.371-6.327: we might think that a scientific description of the world (a description that can only attend to the facts) is the end of the matter and that with such a description everything has been explained and that we may stop once we have this exhaustive explanation. However, we moderns are said by Wittgenstein to have stopped short – we did not go far enough. But in what sense? In the sense that we did not realize that the facts are not the end of the matter – that everything cannot be (scientifically) explained.

The modern might think that his/her view of things is complete and, as such, unantastbar – “unassailable,” as Ogden translates it. However, it seems here that this pretense of science can itself be “assayed.” And this “assay” leads to the recognition of what actually is unassailable: God and Fate.87

The English “unassailable” might seem to be an odd choice to translate unantastbar, which would more commonly be translated as “inviolable,” “sacrosanct,”

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87 In this context, the end of the Preface is interesting. Wittgenstein says that the value of the work consists in two things: “that in it thoughts are expressed” and that “the truth of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable [unantastbar] and definitive.” If God and the meaning of life are things that are unassailable, it is then interesting that the Tractatus itself is put in a similar position. It is even more suggestive if we taken into account more common translations for “unantastbar” (given the following paragraph).
“taboo,” “inalienable,” “untouchable,” or “indefeasible.” These words all seem to speak more directly to religious experience than the English “unassailable.” We often think of truths about or commands coming from a deity (or deities) as being inviolable; violations are taboo. The religious is itself sacrosanct. A deity can be seen as giving us that which is inalienable. A deity (or deities) and the mysteries surrounding it (or them) can be see as ultimately untouchable. And proofs of the existence of deities or the commands they issue might ultimately be indefeasible. “Unassailable,” however, speaks to what cannot be assayed, and “assay,” insofar as the word is still used, speaks to the analytic projects of science: to assay a material is to analyze it in order to determine its characteristics.

Earlier, the word had a broader meaning: it could apply to oneself, as one attempted to do something (especially if the result would be uncertain), or it could apply to another, as one person tested another in order to determine his/her nature. Such testing could take place through the setting forth of trials or temptations. In both the current and outdated senses, there is an attempt to learn through experience that is generated as a result of the tests that one is able to imaginatively devise.

The different contexts in which the common translations of *untastbar* and the one used in the *Tractatus* are usually found is telling; the more common translations speak more fully to a religious context and so seem more appropriate to the one clear terminus that is God and Fate, while the one used in the text speaks more fully to the scientific context that is supposedly itself assayable. The scientific worldview will approach the world as assayable: the world can be analyzed down into its basic parts in order to determine the facts (the objects in their possible and actual configurations) of which it is

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88 Anscombe and von Wright translate “*unantastbar*” as “impregnable” in the *Notebooks*. I will only address “unassailable,” however, as Wittgenstein actually reviewed and revised Ogden’s translation. Thus, “unassailable” is presumably the translation that he wanted.
constituted. When this task is done, we are finished: we have done all that we can do and are left only with what can be said (and the determination of whether it is true or false), nothing more and nothing less. This would seem to be the general picture that the logical empiricists took away from the *Tractatus*, even though the 6.37s clearly suggest that it is wrong. But why is it wrong? How can we “assay” the approach of science and along with it the ontology, semantics, and account of logic that is given prior to the 6.37s and that presumably remains intact throughout the “mystical” part that closes the text? How does this “assay” reveal “the mystical” as that which is *actually* unassailable? And what light can this shed on the connection between “the how” and “the what,” both of which seem to be God?

It may help here to keep the context of the 6.37s in mind. Proposition 6 gives the general form of proposition. The comments on six deal primarily, as Stokhof has pointed out, with necessity:

The last parts of the *Tractatus* are devoted to an exploration of the consequences of the system for various disciplines that all, in one way or another, deal with necessity: mathematics, natural science, conceptual analysis, ethics and aesthetics, philosophy, the sentences of which it consists. This investigation is needed since Wittgenstein acknowledges only logical necessity (6.37), yet these disciplines do claim to produce meaningful but noncontingent sentences about their various domains. (Stokhof 2002, 97)

By “last parts” Stokhof means those sections that follow Wittgenstein’s discussion of logical propositions. However, logical propositions are also ones that deal with necessity, only they do so successfully. With this in mind, we might speak of the comments on six as dealing with all those propositions which are not sense-full: the notion of (logical) necessity helps to account for the presence of well-constructed but sense-less (logical) propositions, whereas other such propositions, which are also supposedly grounded in
notions of necessity, are (since the operative concept of necessity on which they rely is not logical necessity) nonsensical pseudo-propositions. But if this is so, then Wittgenstein must find some other account for these propositions and in the process dissolve them by doing philosophy as proscribed at 6.53. He must, in other words, give in to the temptation to pick up these propositions up as meaningful in order to show us how such temptations lead to misconceptions of the world.

Proposition 6.3 gives us the claim about logical research that helps us to address other notions of necessity: “Logical research \[\text{Erforschung}\] means the investigation \[\text{Erforschung}\] of all regularity. And outside logic all is accident.” After introducing this claim (itself a comment on the general form of proposition given at 6), Wittgenstein immediately addresses causality as a notion of necessity. He rejects the possibility that causality can be an internal relation between two propositions. Stokhof explains this well:

Given that \(p, q, r, \) and \(s\) are elementary sentences no logical relations between them obtain. But this holds also for some (not all) complex sentences that may be formed from them. For example, whereas \(p \land q\) and \(p \lor r\) are logically related, \(p \land r\) and \(r \lor s\) are not. We may think of two such sentences as describing two events that take place at distinct moments in time. Whatever the relation between such events might be, it cannot be a logical relation. It is the existence of a causal connection that would provide such an internal (5.1362), that is, necessary, relation, that Wittgenstein denies […]. (99)

Stokhof stresses, correctly I believe, that this does not mean that Wittgenstein denies causal relations. He merely denies that they are necessary, internal relations. What connects two distinct states of affairs occurring in distinct moments of time is not something called “causality” but the logical regularity of the mesh that describes those events across time.
We can more easily understand this if we look at the notion of a *Netz* (“net” or “mesh”) or *Netzwerk* (“network”) in 6.341. There, Wittgenstein speaks of how a scientific theory (such as Newtonian mechanics) “brings the description of the universe to a unified form” (6.341). The unity comes from the logical regularity underlying the net or network that is held up to the world and used to describe it. Since the ontology of the *Tractatus* requires that the world be constructed logically (a precondition for tractarian (scientific) description), the scientific description will be successful to the extent that it can mirror or capture the logical relations that actually obtain among the facts of the world. But the necessity that obtains in the system is logical, not causal. The notion of causality is merely an “Einsicht” (6.34) into the possible forms of propositions that can be used in the construction of a scientific system. That the system can describe the world says nothing about the world, other than that it can be so described.

Thus, Wittgenstein writes, “That a picture like that instanced above [the “white surface with irregular black spots” in 6.341] can be described by a network of a given form [for the spotted surface, it is initially a “fine square network] asserts [sagt] nothing about the picture” (6.342). However, the picture (meaning the fact that is the white surface with black spots) is “characterized” in that it lets itself be “completely described by a definite net of definite fineness” (6.342). Further, the “fact” (Wittgenstein’s word) that the world can be described by a network (such as Newtonian mechanics) “asserts [sagt] nothing about the world,” although “this asserts something, namely, that [the world] can be described in that particular way in which as a matter of fact it is described” (ibid.). The emphasized “this” is the “fact” that the world can be described as it is. Another “fact” that “says [sagt] something about the world” is “that it can be described
more simply by one system of mechanics than another” (ibid.). Thus, a network such as mechanics does not explain the world but is instead “an attempt to construct according to a single plan all true propositions which we need for the description of the world” (6.343), and insofar as it succeeds, it says or asserts (although the tractarian ought to merely say “shows”) nothing about the world (since the “fact” in question is not something that can be asserted) but only that the world is like this (it is such that the pictures and mesh can be used describe it). And there is no such thing as a “law of causality” on which such a system or the world is grounded: “If there were a law of causality, it might run: ‘There are natural laws.’ / But that can clearly not be said: it shows itself.” (6.36) And what shows itself here is actually not some entity that we might be tempted to call “a natural law” but only the regularity that any description of the world will (in fact, must) have according to the tractarian account.

There is then no “ground” to such description, at least not in any sense that is sayable. It is again worth noting that in the original version of 6.372 the last word of “whereas the modern system makes it appear as though everything were explained [erklärt]” is not erklärt but begründet (6.5.16), meaning that the modern system makes it look as though everything was founded or justified, i.e. had some ground or reason. The change of word might be significant, although it might also be trivial: the Tractatus does not approach the world in terms of grounds and reasons but in terms of description. “Explanation” is thus a more fitting word choice: it appears to be a kind of description, one that appears to describe the grounds or reasons for how things are. However, it is precisely this “ground” that is both indescribable and unassailable, and it seems to be called both God and Fate.
Yet if God is the world, would not God then be precisely what science describes? In analytically breaking the world down into its most basic parts in order to fully understand and describe it, is not the world – and so God, if God is the world – precisely that which is assayed by the modern worldview? If God is what is higher, then it would make sense that He could not be assayed, i.e. He could not be said/described since we can only describe facts in the world. But if we treat God as the totality of facts (understood as the How, as what is the case), science could then describe this totality, even if at a somewhat general level, precisely because “[l]ogic fills the world: the limits of the world are its limits” (5.61), and so everything in the world can be described: “The world is completely described by the specification of all elementary propositions plus the specification, which of them are true and which false” (4.26). We might then try to say that God is not the totality of facts but the “fact” that the world is such a totality: He is not simply all that happens to be the case, but rather the “fact” that all that happens to be the case is a limited whole. This is precisely the claim that Zemach makes when he links God with the general form of proposition: “The essence of the world, i.e. the totality of facts, is the general form of the proposition. Thus the general form of the proposition is identical with the concept God” (Zemach 367). But this general form gives us “the way in which a proposition is constructed [out of the elementary proposition]” (6.002; the bracketed text comes from 6.001), not a description of how things happen to be right now. In doing this (in giving us “a formal law that governs the construction of all possible proposition” (5.501)), Zemach rightly notes that the GFP gives us the domain by which the world is limited and so capable of being seen a whole. He also notes that GFP does not give us “the how” when he quotes a Notebooks passage that makes this explicit:
“The subject matter of general propositions is really the world; which makes its appearance in them by means of a logical description. And that is why the world does not really occur in them, just as the subject of the description does not occur in it” (29.10.14). The GFP thus gives us the possibility of the description of the world and shows how it can be seen as a limited whole, but it does not and cannot tell us how things actually happen to stand right now. And just as science could not describe or account for the GFP, it could not describe or assay God (if God turns out to be the GFP).

These observations are reinforced by the other tractarian propositions in which the GFP is discussed: 4.5, which first introduces the reader to the GFP, and the three comments on 4.5. The GFP is not itself a proposition that describes the world but “a description of the propositions of some one sign language” (4.5). In “the description of the most general form of proposition only what is essential to it may be described – otherwise it would not be the most general form” (4.5). We are thus dealing not with the contingent matter of how things happen to stand but with the essence of any possible world. The form is “Such and such is the case,” but this does not tell us what actually is the case. The first comments on 4.5 (4.51-4.52) reinforce the claim in 6.001-6.002 that the GFP gives us an understanding of how we can build propositions out of more basic ones, so that “from the totality of all elementary propositions (of course also from the fact that it is the totality of them all)” (4.52) we can generate all the possible descriptions of the world. The third comment notes, “The general proposition form is a variable” (4.53). We are thus dealing with the conditions for any possible description of the world, and for this we need only recognize that there is something (cf. 5.552).
The recognition that there is something is the pseudo-experience necessary not just for a description of the world but also for an understanding of logic. It is recognition of “the What.” Insights into supposedly natural laws are also just insights into the possible forms of propositions, i.e., recognition of the various ways that we can possibly describe what is before us and, in essence, say that such-and-such is the case. They enable us to render the system of description more definite so that we can better describe what happens to be the case. But Wittgenstein’s description of the GFP also seems to entail another experience: it entails the recognition of the way in which the world is or can be seen as a limited whole. And, as we see in 6.44 and 6.45, these experiences of recognition are tied to the mystical. 6.44 states, “Not how the world is, is the mystical, but that it is,” and it is immediately followed by 6.45, which states, “The contemplation [Anschauung] of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole. The feeling [Gefühl] that the world is a limited whole is the mystical feeling.” This experience is not simply that there is something but that the world is. It is not a matter of seeing that there is something that I wish to describe but that there is a world in and of which the something is a part. Further, we are experiencing this world as the limited whole that follows from the essence of the GFP. An understanding of logic (of what is necessary to describe the something that is, whatever it happens to be) should eventually lead to a recognition of the way in which the possible forms of proposition gives us the world as a limited, interconnected domain. In order to see this, we again have an “experience” that is no experience (since it is not a fact in the world that can be described) and it arises from an Anschauung.
The word “contemplation” carries religious and mystic overtones that may or may not be intentional. However, as Stenius has observed, the word “Anschauung” might be better translated in Wittgenstein as “imagination.” I’ve been using the words “recognition” and “insight” in order to capture the sense of seeing what is there to be seen by looking at the world (and not at a non-physical world separate from it). The aim is to avoid the word “intuition.” In the context of the tractarian account of logic and mathematics, it is clear that there is no logical or mathematical intuition providing us with necessarily self-evident experiences of objects. There are no objects to intuit, and language in any case “supplies the necessary Anschauung” (6.233; cf. also 5.1363, 5.4731, and 6.1271). Again, the Anschauung in question seems to speak more simply to a certain way of viewing or looking out on the world, a sense that is imbedded in the word Weltanschauung (in 6.371). Granted, Wittgenstein worked with the Odgen on this translation, so “contemplation” should perhaps been seen as authoritative, but it seems necessary to caution against treating this as an instance of contemplating some objective thing or truth than can be intuited. Logic and the GFP “enable” this “experience,” just as language enables the “experience” necessary for solving mathematical problems, but intuition is not required for this to work, and given the technical meaning of the term as a capacity to perceive non-physical, objective entities, it cannot be required.

If this is so, then the “experience” of the mystical (experiencing the world as a limited whole through some kind of feeling or view of it) is an “experience” of what logic can show to us. Logic will require (if, according to the tractarian, we are to understand it) the “experience” that there is something; logic also involves the “experience” that there is a world that is a limited whole. It is not entirely clear if these “experiences” are in fact the
same “experience”: I must “experience” that there is something if I am to understand logic and engage in logical 
Erforschung, but must I also “experience” the world as limited whole to understand and explore logic? Much would depend on the notion of “understand.” For instance, a beginning student of logic might understand that there is something and that it can be logically described and that logical operations can be performed on it (it can, for instance, be negated), but the understanding required to do logical research or to have the “experience” of the world as a limited whole might be something that comes later if at all. The tractarian should not have a problem with the idea that we might not immediately gather all that can be seen from looking at what shows itself: as 4.002 claims, “it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language,” and, we might add, the nature of logic itself.

More light is shed on the relation between logic, language, understanding, and use in the 4.00s.89 As we have seen, the general form of proposition shows us how to construct the totality of propositions that would be needed to fully describe the world. This “totality of propositions is the language” (4.001) (and “the language” presumably means here not just the colloquial language that we use and have constructed over time but all possible language; cf. 4.002). However, understanding (colloquial) language is “enormously complicated” (4.002), and from (such) language “it is humanly impossible to gather [entnehmen] immediately the logic of language” (4.002). Furthermore, “Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language.” I take it that “to gather” is here a metaphor for an “experience” necessary for understanding logic (to gather something about logic is either

89 The “phantom” propositions, which are written as X.0 or X.00, are odd in that they are not comments on X (since the first comment is X.1). It is not clear what role these “phantom” propositions are supposed to play.
simply to see it (to see what is shown; “to see” is a possible meaning of entnehmen)). We cannot immediately understand the logic of our language, and because of this we use language in a way that further confuses us and causes trouble. The “experiences” required to understand this logic, however, are not necessary to successfully use language, although we may be more prone to error (to the sort of Täuschung described in 6.371) insofar as we do not have a “correct” view of this logic and of the world it makes possible. And these “experiences” do not come at all once: as we progress in our understanding of logic, we can see more and can move from the experience of “that something is” (5.552) to the experience of “the world as a limited whole” (6.45).  

Thus, the experience needed to get our understanding of logic off the ground (the experience that there is something) would be different from that which would be possible after having done the kind of extensive research that would be needed to see the general form of proposition. The “experience” “that something is” would be one needed to understand logic at all; the “experience” “that the world is” and, what is perhaps the same thing, “that the world is a limited whole” is one that would result from having understood logic and, in particular, the GFP, which is the essence of both language and the world (5.471-5.4711). In order to do science successfully and fully describe the world, it would seem necessary to have the initial “experience” – the one needed to understand logic and so to separate out what science can say from what is nonsense. However, it would seem that one of the Anschauungen of the world that this enables – die moderne Weltanschauung (6.371) – does not proceed all the way to the Anschauung of the world in which one “experiences” that the world is and that it is a limited whole. Science, in

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90 The notion of such development is consistent with the idea that tractarian education is “ladder-like” (cf. 6.54).
other words, does not lead to the mystical experience of what is unassailable. But why not?

The answer, I believe, lies in the notion of necessity that leads to the comments in the 6.37s. Part of the reason that the modern worldview leads one to believe that all has been explained (or can be explained) by a scientific system is that the modern makes a mistake: s/he believes in the causal nexus. However, since there is no internal relation between a cause and effect, the scientific system is only (on the tractarian account) a logical network in which what can be “predicted” is simply what logically follows from the description of what is the case. But logically a great deal is possible, and while what actually does happen happens in accord with logical necessity, there is no possibility of scientifically accounting for the fact that it (and not something else) did happen, let alone why it happened (since it could have been otherwise). The modern answer – “Because it was caused” – is an illusion (eine Täuschung). The answer that is, if not “correct,” then at least more in accord with the unassailable nature of how “the how” happens to be what it is, is that God/Fate is responsible. In other words, things happen as they do happen because of God/Fate (just as, “if everything we wished were to happen, this would only be, so to speak, a favor of fate [die Gnade des Schicksals] […]” (6.374)).

We will return to this relation of God to “the how” shortly; for the moment, we must note that giving the “fated-ness” of what happens (it could be otherwise, but it must be something among what is possible) the name “God” does not mean that this God can

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91 I am tempted to say that science does not necessarily lead to this experience, but that would hold true of anything with respect to such experiences. However, it does seem that the experience is more meaningful if conjoined with science, especially if there is a ladder-like progression: the experience that something is and that the world is and that the world is a limited whole would perhaps draw one into assayment; what is needed is some insight that would convert this assay into a recognition of the unassailable. For this “conversion,” science is not sufficient, as the next paragraph attempts to make clear. (An excellent illustration of such conversion is provided by the film π: Faith in Chaos, a 1998 movie directed by Darren Aronofksy.)
act contrary to logic. The other two tractarian statements on God make this clear. At 5.123 we read, “If a god creates a world in which certain propositions are true, he creates thereby also a world in which all propositions consequent on them are true. And similarly he could not create a world in which the proposition ‘p’ is true without creating all its objects.” And at 3.031 we find, “It used to be said that God could create everything, except what was contrary to the laws of logic. The truth is, we could not say of an ‘unlogical’ world how it would look.” In other words, even God is bound by logical necessity. But within the realm of logical necessity, i.e., within the realm of logical space, anything is possible.

At the same time, logical necessity cannot account for what does in fact happen. Nor, according to the Tractarian account, can causal necessity account for it, since there is no such necessity (causal necessity is merely a way of describing what does happen). How, then, can we explain what does happen? According to the tractarian, we cannot. This – that some one among the possible worlds happens to be the actual one – is inexplicable and, as such, unassailable. Yet if this so, then we are in some sense radically at the mercy of our inability to know what will actually happen or to know why it does. And we are in another sense free, as no one particular thing needs to happen. (Thus, Wittgensteinattributes “freedom of the will” to “the fact that future actions cannot be known now. We could only know them if causality were an inner necessity, like that of logical deduction” (5.1362)).

If neither logic nor causality can account for what does happens, the implication is that some force, which Wittgenstein choose to call God or Fate, is responsible for the world: this is the force by the grace of which things happen to happen at all and as they
do. What happens is also contingent. We might thus add “Chance” to the list of words
that “name” this one clear and unassailable terminus.92 And this is all that we have to
connect God to how things stand: He is not identical to them; He is at most responsible
for them. This insight, combined with an awareness of the limited domain of possibilities
which is made possible by an understanding of logic (an awareness that in turn leads to
the recognition of the GFP and of the superstitious nature of the causal nexus), leads to
the recognition that what happens is (a) not necessary and (b) inexplicable in its essence.
Thus, God is not how things stand (contrary to the claim in the Notebooks at 1.8.16).93 At
most, if God is responsible for “the how,” then the current, actual how is but one of many
possible manifestations of the logically possible, i.e., of God.

If all of this is correct, then we now have some sense of the kind of “experience”
that would lead to this recognition of the tractarian God: it would come from seeing what
is shown by the logic of our propositions, i.e., seeing all that is logically possible and thus
that things can be otherwise.94 The experiences that are assumed in this seeing are
mystical only in the limited sense of being inexpressible, but they do not yet involve any
intuitive access to objective, non-natural entities. However, we must still wonder at the
consequences of these experiences of the unassailable for ethics. For instance, if God is

92 “Chance” is one of Schopenhauer’s names for the contingent: “Every object, of whatever kind it be, e.g.,
every event in the actual world, is always at the same time both necessary and contingent; necessary in
reference to the one thing that is its cause; contingent in reference to everything else. For its contact in time
and space with everything else is a mere coincidence without necessary connexion; hence also the words
chance, contingency, σύμπτωμα, contingens” (WWR I 464). Of course, since there is only logical necessity
in the Tractatus, the relation of what is contingent with its “cause” (God) and with what is necessary (logic)
has to be rethought.
93 That we cannot accept the entry on 1.8.16 at face value is also supported by the entries on 11.6.16 (the
meaning of the world/life is outside it, and this meaning is God) and 8.7.16 (believing in God is seeing
“that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter,” i.e., it is “to see that life has a meaning,” one
which, following both 11.6.16 and 6.41, lies outside the world).
94 I.e., seeing the truth of the claims of 5.634: “This [the point about the metaphysical subject in 5.633] is
connected with the fact that no part of our experience is also a priori. / Everything we see could also be
otherwise. / Everything we describe at all could also be otherwise. There is no order of things a priori.”
not how things stand, but merely their possibility and unassailable origin, why must we,
as Zemach claims, always will to affirm what is the case? What is so special about how
things actually happen to stand right now? If God were how things stood, then we would
have a pantheism in which the world is God. However, we have now seen that there is
good reason to reject the claim that “how things stand = God,” since how things stand is
assayable whereas God is not. Value is also not found in the world (in how things
stand) but lies outside it. Further still, although it is found outside the world, it is also said
to be found “in the action itself,” strongly suggesting that there is a transcendental (or
even transcendent) feature to actions (not to how things stand). But if there is no intrinsic
value in how things happen to stand right now, why should I, when I go to act, aim
simply to affirm what is before me?

Zemach’s argument relies on an identification of God’s will with my will. He
claims that God and the I are ultimately two different names for the same thing (the limit
of the world) viewed from different perspectives: “For logic, the sense of the world is its
inalterable form: God. For ethics, it is the willing subject” (369). Goodness and badness
are qualities of the willing subject, and these qualities emerge insofar as the two
godheads are reconciled. Zemach produces this conclusion by reducing the act of will to
mere agreement or acceptance (or disagreement or denial) of the world (of God) and

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95 It is worth noting that Schopenhauer explicitly and vigorously rejects pantheism (it is an error of
Hegelian magnitude), and his reasons are in part ethical: “All pantheism must ultimately be shipwrecked on
the inescapable demand of ethics, and then on the evil and suffering of the world” (WWR II, XLVII 590).
Further: “But pantheism is wholly untenable in the face of that evil side of the world” (WWR II, XLVII
591). The problem here is that, if pantheism is true, then ethics is not possible, since (a) all that is is god
(since it is God) and (b) the individual has no will and so cannot act morally (since s/he is just a
manifestation of God). As is clear in the remainder of chapter, I take Wittgenstein to agree with
Schopenhauer that there are ethical implications to this rejection of pantheism.

96 The terms are prima facie synonymous insofar as “meaning of life” is rendered synonymous with “value
of value” in 6.41 and with God in the Notebooks, suggesting that God is the value of value (if in fact “God”
as a name for the meaning of life is an idea that remains intact in the Tractatus; evidence for this is
potentially implicit in 6.432).
combining this with the claim, “No desire can be fulfilled” (371). This latter claim appears to be a misreading of 6.374: my will can be fulfilled (by a favor of fate), although I cannot cause that fulfillment. Nonetheless, Zemach concludes that “the good will is precisely the will that wishes nothing, giving its consent to whatever happens as it happens” (371). This conclusion is suspect insofar as God (for Zemach) is simply the inalterable form of the world, i.e., what is possible, and so it is not clear why we should favor what is actual over what is possible. Zemach also overlooks the task we might be asked to perform: even though the task might not be to cause events to happen, it could be that what we do diminishes badness through resisting, not acquiescing to, what happens. Further, wishes and desires are part of the world; accepting the world should thus involve accepting my wishes/desires, whatever they happen to be. (Perhaps I desire to resist those who would slaughter innocents.) If I can change these desires, then I can, pace Zemach, change the world.

Stokhof makes a very similar argument nearly forty years later (although he makes no mention of Zemach): “the ethical task for the individual will is no other than to be in harmony with the metaphysical will, that is, God’s Will” (Stokhof 217). Like Zemach, Stokhof relies largely on the Notebooks to make his argument. He takes the metaphysical subject to be the willing subject, and he takes that in turn to be identical to God’s Will. Since God is how things stand (1.8.16), meaning “however it is that the world happens to be at the given moment,” then how things stand is good, since God’s Will is “intrinsically good” (216). Since we cannot change how things stand, we must thus accept things as they are; in doing so, we are in fact accepting them as we willed them to be (insofar as our metaphysical will is God’s Will and so we had already willed
things to be as they are). This is, according to Stokhof, the task that the world at any
given moment presents to me: accept things as they are. And Stokhof, likes Zemach,
argues that our individual (phenomenal) will has the capacity to deny or dampen our
(phenomenal, factual) wishes and desires, an act that is essentially a denial of how things
happen to be and so a denial of a crucial claim (the impotence of the will) on which their
arguments rest.97

There are, then, numerous problems that arise in the interpretation of the ethical
purpose offered by Stokhof and Zemach on the basis of what God and the will are. We
have seen in this chapter that the connection between God and how things stand is not
such that the world is good because it is God’s will; rather, the point is that that things
happened as they did is something ultimately unassailable. Recognition of this is
“necessary” if we are to ever recognize the task that we must perform, a task that claims
us in a way that, once seen, is difficult to resist. Another pressing problem in the reading
offered by Zemach and Stokhof is the notion of the willing subject on which they rely,
especially insofar as it posits that I am in both in control of my willing (I can change my
desires) and not in control of it (I cannot change anything), and especially insofar as the
will seems to be both a cause and an attitude. It is surprising that they rely so heavily on
the Notebooks for this interpretation of the will, since there is evidence that Wittgenstein
actually gave up all these ideas and that he did so with reason. It is to that evidence that
we now turn.

97 Indeed, Stokhof specifically stresses that “the good will has no relations with wishing that are of ethical
importance,” (214), even though “the ethical task for the individual will is no other than to be in harmony
with the metaphysical will” (217), such that the “individual will, confronted with the world in which it
finds itself, by harmonizing with it neutralizes itself, silences its urges and directedness” (220). This seems
a thin reed on which to base self-neutralization. It is also not clear how the Tractatus could have been
written had Wittgenstein neutralized his urge to write his text and “change” the world, unless Stokhof
wishes to suggest that the text is an act of evil.
CHAPTER SIX: THE ANANKASTIC WILL AND MY WORLD:

The Notebook Entries of November 4th through 19th, 1916

Introduction

Wittgenstein’s ethical notions have historically not received much attention. With the exception of a small section in Hacker’s 1972 *Insight and Illusion*, there is largely silence on the issue after Zemach until the 1990s. In the first few decades after the publication of the *Tractatus*, the consensus was largely that those notions were a youthful enthusiasm that could be done away with or that could be reinterpreted in emotivist terms; at the very least, they seemed to give most commentators “intellectual discomfort,” as Russell described his own sense of the mystical part of the *Tractatus* (Russell 1992, 22). In the 1960s, with the publication of the *Notebooks*, there arose the sense that the ethical notions of the *Tractatus* did have a positive role to play and should be incorporated into attempts to understand the work as a whole (as evidenced in various degrees by Anscombe, Stenius, and Zemach). However, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, those early interpretations were subject to errors, ones that reappear in more recent work (by, for example, Brockhaus, Hodges, and Stokhof).

My belief is that these errors stem in large part from an insufficiently critical use of the *Notebooks*. There is reason to be suspicious of this use of the *Notebooks* on two grounds: first, the notion of subject in the *Tractatus* does not support this, and second, the *Notebooks* themselves fail to offer a consistent account of the will and in fact appear to
show that Wittgenstein has reasons for rejecting the notion of the willing subject and in particular the will-as-attitude.  

In this chapter, I wish to develop this second ground for suspicion. I shall argue that Wittgenstein had compelling reasons to reject these notions of the will and that this has repercussions for how we can view the ethical purpose of the Tractatus. In order to develop my argument, I will provide a close reading of the diary entries on 4.11.16, 9.11.16, and 19.11.16. The entries on 4.11.16 compromise the longest set of entries on the ethical notions, and they are exclusively focused on the concept of the will. The entries on 9.11.16 and 19.11.16, on the other hand, comprise just six lines. In these lines, which are the last dedicated to the ethical notions in the Notebooks, Wittgenstein draws the inevitable conclusion of the entries from the 4.11.16: there is no need for the notion of the willing subject. A close look at why this is so sheds a great deal of light on the development of Wittgenstein’s early thought.

Wittgenstein clearly did not jettison these early notions of the willing subject and the will-as-attitude simply in order to be “silent” in the Tractatus, as there is a great deal from the Notebooks – numerous earlier conclusions from the year before and even from the 1916 Summer and Fall reflections on ethical issues (reflections which begin on 6.5.16 and run until 19.11.19) – about which Wittgenstein should have remained “silent” but did not. He is thus clearly willing to talk about (reden von, to use his locution from 5.641) such inexpressible issues. Indeed, since all talk of such things (the subject, value, the mystical) fails to say anything, he is in fact already logically silent on these issues. If that is so, why not talk about the willing subject and the will-as-attitude? Why would

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98 These notions play prominent roles in the commentaries of Hodges, Brockhaus, Friedlander, and Stokhof.
Wittgenstein find it acceptable to speak of the metaphysical subject at all or even the will as the bearer of value (even if to note the obvious tractarian point that we cannot speak about it (6.423)) but then not speak of other such issues? Why would it be acceptable to speak of God as what is higher but then not point out that God is the meaning of the world (if Wittgenstein still believed that), which would give us a handy equation of God with value? If the subject of which we can philosophically speak (and how is this different from speaking in a logical sense?) is also the willing subject, why is this left out while other things he says about subject and value are included in the *Tractatus*?

Furthermore, while Wittgenstein sticks by the notion that we cannot isolate this subject in the book “The world I found” (“Die Welt, welche ich vorfand”) (23.5.15) (which becomes “Die Welt, wie ich sie vorfand” (“The world as I found it”) (5.631; emphasis added) in the *Tractatus*), he makes no mention of the “fact” that this world (*my world*) is adequate for the role that we’d like the willing subject to play. He even sticks by the notions of ethics being a matter of something *Angenehmes* in the action itself and of the limits (not the facts) changing as a result of such value (5.7.16 and then 6.422 and 6.43), but the of the will he says almost nothing - only that “of the will as the subject [Träger, bearer] of such value we cannot speak” (6.423), even though we can no more speak of value than of that which bears it.

At first glance it does seem as if the final entries, in chasing down the notions of the willing subject and the will-as-attitude, support earlier conclusions that the will is somehow bound up with the subject about which philosophy *must* talk and that this will is not an experience in the world but a metaphysical “something” for which we must (philosophically) account. But by the end of these entries, this notion of will has lost its
meaning and is emptied of anything worthwhile, insofar as the expression “my world” is regarded as already sufficient for what these ideas of the will could or should have captured. What is this will supposed to be?, Wittgenstein seems to wonder in these November entries. What work are we trying to do with it? Questions such as these must be asked if we are to understand how Wittgenstein moves from the question “Is the will an attitude towards the world?” at the beginning of 4.11.16 to the question, two weeks later, “Is not my world adequate for individuation?” (19.11.16) The answer to that final question, given the crucial presence of the notion of “my world” and the absence of the willing subject or the will-as-attitude in the Tractatus, seems to be a clear “yes”: the notion of “my world” survives in the Tractatus, while no mention of a metaphysical or transcendental will is made.

The phrase “my world,” which is adequate in the Tractatus for the individuation that the will-as-attitude may have been intended to accomplish, is used four times in the Tractatus, at 5.6, 5.62, 5.63, and 5.641. Wittgenstein thus tells us, “The limits of my language mean [bedeuten] the limits of my world” (5.6), “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” (5.62), “I am my world. (The microcosm.)” (5.63), and

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99 Wittgenstein does not actually conclude on 19.11.16 that the assumption of the willing subject (as an accompaniment of my actions) is not necessary, given that the notion of “my world” is adequate. He merely asks two questions: “What kind of reason is there for the assumption of the willing subject?” and “Is not my world adequate for individuation?” (19.11.16). My argument is that, given the presence of “my world” and the absence of “willing subject” in the Tractatus, the later notion is dropped in accordance with Wittgenstein’s commitment to Ockhamite ontological simplicity and with his desire to avoid the sorts of confusions that he himself faced in trying to grapple with the notion of a non-phenomenal will in the Notebooks.

100 Most commentators assume that the “will as bearer of the ethical” is a reference to such a will, but it is possible that he is speaking of a perfectly natural will that bears value epiphenomenally, such that the will is a natural capacity while value is something non-natural. Indeed, the purpose of the section of the Tractatus in which the notion of the “will-as-bearer” appears is to address such a notion of value (but not such a notion of the will). The question is then whether this notion of value requires us to read a metaphysical will-as-attitude back into Wittgenstein’s thinking. I argue that it does not.
finally, “The I occurs in philosophy through the fact that the ‘world is my world’” (5.641). 5.641 is the final comment in the 5s. It ends with the observation, “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.” This notion of the subject (discussed above in Chapters 1 and 2) follows from the logic and semantics of the Tractatus and is a necessary condition for the possibility of language.

After 5.641, Wittgenstein turns immediately to proposition 6, in which he gives us the general form of proposition. In the pursuit of an understanding of the GFP and its consequences for non-logical conceptions of necessity, we are led to the “experience” of the world as limited whole that follows from the GFP. If the philosophical I is “my world” and is “constituted” by the delimited totality that logic and language gives, and if this limit follows from the essence of the GFP, and if this in turn is sufficient to give us an experience of the world as a limited whole – and so of an experience of ourselves as the subject – then perhaps we have here not something the understanding of which requires the willing subject but rather the sense in which such a notion is adequate in that it accounts for the world of my actions and the “experiences” which give me a fuller sense of the world, a sense that is shown by what I do in my world, such that my world changes – through the grace of fate, it must be added, since the world is independent of my will.

Although the tractarian claims that the world is independent of my will (6.374), this is a logical independence, and it does not mean that there is no distinction between willed and unwilled movement (cf. 5.631) and no sense of the will as a phenomenon (cf. 6.423). But if this is so, then the problem arises of how to properly account (from the
tractarian perspective) for such willing. In the *Notebooks*, the independence of the world from the will (5.7.16) and the need to deal with the presence of willed movements (cf. 20.10.16) are established themes by the time Wittgenstein turns to the willing subject and the will-as-attitude on 4.11.16. The most pressing question of the November entries is then how this will is related to the world in spite of this logical independence.

Wittgenstein investigates the notion of the will and its possible relation with the world by approaching this relation in various ways. He looks at it first as the notion of the will as a cause (one of which we have an immediate apprehension), then in terms of the distinguishing mark of its acts (only to find no such mark), and then as an accompaniment rather than an attitude or cause. He develops this idea of the will-as-accompaniment via a distinction between wishing and willing. In the course of this investigation, we can see that there are numerous reasons that would have led Wittgenstein to dismiss the notion of the willing subject and the will as a cause or attitude. In addition to the problematic sense of immediacy and the absence of a distinguishing mark in the world, there are problems with the idea of causality, proximity to the world, temporality, and necessity. These problems show the way in which notions of the will as a cause or attitude fail to capture what we find in the notion of the will as accompaniment, a notion of will that fits with the world-will independence thesis and that Wittgenstein appears to conclude (on 19.11.16) is already at work in the tractarian notion of “my world.”

A key consequence of this world-will independence is that the will-as-cause is an illusion: I will argue that we can see Wittgenstein following Schopenhauer in concluding that the notion of what Schopenhauer calls the “I can do what I will” fails to capture the
world-will relation. Schopenhauer offers a clear and concise critique of the “I can do what I will” in his *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*, where he concludes that the freedom is not found in the ability to do what I will but rather in the sense of responsibility that I have for what I do. While Wittgenstein will ultimately reject talk of such a will (a willing subject) and find that his notion of “my world” is sufficient, I will argue that the notion of “my world” contains this sense of responsibility for what is my own: my actions, which are (as he develops the notion of will on 4.11.16) accompanied by my will, such that my actions are the manifestation of who or what I am.

The notion of responsibility makes a brief appearance on 4.11.16, and it while it does not appear again (either in the *Notebooks* or in the *Tractatus*), it captures the element of non-picture-able, distinguishing immediacy of the will for which Wittgenstein is looking and it does so in a way that does not imply nonnatural causes. We end up with a notion not of the will as a cause of or attitude toward anything in the world but of the will as something to which I find myself subject in the world onto which I stumble. The will, or what I do and the world in which I do it, is something that I find myself subject to, just as I am subject to the world as I find it. This sense of being subject to my will and of being responsible for what I do will help to explain the sense in which what I do bears value in a way that changes my world, such that my world “waxes” or “wanes” in a way that makes me happy or unhappy. It also reveals a sense of open-endedness in the tractarian outlook on life, insofar as what is could always be otherwise, and what how my world will be is always an open question of sorts, presenting a “task” (6.4321) that I am always in the process of discovering, insofar as what my “experience” of responsibility (for the world that turns out to be mine) will lead me to do and the value of the action
cannot be anticipated but yet demands a response that I feel compelled to give, as when Peer feels compelled to tell the truth (and not call what he find ugly “beautiful”) and or when (as we shall see) Nora feels compelled to leave her family, as the world she might once have found “happy” comes to be a bad one that presents her with a “duty” to herself, one that involves her ability to accept the world as she finds it, a world that seems to deny her transcendence just as she herself had denied any “experience” of such transcendence.

Indeed, the move from 4.11.16 towards the *Tractatus* makes sense if we attend to introduction of the notion of experience on 9.11.16 in light of the notion of compulsion with which the 4.11.16 entries end: the will accompanies our actions as something compelled (*gezwungene*), something that we cannot avoid even though it is “beyond” the world as an accompaniment of what I do within it. It is this will that in the *Tractatus* is said to bear value “in the action itself” (6.422-6.423). If we are at the mercy of the value of what we do, then value, rather than guiding us, shapes our world. It is the world to which we must attend. But we need more: the tractarian view of human life is not possible without the distinction between experience (of facts) and “experience” of what the facts show. To the “experience” of what the facts show we must will have to add the “experience” of the responsibility I feel for what I do and the value my world has for me. Thus, to a tractarian understanding of belief and the subject we will have to add an understanding of will and value. We will, in the end, have to continue or development of a tractarian philosophical anthropology (something that marks a continuity with his later work). The entire pitch of the *Tractatus* to one who might understand it and its ethical purpose will make no sense otherwise.
Ultimately at issue, then, in Wittgenstein’s early investigation of the will (as cause or attitude or accompaniment) is not just a notion of responsibility but a tractarian virtue: the virtue of sticking to the tractarian approach in the face of ordinary conceptions of the human and the concepts by which we understand the human and thus how we relate to ourselves and our world. It is on this relation that we must focus in our reading of the *Tractatus*. The desire to “read” the willing subject back into the work is a temptation to be avoided. The problem is that the willing subject says (or does) nothing that “my world” does not already do, while the notion of the willing subject (of the will as attitude) leads to the very temptations/problems through which Wittgenstein will already have worked.

**The Idea of the Will-as-Attitude**

The 4.11.16 entries begin with the question, “Is the will an attitude towards the world?” When Wittgenstein asks the question, it has been over two weeks since he last discussed the will. In the previous discussion, on 20.10.16, he deals with two issues. First, he develops (slightly) the metaphor of visual space in relation to the notion of the subject: just as the eye is not in the visual space that it sees and makes possible, so the subject is not in the world. He then approaches the will in a manner strongly reminiscent of the “world as I found it” approach back on 23.5.15; this approach was taken almost a year and a half earlier and would appear in the *Tractatus* as proposition 5.631. It recurs in the 20.10.16 entry, where he writes:

> At any rate I can imagine carrying out the act of will for raising my arm, but that my arm does not move. (E.g., a sinew is torn.) True, but, it will be said, the sinew surely moves and that just shews [sic] the act of will related to the sinew and not to the arm. But let us go further and suppose
that even the sinew did not move, and so on. We should then arrive at the position that the act of will does not relate to a body at all, and so that in the ordinary sense of the word there is no such thing as the act of the will. (20.10.16)101

We have here an attempt to isolate the will by noting which members are subject to it, which is a central task in writing the book “The World as I Found It.” This is the conception of the will-as-cause – of the will as causally effective. And, although the earlier 23.5.15 entry is the one that will be used in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein here goes a bit farther in the attempt to “say which members [of my body] obey my will and which do not” (5.631). He does this by trying to imagine the will acting while no part of my body moves. However, the conclusion is much the same as it was on 23.5.15.

Wittgenstein noted much earlier that the “world as I found it” method, if used to look for the will, will fail to isolate the subject and thereby show that “in an important sense there is no such thing as the subject” (23.5.15). Here, however, the conclusion is that the “act of the will” does not exist.

We should not be too hasty to assume that we have an identity here between “subject” and “act of will.” First, there is the sense in which there is (and is not) such a thing as the subject. There is no such thing as a *thinking, presenting* subject. Thus, before introducing the “world as I found it” method in the *Tractatus* at 5.631, Wittgenstein writes, “The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing” (Das denkende, vorstellende Subjekt gibt es nicht). This line echoes an entry from 5.8.16: “The thinking subject [vorstellende Subjekt] is surely mere illusion [Wahn]. But the willing subject

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101 This seems to mark a leap of sorts: why, from the fact that we can will and nothing happens, ought we to conclude that the will could not in fact affect the arm?
exists.” A similar line occurs on 20.10.16, preceding the entry regarding the sinews and non-existence of the act of will: “It is true that the knowing subject [ernennendes Subjekt] is not in the world, that there is no knowing subject.” This is the subject that we must conclude does not exist given the metaphor of visual space. Thus, the textual evidence suggests that the “act of will” here occupies the position of the thinking, presenting, knowing subject, i.e. of the ordinary, everyday notion of the subject and its acts. It is these that do not exist.

We might wonder what the point of these late October musings was, given that the conclusion is no different from what it was well over a year before. My suggestion is that the insertion of the “act of will” into the reflections offers us a key to what Wittgenstein is after here in the Fall of 1916: he is still (or now) uncertain whether the willing subject does in fact exist. Thus, while he here concludes that the knowing subject and the act of will do not exist (the “I can do what I will” is an illusion, as Schopenhauer would say), he does not again assert that the willing subject must exist (as he claimed back on 5.8.16) but instead turns (on 4.11.16) to a fuller investigation of such a notion, as if he has yet to make sense of what such a notion might mean. In fact, Wittgenstein is still uncertain (even after the 20.10.16 entries) whether there really is no such thing as the “act of will,” as this act is a central focus on 4.11.16 entries.

Wittgenstein thus needs to make sense of what the willing subject and the acts of such a subject (if there are any) might be and of what an “act of will” is.

102 It is worth noting that the claim that the willing subject exists is removed, as if it is now in doubt, as it will be in 4.11.16 onwards.
103 This distinction between a knowing and willing subject is clearly Schopenhauerian in origin. For my treatment on Schopenhauer’s influence in the Notebooks, cf. “Schopenhauer: The Will as Accompaniment” below.
104 We could speculate as to why he might wonder this; historical evidence (presented in Monk 1994) makes it clear that he was rereading Schopenhauer at this point, and so that alone would lead him back to the issue of the will, as is clear in all the entries from 11.6.16 through 19.11.16.
If there is not to be an unnecessary proliferation of metaphysical subjects (assuming that this is something to be avoided), then the willing subject (if there is such a thing) would have to be related to the subject (the transcendental “I”) insofar as we can speak of such a thing in philosophy. But how might this happen? The three lines immediately following the conclusion that there is no act of will on 20.10.16 suggest the answer that Wittgenstein will soon investigate on 4.11.16. He writes:

The artistic miracle [künstlerische Wunder] is that the world exists. That there is what there is. / Is it the essence of the artistic way of looking at things that it looks at the world with a happy eye?

Life is serious [ernst], art is cheerful [heiter]. (20.10.16)

We have here a brief extension of the metaphor of the eye when he speaks of the “happy eye,” just as he would the “happy subject.” Happiness, according to this metaphor, is a feature of the subject/eye, not the world upon which it looks. That world/life is “serious.” The world is, so far as happiness goes, indifferent (or, at worst, it actively works against happiness). The idea, then, is that the willing subject is what is happy (or not), not the world, and this is the very subject that looks at the world and gives it its “sense” or “meaning” (since the world is in itself without value). If value must come from “beyond” the world, it would seem that the subject is the only source of such value.

The debt at this point is clearly to Schopenhauer, for whom the metaphysical subject (the transcendental ego or philosophical I) is indeed the willing subject. But we can quickly anticipate some problems that Wittgenstein will have with the Schopenhauerian notion of the willing subject and the subject as attitude. The first is the problem of equating what I will with what I wish for, which will become clearer by the

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105 The metaphor of the eye, in discussing the subject, is used in the *Tractatus* in 5.633; the 5.63s are Wittgenstein’s only discussion of the metaphysical subject.
end of our treatment of the entries of 4.11.16. The second, however, can be noted now:

The notion of happiness as an aim or purpose in life is present throughout the *Notebooks*, and it is clearly central to the tractarian conception of ethical value. If this is so, Wittgenstein would be opposed to Schopenhauer, for whom the idea of happiness as the aim of life is the greatest mistake. Schopenhauer writes:

> There is only one inborn error, and that is the notion that we exist in order to be happy. It is inborn in us, because it coincides with our existence itself, and our whole being is only its paraphrase, indeed our body is its monogram. We are nothing more than the will-to-live, and the successive satisfaction of all our willing is what we think of through the concept of happiness.

> So long as we persist in this inborn error, and indeed even become confirmed in it through optimist dogmas, the world seems to us full of contradictions. For at every step, in great things as in small, we are bound to experience that the world and life are certainly not arranged for the purpose of containing a happy existence. (*WWR II*, XLIX 634)

Wittgenstein’s persistence in thinking in terms of happiness suggests that he did not adhere to a Schopenhauerian pessimism and so did not necessarily accept (as commentators from Anscombe to Stokhof argue) that conforming to the world as it happens to be is sufficient for an ethical and/or happy life. However, for Schopenhauer the concept of happiness is simply the satisfaction of the will; as this can easily be frustrated, “earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion” (*WWR II*, XLVI 573). Wittgenstein would agree with the claim that satisfaction of what I will (if “what I will” is treated as “what I desire,” as it is for Schopenhauer (cf. *WWR II* 573)) can easily be frustrated, but this does not mean (as I hope to show) that there is happiness (outside the chance moment of satisfaction) is illusory and that there is no reason not to struggle for a better world.
There is another aspect to this “happy eye” metaphor that marks a potential break with Schopenhauer. It is the idea of the will as an “attitude.” For Schopenhauer, the will is not an attitude toward the world. Technically speaking, it is the world. Nor does the individual will confront the world as a mere attitude toward it. The will of each human being has, in its affirmation, an intelligible character. That character is free and it helps Schopenhauer to make sense of our causally determined actions. When a certain motive is given to us and specific choices become available, we pick one among many. Empirically this choice is determined, while transcendentally this choice is free. But to treat the intelligible character of the individuated will as an attitude understates the role it plays in life. The will does not aim at happiness, nor does it merely passively observe the world like an eye.

Nonetheless, this notion of a judgmental observation (of having an attitude or value-laden perspective on things) is what Wittgenstein pursues in his attempt to understand the willing subject. He thus picks up this line of thought on November 4th by opening with the question, “Is the will an attitude [Stellungnahme] towards the world?” The German word “Stellungnahme” may seem to convey some sense of action: one takes (nimmt) a position (Stellung) or makes a statement. But it is not clear that this is what we are dealing with here. For instance, in the next two entries Wittgenstein seems to be concerned with the relationship of the will toward the world (i.e., with the position from which the will relates to or looks at the world) when he writes, “The will seems always to have to relate to an idea [Vorstellung]. We cannot imagine, e.g., having carried out an act of will without having detected that we have carried it out. / Otherwise there might arise such a question as whether it had yet been completely carried out.” At the start of the
4.11.16 entries, then, we have the notion of the will in a position from which it can view ideas or representations of empirical acts. The will does not here do anything; rather, it simply passively observes what happens – like an eye. Further, Wittgenstein initially entertains the idea that we cannot fail to detect that which is there to be detected. If an “act of will” is something that we must be able to detect, and if when we (intentionally) act there is an addition a necessary act of detection (and is this too detected?), then it is not clear that the will that detects itself in this fashion is any different from a camera that cannot help but observe what passes in front of it. However, a detecting device does not have an attitude toward what it detects – it does not have a perspective on the world (except in the sense that it can only detect what passes or happens in front of it). It simply sees what is there to be seen.

There is also an element of certainty or precision in this notion of the detecting will. This is because, according to Wittgenstein, there cannot be any question of whether the act of will was carried out or not. Wittgenstein seems to be relying upon the following intuition: if I were to engage in an act of will, such as raising my arm, it would be odd if I were unable to determine whether I had done what I had intended to do. However, we might try to imagine situations where this is so: for instance, I intend to head to my office on campus and wish to lock the door to my house on my way out. I then lock the door on the way out. As soon as I complete the act of locking the door, I wonder if I have in fact “completely carried out” this act of will. Perhaps I have a behavioral disorder. Here, then, we seem to have an example of an act of will that I have carried out and yet there is still a question (for me) as to whether I have in fact done so.
Another way to get at the odd nature of what Wittgenstein is proposing here is to recast this brief picture of the will in terms of contingent facts and necessity. When an act of will is completely carried out, the result is a fact. It is something that we can represent and so picture in a proposition. But this act itself is supposed to be something that both causes other facts (and so must itself be a fact) and of which I could not fail to be aware. Further, since the relation to an idea is part of the means for “detecting” that the act of will has in fact occurred (since it is because the act must be related to an idea that I must be able to detect the act) and since I cannot fail to detect such an act, I must necessarily be able to picture what it is that I aim to accomplish (perhaps so that I can detect whether or not it has happened). I would then have a fact that I could not possibly fail to see. And we would have a kind of necessity that follows from an insight into what the act of will might be, one that equates the “carrying out” of an act of will with “detecting it” in a representation.¹⁰⁶

There are two ways of dealing with the difficulties that arise if one accepts Wittgenstein’s insight here. One the one hand, we could attempt to recast an act of will as something that it is always possible to detect, assuming that I am paying attention to what I am doing and that all my sensory organs are working properly. (We might also say that an act in which I am not paying attention is not an act of will.) However, in doing this we have imagined what Wittgenstein says that we could not imagine. It would also mean that the relation is not necessary but only present when certain contingent states of affairs happen to be the case. On the other hand, we could simply give up this picture of the will.

¹⁰⁶ It also seems that our relation to such a fact is somehow immediate in a way that our relationship to other facts is not. While the presentation of facts depends on our physiology, the presentation of this fact, if it is to have the requisite certainty and necessity, could not be suspect to the mediation of such physiology. We will return to this notion below when we look at how such proximity between the will and select parts of the world is intolerable.
For instance, we might note that that which is detected (an act of will) is the very thing that just two weeks ago was said to not exist. Or rather, it was said that there is no such thing as an act of will in the ordinary sense – in the sense of the “I can do what I will” (taking Wittgenstein’s to be indebted to Schopenhauer for the idea of “the ordinary sense” of “act of will”). Yet we seem to be dealing with this ordinary sense of the will here at the start of the 4.11.16 entries. So are we to understand ourselves as always detecting our acts of will (in the ordinary sense) or something else? Is there some other type of “act of will”? And how could there be acts of will if the will is simply something that detects? Would it simply detect its own acts of detection?

We can surmise, given the incompatibility of the notion of the ordinary will-as-cause (the “I can do what I will” and, tied to that, the “I can detect what I will”) with the tractarian outlook, that Wittgenstein quickly dispenses with this notion for reasons of the sort at which we’ve just looked. Indeed, he does not linger on this notion but instead reasserts the need to determine how the will and world as related, and, having again found the common notion of the will to be wanting, he moves to the idea of the will-as-attitude as the next possible candidate for a means of understanding this relation: “It is clear, so to speak, that we need a foothold [einen Halt] for the will in the world. / The will is an attitude of the subject to the world. / The subject is the willing subject.” There are two ways to understand this notion of the will-as-attitude as a “foothold”: either the will-as-attitude is being entertained in order to see if it provides this foothold (and so is worth assuming), or we must provide such a foothold if the idea of a will-as-attitude is to make any sense. In either case, if we understand Wittgenstein as trying to make sense of what the will could be given that the tractarian approach leads us to conclude that there is
no act of will, then we will wish to see if the will-as-attitude provides a viable alternative means of understanding the will. However, it can provide such an alternative only if it actually has some hold on or support in the world. Thus, Wittgenstein must show that this notion of the will provides such a foothold, but he can do that only by understanding what this foothold is.

There is a great deal that needs to be explained if this is to be successful. For instance, there is the question of the relation of the will as an attitude to willing as an act. There is also the question of what this capacity consists in and how that capacity is actualized by a person or a subject. Is the will simply another name for an attitude? Or is the will the subject’s capacity to form such attitudes? Are the attitudes a result of the acts of the subject, or is the attitude itself the act? And how do we get from the initial conception of the will as necessarily related to ideas of its acts to the conclusion that the will is an attitude?

In what follows on 4.11.16, we do not get clear answers to all these questions. However, to some extent it will not matter, as the answers we do get are sufficient for Wittgenstein to wonder (on 19.11.16) why we should even bother to assume the notion of the willing subject in the first place. This is, I claim, the result of three distinct attempts on 4.11.16 to determine what the will-as-attitude might be. Wittgenstein first attempts to delineate the distinguishing characteristics of the act of such a will. He then attempts to understand this will as something that accompanies but does not cause certain actions. Finally, he attempts to separate willing from wishing. I will investigate each of the three attempts in turn and then explain how the failure of these attempts leads to the interrogative conclusions of November 9th and 19th.
Attempt 1: Distinguishing Characteristics

Having written that the will needs a foothold in the world, that the will is an attitude of the subject, and that the subject is the willing subject (claims that he may be asserting as true beliefs or simply writing out as potential nonsense to be investigated) Wittgenstein finally turns to the question of how I might in fact determine that an act of will is underway. He asks, “Have the feelings by which I ascertain that an act of will takes place any particular characteristic [Eigenschaft] which distinguishes [unterscheidet] them from other ideas?” It is a good question, as we have already seen that the notion of “act of will” under consideration seems to require such a characteristic.

Wittgenstein initially claims that it seems that there are no such characteristics, and he turns to two thought experiments in order to think through the issue further. The first one involves the idea of being able to move a chair directly with one’s will, i.e., without moving one’s own body. Wittgenstein claims that I might get the idea that this is possible if there are no characteristics that distinguish an act of will from other ideas (Vorstellungen). In other words, the will (at least, the phenomenal will as ordinarily understood) is a limited capacity insofar as it cannot act without the medium of the body, and so in order to move other objects I must physical interact with them (whether by pushing the chair with my body or using my body to say things to another in an attempt to get them to move the chair). Simply picturing the chair moving is not enough to move it. Thus, a proper understanding of acts of will needs to distinguish some ideas (pictures) from others in a way that would keep us from being misled about the world, since I cannot move a chair directly with my will simply by picturing the chair moving. It must
then be possible to delineate what I do (as a result of my willing) from what I cannot do, but for this to happen there must be some means of distinguishing acts of will from other

Wittgenstein’s response to this example is merely to ask “Is that possible?” before moving on to the next example, with the implication that the impossibility of moving a chair directly with my will makes it clear that there is something missing from his account of the will, since it seems that there are no distinguishing marks of the “act of will” and yet we obviously cannot “directly” move chairs. Thus, we must continue to see if there is some tractarian object to which the name “act of will” corresponds (as one of the key metaphysical errors made in philosophy is, according to 6.53, to fail to assign meaning (objective reference) to words). The words will contribute to nonsense if there is no object to which they refer, and it could perhaps be the case that we have simply not yet found the object or objects to which “act of will” refers. But the tractarian will have the resources to make a stronger claim: the notion of the “act of will” has to do with ideas (with Vorstellungen, with pictures of facts) and is an attempt to add something to one class of picture (those tied to acts of will) that the isomorphism of picturing cannot allow: the picture must have the same mathematical multiplicity as the state of affairs that it pictures. Thus, either the “act of will” refers to something in the world (which it pictures, making it a picture and so a fact) or it does not refer to anything at all. But given what Wittgenstein wants the “act of will” to be here, it could not refer to anything. Again, this does not mean that our inability to find the requisite objects will lead us to think that we can move chairs directly with our will. Rather, it should (as Wittgenstein will eventually come to see) mean that the very notion of the act of will he is here entertaining is misleading.
Wittgenstein then turns to another example, one involving an attempt to draw a picture in a mirror. He observes that to do this one must engage in two distinct acts of will: one must ignore (absehen) the visual information s/he is receiving and at the same time one must rely on (zu Hilfe nehmen) the muscular feelings of the hand and arm with which s/he is drawing. These acts are presumably necessary if we are to make sense of what takes place in the act of such drawing. It also highlights the need to ascertain what acts of will are or, short of that, how we can account for certain facts without the notion of acts of will. For, while it might seem that we are in little danger of thinking that we can move a chair directly with our will, it would be problematic if we were unable to explain the physical phenomena of being able to directly ignore (abstain from or abandon) one set of sensory evidence and directly attend to (rely on or make use of) another set at the same time.

Wittgenstein dismisses any possible insights from this example by asking, “Have we anything more than empirical evidence that the movement of the same part of the body is in question in both cases” (4.11.16; emphasis added)? What exactly is Wittgenstein dismissing, and why? If Wittgenstein is still entertaining the Schopenhauerian identification made earlier in the day (that the (metaphysical) subject is the willing subject), it would seem that Wittgenstein has not fully grasped Schopenhauer’s notion of the will, since Schopenhauer makes a clear distinction between (phenomenological) acts of will (subject to the principle of sufficient reason) and the (metaphysically) willing subject (which has no object but is a blind striving). However, I don’t believe that this is what he is doing here; rather, I take him to still be testing the notion of “act of will” in accord with the philosophical imperative that will appear in 6.54: he is trying to show
(himself or an imaginary interlocutor) that there is nothing that corresponds to this notion as we commonly understand it – it points to something that logically cannot be the case. Simply because he has dismissed the idea of the “act of will as necessarily detectable” does not mean that there could not be other potentially meaningful notions of the will.

In the mirror-drawing example, the will is regarded as something that enables us to coordinate our efforts and focus or attention on two things at once, such that I can both ignore and focus at the same time: in other words, I can concentrate. The question is then whether this capacity for concentration is what the act of will is. Initially, however, Wittgenstein claims that “after all there are two quite different [ganz verschiedene] acts of the will in question [ignoring the visual information and relying on the muscular feelings of the hand and arm]”, and he elaborates by speaking of two “parts of the world”: “The one [act of the will] relates to the visual part of the world, the other to the muscular-feeling part.” The assumption seems to be that the there must be a different act to correspond to the different part of the world with which I am (or my will is) dealing. It also seems that Wittgenstein could utilize the fact that two different kinds of act are taking place: “abstaining from” and “making us of.” Thus, it is not only that we are dealing with two different kinds of sensory information, but we are doing different things with them (and all this is done simultaneously).

It would seem then that we do indeed have two ganz verschiedene (quite different) acts of will, and so we appear to be close to finding that which differentiates the act of the will. (Recall the question that begins this train of thought: “Have the feelings by which I ascertain that an act of will takes place any particular characteristic [Eigenschaft] which distinguishes [unterscheidet] them from other ideas?”) The
characteristics in question (intending two things at once with respect to different parts of
the world) seem to provide possible candidates for the differentiating feature that we
seek. Perhaps the will is our capacity to do certain things with the information presented
to us, and perhaps its acts are differentiated in terms of the parts of the world with which
we deal.

Wittgenstein, however, does not pursue this line of investigation and instead
discusses it (turning next to the idea of the will-as-accompaniment) with the question
noted earlier: “Have we anything more than empirical evidence that the movement of the
same part of the body is in question in both cases” (4.11.16; emphasis added)? I take
“both cases” here to refer to the two acts discussed in the example; thus, one “case” is the
act of will involving the visual part of the world and the other is the act of will involving
the muscular-feeling part of the world. How then did Wittgenstein move from the claim
that the act (drawing a square in a mirror) involves two quite different acts of the will
(related to two different parts of the world in opposing ways) to the claim that the same
part of the body is involved in both acts? The move takes us from the acts of will to their
source – to the part of the body that enables us to ignore what one part of the body (the
“eyes” or the neural network involved in gather visual information) does while enabling
us to do something with the other parts (the arm and hand and the related neural
network). The acts are different insofar as I do different things with different sorts of
information, but the acts are both acts of the same “thing” (the will as a part of the body,
ein Körperteil). This (bodily) will is the capacity that coordinates things such that I can
do many things at once, and it does this by having an idea in mind (I want to draw a
square in the mirror) and then exerting control over the rest of the body in order to
accomplish what it aims at. Here, it abstains and attends to one thing and not another, keeping the eyes still and concentrating on the hand and thus overcoming the natural tendency to follow the eyes. But if this is the case, then we do not really have what Wittgenstein is after: we have not succeeded in identifying the distinguishing mark of the act of will; rather, we have attempted to explain the empirical evidence by invoking an entity (a part of the body) that corresponds either simply to our physiology or to the ordinary conception of the will (the “I can do what I will”), which is illusory. As Wittgenstein interrogatively puts it, we have nothing “more than empirical evidence [to suggest] that the movement of the same part of the body is in question in both cases,” and we do not have the empirical feature that distinguishes the acts of that part.

Here Wittgenstein, concerned as he is with something more than (mere) empirical evidence, gives us the first hint of the deeper tractarian concerns with the problematic nature of what the will is. It does not seem as if we can dispense with the notion: we can move chairs, but not directly, and we can perform certain actions only by attending to some parts of the world and not others. However, the tractarian conception of semantics, logic, and ontology (assuming that it is already fully operative here) seems to leave us with a dilemma: if the acts of will cannot be distinguished from other acts (if there is no way that we can picture (and think about) these acts) then they would not be a part of the world, but what we want here is the connection between the will and the world, not an account of why there is no will. The possibility begins to arise that if there is a will that makes certain actions “mine,” it cannot be something in the world and so it cannot be something subject to thought (and knowing). Yet since this will must have some relation to representation if we are to sufficiently distinguish the “fact” that certain things are
willed from the fact that others are not (or cannot be) willed, we then need some sense of how such an empirically-unavailable will can be related to the world in a way that individuates it as in some sense mine.

One possibility for finding either the justification or motivation for positing the willing subject as the source of individuation (of the “my” in “my world”) is to look at the clear source for this view: Schopenhauer’s distinction between the empirical and intelligible character of an individual. Schopenhauer approaches this distinction by way of what is knowable. Schopenhauer claims that “our knowledge consists only in the framing of representations by means of subjective forms” (WWR II 194; italics here and in the following quotes from Schopenhauer are in the original). This knowledge, which is a kind of framing, gives us “mere phenomena, not the being-in-itself of things” (194). This framing also marks a limit beyond which we cannot proceed, so that we “shall therefore remain at the outside of things [as they are in themselves]” (195). We will see them only as they appear to us in the framing.

Nonetheless, Schopenhauer does not give up hope for a deeper and more meaningful contact with the inside of things. If we cannot move beyond the limits of our thinking to the inner nature of things, we can approach that nature from within. This is possible, he believes, since “we ourselves are also among those realities or entities we require to know” (195). To the extent that we too are the appearing of the thing-in-itself, we are ourselves that very thing-in-itself. In other words, since we are an appearance in the world, there is something “behind” us that is appearing. According to Schopenhauer, this “something” is our will, and we have access to our will not in a mediated fashion (as a representation) but immediately. This immediate access is access to what happens
“within any event that outwardly manifests itself” (196). In other words, we don’t need to go beyond the framing through which we represent the world – we’re already there. This “innerness” that eludes us in other things is given to us in our own willing, and it is in this “innerness” – and not our consciousness (in which things are framed and given to us) – that we find our real nature. Our real nature is not found in thinking, and so we must look elsewhere – at willing – to understand this real nature.

Schopenhauer does provide a caveat to his argument: with our willing, we do not actually have direct access to the thing-in-itself, but to the thing-in-itself “manifested under the lightest of all veils” (197). And even though this willing is known in an immediate fashion, this knowledge comes through the intellect, and this intellect “always remains distinguished from me as the one who wills” (198). There is thus still a split between the known and the real. This split is internalized insofar as my intellect is split from my willing, which is where my real nature lies. There is thus also a fundamental alienation or estrangement at work in us.

Given Schopenhauer’s argument, the notion of the transcendental ego – of an “I think that must accompany all our representations” (139) – is not sufficient to capture what is at work “beyond” our empirical acts of willing and knowing. The “I” is, in spite of our immediate awareness of it, “an unknown quantity” and “a mystery and a secret” (139). It is a condition of consciousness and so it “cannot itself be conditioned by consciousness” (139). We cannot, in other words, think of the “I” in terms of thinking anymore. The “I” must now be thought of in terms of the (non-empirical) will. This seems paradoxical, if not impossible: to think the “I,” we must approach it as something
that cannot be thought and that is “beyond” thinking. Yet how can we accomplish such an uncanny task?

It is precisely these uncanny aspects and implications of the will with which we see Wittgenstein grappling at the end of the *Notebooks* and in particular on 4.11.16. And some semblance of Schopenhauer’s metaphysical will is clearly in the back of Wittgenstein’s mind as he moves from an empirical will (one caught up with the thinking, representing subject) toward something non-empirical (insofar as it cannot be pictured in thought (or in what Schopenhauer would call the world as representations) in which everything is connected in a way that renders it all describable scientifically).

**Schopenhauer: The Will as Accompaniment**

The debt to Schopenhauer becomes more apparent as Wittgenstein moves from an attempt to find a distinguishing empirical mark of the “act of will” to the idea of the will as an “accompaniment” of what I do. It is not clear whether Wittgenstein was rereading Schopenhauer when he worked on these notions in the *Notebooks.* Thus, we cannot be sure of what exactly he read (if he did read anything). However, that he was engaged with (and becoming in some ways disengaged from) Schopenhauer’s thought is undeniable. For instance, in the *Prize Essay*, Schopenhauer offers the description of the will in a “popular sense” as the “I can do what I will” (20), and in this sense willing is seen in terms of doing and, specifically, in terms of what I do with my body, which is how

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107 In his biography of Wittgenstein, Ray Monk can only speculate as to whether Wittgenstein had Schopenhauer’s text at hand: “Whether Wittgenstein was rereading Schopenhauer in 1916, or whether he was remembering the passages that had impressed him in his youth, there is no doubt that the remarks he wrote in that year have a distinctly Schopenhauerian feel. He even adopts Schopenhauer’s jargon of *Wille* (“will”) and *Vorstellung* (“representation” or, sometimes, “idea”) [...]” (143-144).

Wittgenstein often treats willing in the *Notebooks* (cf. the book of the world as I found it on 23.5.15 and the entries from 20.10.16 and 4.11.16 on which this chapter has focused). This everyday notion of the will leads one to think that I can either do or not do something and am thus free. However, Schopenhauer argues that this looks at things *after* the fact: I look back and believe that I did what I did because I chose to do it and I chose it among other possible options. Schopenhauer claims that the evidence does not support this: I can only have done what I did; I could not have done both $p$ and $\neg p$; thus, it is highly likely that I did $p$ because I had to do it – not because I was free to do it. Thus, in answer to Wittgenstein’s question earlier in the day (“Have we anything more than empirical evidence …?”), Schopenhauer would say that we do not in the case of the “I can do what I will.” So, when we approach an uncertain future in which we could do $p$ or $\neg p$, we believe that we can choose to do either in spite of the principle of sufficient reason and thus mistake our uncertainty and our scientific ignorance for freedom.

That Wittgenstein in part agreed with Schopenhauer is evident from proposition 5.1362: “The freedom of the will consists in the fact that future events cannot be known now.” In other words, belief in such freedom stems from a necessary uncertainty about the future, one built into the nature of things.\(^{109}\) This passage is unusual among the will passages in that it is found much earlier in the *Notebooks* – well over a year before the experience on the Eastern Front. The claim is placed in the *Tractatus* in the context of the logico-semantic considerations that constitute the bulk of the *Tractatus*. More precisely,

\(^{109}\) That there is only partial agreement with Schopenhauer stems from the fact that what I do is not subject to causal determinacy for Wittgenstein, as there is only logical necessity and thus no causal nexus according to the *Tractatus*. Thus, a sufficient scientific description of the world only enables us to say what is possible in the future, but we cannot say what will happen. Schopenhauer’s view, however, entails the possibility that a scientist with sufficient knowledge could predict what will happen, since what will happen follows from the antecedent causes; “we should regard the events as they occur with just the same eye with which we read the printed word, well knowing that it was there before we read it” (*PE* 55).
it is made in the context of a discussion of the inference. Proposition 5 is claims that
propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions (which are in turn truth-
functions of the themselves), and the 5s deal in large part with the regularity found in
language. 5.1 is the claim that the ability to order truth-functions in series is the
foundation of probability; 5.13 is a comment on this, claiming further that we perceive
(\textit{ersehen}) that the truth of one proposition follows from another insofar as we perceive
their structure. Finally, 5.132 claims that there is no need for a law of inference (as
Russell and Frege believed): such laws are senseless and, in any case, not needed, since
the propositions themselves show (although the word used here is “justify”
(\textit{rechtifizieren})) this internal relation. And, as 5.1 claims, this something shown (the
internal relations among inferentially connected propositions) is simply perceived. The
proposition itself asserts (\textit{bejaht}) those which follow from it; there is nothing we can say
about that assertion or add to it other than the specification that we take it to be true. But
it would be a mistake to confuse what follows from what we take to be true with what
will actually happen or with an ability to freely determine it. In a similar vein,
Wittgenstein later claims: “Only that which we ourselves construct can we foresee”
(5.556; 15.4.16). But again, we must not mistake this ability to articulate the inferences
implicit in our description of the current state of affairs with the ability to actually see
what will happen or with the ability to freely decide among possible consequences.

Thus, Wittgenstein would agree with Schopenhauer’s claim that freedom to do
what I wish is an illusion, although for different reasons. According to Schopenhauer, the
reasons are causal:

\begin{quote}
Just because all that happens, both great and small, occurs with \textit{strict}
necessity, it is quite futile to reflect on it and to think how trifling and
fortuitous were the causes that led to that event, and how very easily they could have been other than they were. For this is an illusion, since they have all occurred with just as strict a necessity and have operated with a force just as perfect as that in consequence of which the sun rises in the east. (PE 55)

These sentences offer the conclusion to Schopenhauer’s argument (in the Prize Essay) that, empirically speaking, there is no freedom of the will; such (empirical) freedom is not possible given the principle of sufficient reason.¹¹⁰ For Wittgenstein, however, the reasons for rejecting freedom of the will (in the ordinary sense) are logical. As we have seen, the tractarian is committed to the non-existence of the causal nexus. And in the investigation of will on 4.11.16, Wittgenstein finds that the feature that distinguishes willed from unwilled movements cannot be pictured; if that feature cannot be pictured, we then have actions (“acts of will”) that cannot be connected inferentially (in a causal network, one displaying inferential patterns that we call “scientific laws”) with other events since there is no picture of the event of the will causing the movement.

But if we are to make sense of what Wittgenstein meant by saying that we feel responsible for what we do (an insight that elaborates what it means to say that the will accompanies my actions) we should still attend to what Schopenhauer has to say here, for even if their reasons for rejecting the “I can do what I will” are different, they both reject the notion as an illusion, and, more importantly, there are affinities in their retention of the “I am responsible for what I have done,” which is the feeling on which Schopenhauer relies in developing his conclusion that there is freedom of the will, but only in a

¹¹⁰ Cf. also WWR I 467: “For all that happens, happens necessarily, because it happens from causes, but these themselves in turn have causes, so that the whole course of events in the world, great as well as small, is a strict concatenation of what necessarily takes place. Accordingly, everything actual is at the same time something necessary, and in reality there is no difference between actuality and necessity.”
transcendental sense. Thus, Schopenhauer is able to conclude that freedom and necessity are compatible, such that what happens empirically and with necessity (as our will reacts to “motives,” i.e., the objects given to it by external cognition) is the manifestation of our freedom:

By virtue of this freedom, all deeds of a human being are his own work, however necessarily they may proceed from the empirical character when the latter meets with the motives. They are his own work because this empirical character is merely the appearance of the intelligible character in our faculty of cognition – a faculty that is bound to time, space, and causality. In other words, the empirical character is the mode and manner in which the very essence of our own self exhibits itself to the faculty of cognition. Consequently, the will is indeed free, but only in itself and outside the appearance. (PE 86-87)

For Schopenhauer, the possibility of this compatibility depends upon his metaphysics (according to which the world can be understood both as representation (appearance) and as will (the thing-in-itself)) and the implication such metaphysics has for his conception of human nature. It is an implication that leads to a conception of human nature that clashes with the ordinary conception, guided as it is by a belief that I can do what I will.

According to the ordinary conception, we attribute most of what happens with willing to the subject. In fact, there is a tendency to identify the subject with its will: for instance, in the face of a series of objects that I could choose to pursue, the ordinary person believes that I will do what I will, and the objects matter only insofar as they relate to my desires and needs and demands (all of which can also be objects for my will).

Schopenhauer believes that there is a mistake here:

With regard to willing […] ordinary common sense has a tendency to attribute far too little to the object and far too much to the subject, by having willing originate entirely from the subject without making due allowance for the factor to be found in the object, namely the motives.

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111 As Wittgenstein puts it on 4.11.16, “We feel, so to speak, responsible for the movement [that we have willing performed].” One who speaks so is Schopenhauer.
These really determine the entirely individual nature of the actions, whereas only what is general and essential in them, namely their basic moral character, originates in the *subject* (PE 83).

In other words, what I do is determined by the interaction of my (intelligible) character with the motives (provided by objects) before me. The motives provide tests or temptations, ones that reveal what I really am. However, I am not (from an empirical point of view, at least) in control of either the motivations or the character that reacts to them. What I do results necessarily from how my character interacts with the motives to which it is subjected. I am thus at the mercy of both those motives to which I happen to be subjected and to my character, which reacts with strict necessity to those motives. The “I,” in fact, seems to drop out (or, at best, to be a helpless bystander, one that can at worst be confused by what is happening and at best realize what is happening and accept it (although that acceptance will make no difference in what does or does not happen)).

While this account of our motives and character might seem at first glance to be a version of classic determinism, Schopenhauer instead argues that it is in fact a precondition for understanding what moral freedom really is: “if [as a] consequence of the foregoing discussion we have entirely suspended from human action all freedom and have recognized that such action is thoroughly subject to the strictest necessity, we are thus led to the point where we shall be able to understand true moral freedom, which is of a higher kind” (83). A proper understanding of true moral freedom is possible (according to Schopenhauer) only if we first accept the strict necessity to which my action is subject. This move might seem paradoxical, if not contradictory: how can Schopenhauer argue for a classic determinist stance (saying, in essence, that all action is subject to causal laws), and then reverse course and claim that this in fact shows how we are free? The short
answer is that Schopenhauer is able to do this because of his dualist conception of the world as will and representation: I am determined in the world as/of representation, but my true nature transcends this empirical world of appearances, which is subject to the principle of sufficient reason; in the transcendent realm of will I am free, in that I freely chose the character (or made the choices) that is (are) empirically revealed to me (and others) in space and over the course of time as mine. And this character is what I am and it is for it that I feel responsible.

However, given that Wittgenstein does not share this account of causality and its consequent impact on the notion of freedom, we will have to look a bit closer at Schopenhauer’s reasoning if we are to pick up the thread that Wittgenstein himself seems to have picked up. We can do this by asking for a more precise account of how we are to understand this feeling of responsibility, which is a feeling that (at least some of us) cannot shake and the “unshakeability” of which seems to set the stage for the recovery of some meaningful role for the will in our lives. For Schopenhauer, this feeling speaks to the “fact” that if we really had no choice when presented with \( p \) (we had to choose \( p \), given the motive that \( p \) presented to the kind of thing that just happened to have my character) and so pursued \( p \), then the opposite of this could only have happened if I were another person – only if I had had a different character and so was not, in essence, me. Schopenhauer explains:

The character is the empirically known, constant, and unalterable disposition of an individual will. Now as this character is just as necessary a factor of every action as is the motive, we thus have an explanation of the feeling that our deeds come from ourselves or of that ‘I will’ which accompanies all our actions, and by virtue of which everyone must acknowledge them to be his deeds, for which therefore he feels himself morally responsible. (85; emphasis added to “accompanies”)
What makes my actions mine and actions that are willed and more importantly willed by me is that such actions are accompanied by my will and reveal or establish my character, and it is for this that I feel responsible: I feel responsible for who I am, as revealed in what I do (even though I have no real choice regarding what I do), which are actions that my will accompanies.

My actions, then, come from and reveal and, over time, establish empirically my character. This in turn explains why valuation terms are, for Schopenhauer, most properly directed not at actions but at character — at the being who performs (wills) the action and not at the action itself. Since freedom cannot be found in the individual actions, which occur with strict necessity given the motives and the character, it must then be found in the character of the individual. And the same motive will draw different reactions from different characters. Also, the character cannot be “enacted” without being subjected to motives: the subjective factor of the action is incapable of bringing about the action by itself but also unable to not do this action once the motive is introduced.

It will seem to the everyday perspective of the person-on-the-street, who endorses the “I can do what I will,” that the complete empirical determinism offered by Schopenhauer denies the reality of the “I will” that we feel so clearly is the cause (a cause that is itself not caused by anything else when I aim to exert my freedom) and not the mere “accompaniment” of my actions. However, Schopenhauer would insist that the accompaniment of the “I will” is sufficient to account for the “fact” that leads me to accept my actions as mine and thus as ones for which I am responsible. Still, this might seem odd, since Schopenhauer is saying both that the action is subject to causal necessity and yet I am responsible for it. How, the everyday person might ask, can I be responsible
for something over which I have no control and that I am not free to do or not do? Is not the idea of moral responsibility nonsense if I am not free to do what I will? If my action follows with strict necessity from my character, and if my character is something empirical and so itself caused by antecedent causes, why do I feel responsible for what follows from it?

The need to offer some answer to these questions is motive enough for Schopenhauer’s idealist reversal: what appears caused from an empirical perspective is in fact free from a metaphysical one. Thus, for Schopenhauer, the “strict necessity of our actions still coexists with that freedom to which the feeling of responsibility testifies and by virtue of which we are the doers of our deeds and these are attributable to us” (86). The feeling of responsibility is then the insight, from “inside the thing,” of the will of which all appearance is the manifestation, and this will is not in itself subject to the principle of sufficient reason which dominates all its appearances. It is an explicitly Kantian distinction: “empirical character is the mode and manner in which the very essence of our own self exhibits itself to the faculty of cognition. Consequently, the will is indeed free, but only in itself and outside the appearance” (87). This will is our “being and essence” and it “must be conceived as [my] free act manifesting itself merely for the faculty of cognition (tied as the latter is to time, space, and causality) in a plurality and diversity of actions” (87). Action thus follows essence. And since freedom cannot be found in the action, it must lie in the essence. So “what one is” is what morally matters, since what one does follows from that.

What Wittgenstein calls “accompaniment” is thus for Schopenhauer a form of identity: “In a word, a human being always does only what he wills, and yet he
necessarily does it. This is owing to the fact that he already *is* what he wills” (88). I am what I will. The “will” that accompanies my actions and gives rise to the feeling that they are mine is my essence. In other words, I accompany what I do. This is what is inescapable: me.\(^\text{112}\) And I do not, objectively and empirically speaking, freely choose what I will – it follows with necessity from how my essence interacts with motives. At the same time, while I might realize that objectively I am determined, subjectively “everyone feels that he always does only what he *wills*” (88). And “this merely means that his actions are purely the manifestation of his very own essence” (88). My essence is revealed in what I do, and the feeling of responsibility is at bottom recognition of this.

If this somewhat paradoxical view is difficult for the everyday perspective to swallow, it will be no easier for one committed to the scientific perspective (the sort that endorses complete causal determinism). From the scientific perspective, it will appear as if a leap is being made in moving from the “fact” that every action will have an internal, subjective component to the claim that I am responsible for that component and that that component is in fact in some sense free. There might be good reason to treat people as if they are responsible and to teach them to believe in such a notion in order to get them to behave in a certain way. However, one could simply dismiss the feeling noted by Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein as a mere illusion. Not everyone has it, it might be said. Or it might be said that a mere feeling is insufficient evidence for the claims that Schopenhauer and perhaps also Wittgenstein seek to base on it. For our purposes,

\(^{112}\) Of course, for Schopenhauer, the story does not stop here, as his metaphysics requires a further stage of development in which I realize that what “I” am is more than “me” understood as an individual, phenomenological ego. I must move from an awareness of my intelligible character to my being indistinguishable from other such characters, as each is simply a manifestation of one will. A similar insight is present in earlier post-Brusilov entries in the *Notebooks*, although these passages are left out of the *Tractatus*. 
Schopenhauer’s response to such a charge is not important – it would rely upon his metaphysical framework. However, is Wittgenstein making a similar move on 4.11.16, and if so, how can he respond to this charge? Is the will that accompanies my actions, making me feel, “so to speak, responsible” for what I do, a reference to an empirically unavailable “feeling” or “experience” that is nonetheless necessary for understanding the world (my world) and the possibility of my thinking of and acting within it?

Wittgenstein qualifies his introduction of the feeling of responsibility with the phrase “so to speak.” This is, then, a way of speaking, one that is put forth as somehow not quite right. We feel responsible, but when we say this we are only using a customary manner of speech, one that, upon (tractarian) reflection, would be revealed as nonsense, as saying nothing. It is not, then, something said, but something that (as Anscombe put it) we would say were it not impossible to say it. But recognizing this – recognizing that what Wittgenstein would like to say here cannot in fact be said, or at least not said in the emerging tractarian sense of “say” – does not destroy the possibility of the “feeling” in question or a recognition of it as we look at the world.

**Attempt 2: The Will as Accompaniment with an Object**

Returning to the investigation of the will on 4.11.16, we find Wittgenstein giving up the attempt to find a distinguishing empirical feature of the “act of will” and instead asking, “Then is the situation that I merely accompany my actions with my will?” This second attempt at defining the notion of the will is again focused on finding something to distinguish acts of will from other acts which will also give the will a “foothold” in the world, but here the differentiating feature/foothold at which Wittgenstein looks is the intentional relation of the act of will to its “object,” i.e., to that which I aim to do. In other
words, in an attempt to avoid the will-as-cause and yet provide the needed “foothold” for
the will in the world, Wittgenstein entertains the idea of the foothold as an object in the
world and the possibility that the intended action is this object, such that the will’s
purchase on the world is found in that toward which it aims.

The lines that set up this line of thought are quite dense, dealing in particular with
the possibility of predicting what I will:

Then is the situation that I merely accompany my actions with my will?
But in that case how can I predict – as in some sense I surely can – that I
shall raise my arm in five minutes’ time? That I shall will this?
This is clear: it is impossible to will without already performing the act of
the will.
The act of the will is not the cause of the action but is the action itself.
One cannot will without acting.
If the will has to have an object in the world, the object can be the
intended action itself. /
And the will does have to have an object. /
Otherwise we should have no foothold and could not know what we
willed. /
And could not will different things. (italics added)

I take the “Then” to mark the turn to the next phase of the investigation: If it is not the
case that the will is distinguished by certain (empirical) characteristics of its acts, then is
it the case that it accompanies actions via an intentional relation to an “object”?

“Accompany” here seems to be a kind of identity, just as it was for Schopenhauer: to will
is to perform an act of will, and to perform an act of will is simply to act. Thus, one
cannot will without acting, which is what it means to say that the will “accompanies” the
action: without the action, there could be no (act of) will. It is a condition for the
possibility of willing. This is one of two conditions that Schopenhauer lays down – the
other is the “object” or motive, at which Wittgenstein will look in a moment. It is the idea
that “the will has to have an object in the world” that seems to motivate his concern with prediction.

The problem with prediction returns us to the ordinary conception of the will as my free capacity to do what I wish. We saw that this conception is problematic for Wittgenstein for two reasons: he shares Schopenhauer’s belief that the freedom is an illusion stemming from our inability to know the future, and he goes further in claiming that the causal nexus is also an illusion, such that the world is independent of our will. Yet how are we to then make sense of my seeming ability to form an intention (raising my arm in five minutes) and then successfully act on that intention, making my prediction true? Here, I make no claim to know the future; I am merely predicting what I believe will happen. However, the prediction rests on the idea that I can do what I will. Further, it treats the act of will as identical to an intention to do something.

That the act of will cannot be the intention – one that “causes” an event to happen, such that I can predict what will happen as the result of my intentions – is, for Wittgenstein, clear, given the impossibility of willing without “already performing” the act of will. Here we have the identity of the will with what I do, an identity that results on 4.11.16 from the impossibility of the will as cause. The act of will is thus “not the cause” but “the action itself,” a phrase that will occur in the Tractatus at 6.422. Ethical value will be found not in the world but “in the action itself,” giving us cause to find the “the action itself” to be a matter of something transcendental. If this is so, then the only possibility open to Wittgenstein for accounting for the “foothold” of such a will in a world where prediction is possible it so distinguish the will from my intentions and treat the intended action as the object in the world.
We can more fully understand these notions of “object” and “intended actions” if we look once again and more closely at Schopenhauer’s notion of “motives” as objects of the will: “When a human being wills, he will something; his act of will is always directed to an object and is conceivable only in reference to such” (PE 12). Schopenhauer continues:

Now what is meant by willing something? This means that the act of will, which is itself in the first instance only an object of self-consciousness, arises on the occasion of something that belongs to the consciousness of other things and thus is an object of the faculty of cognition. In this connection such an object is called a motive and is at the same time the material of the act of will, in that the latter is directed to it, that is to say, aims at some change in it, and thus reacts to it; its whole essence consists in this reaction. It is clear from this that without the motive the act of will could not occur, for it would lack the occasion as well as the material. (PE 12)

This definition of the act of will sets up the question that Schopenhauer seeks to address in the Prize Essay: the question is whether the will is “necessarily called forth by the motive, or whether the will retains complete freedom to will or not to will, when the motive enters consciousness” (PE 12). From the empirical point of view, the answer is that the will is indeed necessarily called forth by the motive; from the “higher view,” as Schopenhauer calls it, the motive enables my transcendentally free will to make itself manifest. Thus, if we take Wittgenstein to be in dialogue with Schopenhauer on 4.11.16, we have model of “act of will” that follows the one offered by Schopenhauer: the act of will is not something that precedes my action; what precedes my action is the motive (and my character), and who or what I am (my world, Wittgenstein would say) is revealed not in what I intend but in what I do. What I do is related to a motive, insofar as an “object” draws forth an affective/appetitive response that is the action. This “action itself” reveals my essence, an essence that I recognize in feeling responsible for it. And
when I stand before possible “objects,” I can see that there are (at that moment) different ones that can move me, such that I can “will different things” insofar as I cannot know which possible action I will in fact will. I can then “know” what I willed by simply attending to what I did in fact do. And I can predict what I might do if I have a sufficient sense of both my character as it has been revealed in the past and of the motives that are likely to present themselves to me.

In spite of the way that this seems to address Wittgenstein’s concerns, his (philosophical) anxiety over the issue is not allayed. He does not seem to be content with this notion of the will as an accompaniment to actions that it is related to as intended objects. Many questions might arise at this point. Why must the will have an object? And what exactly does it mean to say that this object is the intended (but not yet performed) action, if the will also accompanies the action itself? Wittgenstein writes that it is “clear that I cannot will without already performing the act of the will.” But how, then, can something that accompanies $x$ have $x$ as its object? What sort of relation is this? The will thus seems to relate to the world through simple accompaniment, not intention. Wittgenstein will push this problematic notion of the will’s intentional foothold in the world by making a crucial distinction between wishing and willing.

We can anticipate Wittgenstein’s introduction of the distinction between wishing and willing by looking at the informal arguments he seems to be offering at this point on 4.11.16, ones that appear to produce a contradiction. The arguments are tied to these two potentially opposed theses: one cannot will without acting and the object of the will is the intended action itself. The latter claim is built from an informal argument as follows:

Premise: Without an object in the world, the will has no foothold in the world.
Premise: Without an object in the world, I could not know what I willed.
Premise: Without an object in the world, I could not will different things.
Evidence: I can will different things.
Evidence: I can know what I willed.
Ergo: The will must have an object in the world.
Ergo: The will has a foothold in the world.

This informal argument provides support for the informal argument that presents the object as the intended action: “If the will has to have an object in the world, the object can be the intended action itself.” We thus have,

Premise: The will must have an object in the world.
Premise: This necessary object can be anything that can be an object of the will.
Premise: An intended action is a potential object of the will.
Ergo: The object of the will can thus be the intended action itself.
Ergo: The intended action is the will’s foothold in the world.

This conclusion marks a leap of sorts: if the will must have an object in the world, it is not clear how and why this supports Wittgenstein’s conclusion of what the object can be.

Why can it be the intended action that the will accompanies? The will is not yet “present,” since the action has not yet been performed. Or, rather, if it is present, then it seems that it would be accompanying the process of forming the intention – the process that Wittgenstein will shortly call “wishing” in distinction from “willing.” Thus, given that he enters into a discussion of the difference between wish and will, arguing that the wish (not the will) is what precedes the event, it seems that Wittgenstein is worried that his conclusion the will’s foothold is the intended action (the motive) rests on a mistake.

This informal argumentation thus sets up what is at stake in the investigation of wishing: it makes clear that if the will must have a foothold in the world, it is the action itself; but if it is just the action itself, then we are left without any distinguishing mark, whether that mark is envisioned as an empirical feature of certain acts or the relation of
the will to possible (intended) actions. This attempt to define willing in distinction from wishing is the third and final essay that Wittgenstein makes on the notion of the will, and it is the one in which the concept of responsibility finally emerges.

Attempt 3: The Will as Pure Accompaniment and Source of Responsibility

Wittgenstein’s investigation on 4.11.16 enters into its final stretch with a question that raises the possibility that the “mark” that distinguishes willed from unwilled movements is quite simply the presence of the will: “Does not the willed movement of the body happen just like any unwilled movement in the world, but that it is accompanied by the will?” Here we return to the earlier problem of what distinguishes (in the world) a willed from an unwilled movement, but there is no attempt to offer any empirical feature, whether external (observable in what I do) or internal (within my neuropsychological activity). The willed movement of the body must happen just like any other movement in the world (whether an involuntary movement of one’s body or the movement of something that has no will) in that it can be pictured (it is a fact) and the proposition that describes it can be linked to other propositions in a causal network that displays logical regularity. The only difference that would distinguish the willed from the unwilled movement is, perhaps, the sheer presence (the accompaniment) of the will. It is this possibility that Wittgenstein investigates in the final eighteen lines of the 4.11.16 entries.

Wittgenstein quickly reminds himself (in a way that seems to chasten) that the willed movement is “not accompanied just by a wish! But by will.” What is the temptation (the mistake) that must be avoided here? Why are we likely to think that what accompanies the willed movement is (just) a wish, and why would we be wrong
(according to the tractarian)? What Wittgenstein means by this distinction will become a clearer near the end of the day’s entries (where he notes, in the final three entries, that wishing is a process that precedes the willed movement and would itself be accompanied by willing), but already at this point in the entries and in Wittgenstein’s apparent thought process it is possible to shed some light on this distinction by looking at the entry that immediately follows this one and that seems to provide a comment on it: “We feel, so to speak, responsible for the movement.” A wish would, presumably, lack this feeling of responsibility. I might wish things that I cannot bring about (for instance, I might wish that it rain today even though I cannot make it rain) and I might wish things but do nothing to bring them about (I might eat only fast food and never exercise and yet wish to I lose weight in spite of doing nothing to alter my behavior). Thus, what accompanies the willed movement is no mere wish but something more, since we will have acted in accord with our wish (whatever that wish may be and however unlikely our chances of success in actually accomplishing what we wish). We might even have suddenly acted in a way that conflicts with what we’d always (consciously) wished. So we can surmise for the moment that, for Wittgenstein, to say that something more than just a wish accompanies the movement is to say that the action is accompanied by something that marks it not as a vain hope but as something I actively sought to bring about and then did do (even if no intention preceded it). Thus, it is something I do, and this is shown in my

\[\text{\footnotesize\cite{113}}\] For Schopenhauer, too, wishing is a manifestation of willing: “For not willing and deciding in the narrowest sense, but also all striving, wishing, shunning, hoping, fearing, loving, hating, in short all the directly constitutes our weal and woe, desire and disinclination, is obviously only affection of the will, is a stirring, a modification, of willing and not-willing, is just that which, when it operates outwards, exhibits itself as an act of will proper” (WWR II, XIX 202).

\[\text{\footnotesize\cite{114}}\] It is worth noting that feelings would be events in the world and so facts that can be pictured. However, is there a “feeling of responsibility”? One the one hand, we might say that we are certainly aware of such a feeling, either in ourselves in reports from others. On the other hand, the “so to speak” inserted by Wittgenstein draws attention to the fact that this might be a pseudo-feeling, one of the “experiences” that is “necessary” for tractarian recognition and happiness.
doing it, and in doing it, it is somehow mine, such that I am responsible for it but not the actions of others (or perhaps for other movements of mine).

The six entries that follow the introduction of the notion of responsibility focus more fully on the distinction between wishing and willing, but I would like to pause for a moment on this notion of responsibility. While the notion of responsibility does not appear again (either in the *Notebooks* or in the *Tractatus*), it seems to capture the element of non-picture-able, distinguishing immediacy for which Wittgenstein is looking and it seems to do so in a way that does not imply nonnatural causes. Further, it mimics the turn that Schopenhauer made in his *Prize Essay*: after dismissing the “I can do what I will” (the will as cause) and then dealing with objects of the will (and the will as attitude toward them), Wittgenstein, like Schopenhauer, turns to a more transcendental notion of the will as a pure and immediate accompaniment and the source of the feeling of responsibility for what I do.

With respect to this immediacy, if we recall the start of the day’s entries, we began with a search for the distinguishing characteristic of the will in a kind of immediacy (the immediate recognition of what one is doing/causing). The immediacy there was one of knowledge: it would seem that one knows what one does. However, the *Tractatus* does not seem to provide any space for this. And knowledge, on tractarian terms, is not possible outside the inferential connections of a mesh or network. But why should we feel responsible for actions simply because our will accompanies them, especially if we cannot logically anticipate what we will do or cause what we do? And how does a notion of responsibility give the tractarian the mark of the will and its purchase on the world? We cannot know what will happen in the future, and even if we
did, we could not cause the future event through a current act of will (an act of will that would not itself be caused and so would be free). Yet some notion of freely aiming to bring about some future state of affairs (or at least one’s attitude to those possible affairs) through one’s efforts (physical or psychological) is a foundational notion of most moral theories. That Wittgenstein rejects such a notion of freedom is, as we’ve seen, consistent with the tractarian outlook and with long-standing thoughts in *Notebooks*: he dismissed such freedom of the will over a year and a half prior to the 4.11.16 entries (“The freedom of the will consists in the fact that future events cannot be known now” (24.4.15)) and this dismissal remained in the *Tractatus* (verbatim at 5.1362). Our idea of the freedom of the will is, from a tractarian vantage, a mere illusion, one grounded in a two-fold ignorance (our ignorance of our ignorance of what will happen in the future and our ignorance of the illusoriness of the causal nexus). For Wittgenstein, morality will not be a matter of free control over actions and/or attitudes but rather of the feeling of responsibility I have for those actions that happen to be mine and for the value that is borne (*getragen*) in them.

The next six lines on 4.11.16 attempt to make more sense of this feeling of responsibility: they attempt to see if something more can be said – or rather, if anything at all can be said. Wittgenstein begins here by noting that it does seem obvious that “[m]y will fastens on to the world somewhere, and does not fasten on to other things.” For instance, I can move a chair by pushing it. However, I cannot move a chair simply by looking at it and wishing for it to move. I must *do* something, and it is only in action that what I wish to call “my will” fastens onto the world. It fastens to it there where I actually do what it is that I do. Further, it is not enough to do simply what I intend to do: I might
wish that the chair be moved, but this is not the action; the action is what I in fact do, and this is a matter of my muscles, of they way the move and accomplish (or fall short of) what I wished (whether it be pushing the chair or trying to convince someone else to do so). The wish, then, is not the act; the will is; and thus the will is not (just) a wish. The wish relates to some picture of how I would like things to be; the will relates to (or rather accompanies and in some sense also is) the physical action (for which I feel responsible).

But what, we might ask, causes the action? Wittgenstein does not say. He offers only a negative feature of this cause: the will is not a matter of doing something that causes an action. He writes, “The fact that I will an action consists in my performing the action, not in my doing something else which causes the action.” I do not will something, and then find, as a result of that willing, that the action happens. Rather, the action happens, and I find, as a result of the fact that this happened and not something else, that this is what I willed. I may or may not have been what I wished or what I wanted, but there is the (inescapable) fact that this is what I willed, and since my will is simply that which accompanies what I do, what I do is somehow (transcendentally) marked as mine. Thus, when I do something I am in action; when I move something I am in motion; when I act, I am willing. When I act, I act, and another does not do it for me or in my place.

Yet once again common sense cries out: “But: I cannot will everything. –” It almost seems as if there should be an exclamation point here, driving home the emphatic sense of frustration at the tractarian attempt to deny what seems so obvious. The ordinary perspective might insist that telling me something like “When I act, I am willing, and

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115 The mark must be transcendental for the tractarian, since it is not a picturable feature in the world. However, it is not “beyond” the world in another realm, accessible only by intuition; it can be recognized in what I do.
willing is nothing more than acting” misses the obvious (from the ordinary perspective) fact that the will is limited: there are some things I can do and some things that I cannot do, and the will is just what demarcates the realm of what I can do. It brings, so to speak, some parts of the world closer to me than others, and these are brought closer to me insofar as I can do what I will, something that is made apparent when I encounter the limits of my willing in what I cannot will. That which I cannot will is (for me) subject to the causal forces of determinism (or perhaps to the will of another, which I can influence), but what I can will escapes that fate, caused as it is by me. So says the “ordinary” person.

Such a response would not be entirely fair to Wittgenstein, since it is not that he is trying to deny what seems so obvious but rather to wonder if things are as obvious as they seem; indeed, he is wondering if they are in fact obvious yet. And so he asks, “But what does it mean to say: ‘I cannot will this?’” If the will is (just) what accompanies action, then saying I cannot will something is saying that I cannot do something. However, it would seem that this is an empirical question, one that can only be determined by trying to do this, whatever “this” happens to be. And so the next question is: “Can I try to will something?” It is not clear from what stance this question is being asked. It seems, on the one hand, as if the everyday person is asking, “Given the rules of this tractarian game, can I at least speak of ‘trying to will something’”? On the other hand, it could just as easily be the tractarian anticipating this response from the common sense perspective: you are now going to be tempted to make a distinction between trying to will something and willing something. However, does the former concept (trying to will something) make sense? It is as if I tried to act and did not act. So I did not act, yes? I try to push the
chair and I fail. Could I then say that I did not push the chair? Perhaps it was just too heavy for me. But if I simply stood in place away from the chair and willed it to move, or if I willed it to move but then made no physical movements (even though I could), then we would say that I simply don’t understand what they word “try” means. But if I earnestly try to move the chair and fail, does it then follow that I did not will the chair to move? According to the tractarian perspective being developed by Wittgenstein, the answer is not that I tried to will the chair and then failed, but rather I wished or desired to do it but was for some reason unable to; it is not that I failed to will it or that my will failed. My will does not have the power to do what it cannot do, and among the things it cannot do is alter how the world stands.

At first glance it might seem that I cannot will (or fail to will) here because, if the will simply accompanies my action, and if I am not performing that action, then my will is not (so to speak) there at all, trying or otherwise. And yet this seems specious. It would seem that we can try to will something in the same sense that we can try to do something: I can try to move the chair and fail, insofar the chair might be too heavy. I willed the attempt, insofar as I attempted. This means that I cannot (at present) move it. (Perhaps I can get help from others, or I can use ropes or something to help me move it.) By extension, it means (for the tractarian) that I cannot at present will what I desire. It may be clear that I wished for it to move, but my wish can only be realized if the event happens, and I can exert my body, but there is only so much it can do. My intention (my wish) might be clear (I want the chair moved), but simply wishing or even really wanting it does not make it so. I must exert myself, and again, there is only so much I can do. This speaks to the “popular sense” in which there are things done by me and things not done
by me, but that this is so stems from the fact that I can only will what I do, and I do not
do everything (let alone everything that I wish).

But this does not get at what now seems most intolerable to Wittgenstein about
the popular sense of the will: what is intolerable is the implied sense of a variable
proximity of the will to the world. This intolerance emerges in what seems to be an
explanation of the insight that the preceding question ("Can I try to will something?")
was perhaps supposed to generate or the false view that it would elicit:

> For the consideration of willing makes it look as if one part of the world
> were closer to me than another (which would be intolerable
> [unerträglich]).

> But, of course, it is undeniable that in a popular sense there are things that
> I do, and other things not done by me.

> In this way then the will would not confront the world as its equivalent,
> which must be impossible.

This variable proximity of the world, according to which some parts of the world are
closer than others, such that the will does not confront the world as its equivalent, is
unbearable. Upon an initial sounding of the line that introduces a sense of the intolerable
(the unerträglich), it is hard not to hear an echo of 6.423: “Of the will as the subject
[Träger] of the ethical we cannot speak.” The will bears value. (Where it bears it from is
not clear.) But we are not speaking yet of value. Nor is the inability to bear here the
inability that might stem from a guilty conscience (one that cannot bear the value its
actions carry with it). Rather, we have an instance of the inability of bearing something
that, as Wittgenstein claims two lines later on 4.11.16, is impossible.116

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116 This inability to bear the impossible is perhaps a motivation for responding to the philosophical
injunction found in remark 6.53: we are told that the right method of philosophy requires us to “always”
provide demonstrations to those who wish to say something metaphysical. The tractarian cannot bear such
attempts, perhaps for reasons having to do with the value borne by certain actions, such that remaining
Why is this variable proximity impossible? From a common sense point of view, it seems quite possible. According to what we might call the “variable proximity thesis” put forth by common sense, there are some parts of the world that “of course” are “closer” to me than others. What this means is that “there are things that I do, and other things that are not done by me.” I take this to mean that what is at issue here is the idea of the will as cause of things in the world, a cause that is somehow potentially beyond the influence of antecedent causes. This is the popular idea of the free will, of the “I can do what I will.” One effect of this idea – aside from its invocation of an object that cannot be pictured and so cannot be put into sentences that can be connected with others in a logical network of relationships – is to create the sense that I do not confront the world as the equivalent of my will. So the explanation of the impossibility of the variable proximity of the will requires us to make sense of what we can call the “equivалency thesis of world and will,” according to which the later confronts the former as its equivalent, such that “[a]ll propositions are of equal value” (6.4).

This equivalency thesis is not dealt with in the Notebooks. In fact, instead of pursuing this line of thought further, Wittgenstein moves back to the distinction between wishing and willing. While it is possible to assume that he simply dropped the one line of thought and picked up the other, it is plausible to assume that he already accepted world/will equivalency as a necessary consequence of the tractarian perspective. While he never states “the world and will are equal,” he does offer enough, in both what precedes this entry in the Notebooks and in what remains (and is introduced in) the physically still and silent (writing nothing and uttering nothing) carries with it badness, a badness which, coupled with the impossibility of what is being said, is simply too much for the will of a tractarian. This would fit with remark 6.423, which echoes this unbearable, since it would be what the will bears (or doesn’t) that presumably has something to do with why I might be moved to speak out against the nonsense (apparent or actual) of another or myself.
Tractatus to warrant this assumption. At the least, there is notion that the world and life are one (5.621), which is introduced as the start of his ethical reflections in the Notebooks (in the “theses” laid down on 11.6.16) and repeated on 24.7.16. If what I am suggesting is so – if he was assuming the certainty of a conclusion from an argument he never articulated – he most likely thought that this certainty was sufficient to end the common sense objection (the objection that surely some parts of the world happen to be closer to me). Thus, it is worth developing this argument here, since it helps to make sense of the final entries on this day and the consequent rejection of the willing subject and the will-as-attitude.

Two tractarian propositions (the first of which is present in the Notebooks) that are of assistance here. The first is the idea that the world and will are logically independent of each other (6.373; it occurs in the Notebooks at 5.7.16, which is the second day of the mystical entries). Wittgenstein immediately illustrates this claim: “Even if everything we wished were to happen, this would only be, so to speak, a favour of fate, for there is no logical connexion between will and world, which would guarantee this, and the assumed physical connexion itself we could not again will.” (6.374). The notion of “willing again” is odd here. We are presented with a possible scenario, one in which everything we wished actually happened. This scenario is presented as a comment on the claim that the world is independent of the will. Apparently, there is some danger that we might think otherwise: we might currently believe or be tempted to believe that the world is (to some extent) dependent on my will. That the tractarian would reject such dependence might seem rather obvious, given 6.37, which asserts that there is no causal necessity but only logical necessity. Thus, nothing to which we commonly refer to as a
“cause” has any (internally) necessary connection to what we refer to “the effect of that cause,” and so the will cannot be said (logically) to cause anything.

But it is not simply that the will cannot cause things in the world the way that other causes cause things in the world. Rather, there is a crucial way in which it makes no sense for the tractarian to speak of in terms of causes at all, whether my will or anything else, since there is nothing (no fact in the world or beyond it) that necessitates that things happen as they do; there is only logical necessity. However, proposition 6.373 seems to assert something more than that, since it ought to seem rather clear, given propositions 6.35 and 6.36, that the will does not cause things to happen. Indeed, if we look back to propositions 6.35 and 6.36, we can see that is does make sense to speak of causality, but what we think of as causality is a feature of the logical network we use to describe events: “Laws, like the law of causation, etc., treat of the network and not of what the network describes” (6.35). In 6.36 we are told what such a law might look or sound like if we could say it – if there were something that was this law and to which a proposition could refer: “If there were a law of causality, it might run: ‘There are natural laws.’ / But that can clearly not be said: it shows itself.” Such laws (or perhaps we should call them “pseudo-laws”) are instead “a priori intuitions [Einsichten] of possible forms of the propositions of science” (6.34). Such insights are the sort of thing we encounter in “logical research,” which is “the investigation of all regularity,” “outside” of which “all is accident” (6.3). Thus, in investigating the regularity of the network with which we attempt to describe the world as fully as possible, we gain insight into the possible propositional forms we can use in such description and into the internal (logical) relations of those forms. But although its tells us something about the world when we see that it
can be thus described (6.342), we must not mistake what we are able to do with such propositional forms with our having discovered some object that makes those forms true or necessary. The forms enable us to describe the world, but there is not some object that is the form. The possibility of such description (as with, say, Newtonian mechanics) “asserts nothing about the world; but this asserts something, namely, that it can be described in that particular way in which as a matter of fact it is described” (6.342). Our ability to do this shows something – it shows that we’ve gained insight into how we can (better) describe the world.

So the fact that one thing happened does not necessitate the happening of another thing. It might look this way, but this is only because we misunderstand our language and its relation to the world, confusing the logical, necessary relations among propositional forms for necessary ontological, causal relations among things. The tractarian would caution us to not confuse the necessity of the regularity of the mesh for necessity in the world that mesh can describe. But if this is so, then it seems like it ought to go without saying that the will can no more cause events than anything else. My will can no more cause a chair to move than a hurricane can. Why then the need to assert that the world is independent of my will? And why the further need to comment on that with propositions that seem murkier than what they attempt to elucidate?

I believe that the will is singled out because of both its unique ontological status and because of the extent to which it will be both bound up with and kept safe from accidence. This can be seen if we keep in mind that the will is (in some sense) not in the world. Thus, the non-necessity of its (purported) causal interaction with things in the world is marked by a difference of some sort – it is different from the non-necessity of
the described causal interactions among two things both of which are in the world. It would seem that we lack a propositional form that could describe the possible relation between the will and something in the world (the problem faced on 4.11.16). At the same time, we might ask for the reason, prior to 6.423, to think of the will as (in some sense) not in the world (but as the bearer of value). Why think of the will this way in this context? What reason would someone new to the *Tractatus* (someone who has not read the *Notebooks*) have for making such a distinction? Indeed, it might seem more likely that, until a reader has reflected in tractarian fashion on the will, s/he would be more likely to think of the will in the “popular sense” as the “I can do what I will.” Or s/he might be more “advanced” and think of it as “phenomenon” of the sort that is “of interest” only to science (i.e., “psychology”) (6.423), a phenomenon that is just one cause among many. Instead, we have a comment motivated by the notion of a nonnatural will or aspect of willing (the will insofar as it bears value in the action itself), the very aspect I’m suggesting that Wittgenstein is trying to pinpoint in these final *Notebook* entries.

My claim here then is that reflections of the sort found in the *Notebook* entries (in particular on 4.11.16) do in fact motivate Wittgenstein’s comment in the 6.373 regarding the independence of the world and will, especially when we consider that those comments are not only coming on the heels of the comment on the unassailable at 6.372 but also just before we move from the 6.3s (the comments on logical investigation as the investigation of all regularity, outside of which all is accidence) to 6.4 (“All propositions are of equal value,” which sets up the claim that a value of value would have to be beyond accidence and so beyond the world). We should thus understand the
independence asserted in 6.373 as also establishing a kind of equivalency between the world and will.

We can begin to get sense of how the independence at 6.373 is also a kind of equivalency by determining what, exactly, is accidental in causal relationships. If, outside of logic, all is accidence, and if the causal nexus does not exist, then there is something “accidental” about the relationship between cause and effect. We saw earlier that this accidence can be understood as where science reaches its terminus: that things happen as they do is ultimately unassailable and to this unassailable force (according to which things happen as they do) Wittgenstein gives the name the ancients gave, i.e., God or Fate. This accidence is evident in what we can and cannot anticipate or foresee (vorausnehmen). We can only anticipate what we ourselves construct; i.e., we can only foresee what logically follows from our elementary propositions (5.556) but not what will actually happen. How do we know what the elementary propositions are? “The application of logic decides what elementary propositions there are” (5.557). However: “What lies in its application logic cannot anticipate” (5.557.). Further still, “no part of our experience is also a priori. / Everything we see could also be otherwise. / Everything we can describe at all could also be otherwise.” (5.634). If this is so – if the relation between a cause and its effect is a contingent (accidental) relation, such that no cause can really be said to (necessarily) cause its effect – and if this is a logical feature of any possible world, then the will can no more be a cause of things in the world than anything else in the world.

But the point, of course, is that we must go further with the will and see that not only can the will not be a cause in this sense, because it is in some sense not in the world.
This extra-worldly will or transcendental aspect of the will seem to point to another
notion of necessity (of non-accidence), since it points to something that seems (at first
(popular) glance) to exist in a relationship to the world that is necessary and causal in
way that distinguishes it as a cause from other causes insofar as this cause is somehow
beyond the world and yet still a cause of what happens in the world. In being beyond the
world, the will is (in the ordinary conception) removed from the regular network of cause
and effect and is said to cause things freely, i.e., in a way not determined by (in-the-
world) antecedent causes. The tractarian is attempting to show us that this is not so, and
one consequence of its not being so is that the will confronts the world as a whole and it
confronts each part of the world as something equal in value: no part of the world is
closer to the will than another.

Once we’ve reached this point (in both the Tractatus and the Notebooks), the
danger is that it seems that we have a notion of will that has been emptied of all meaning
and significance: we have a will that cannot even lord itself over my intentions, let alone
any physical action. Such a will seems to be the very opposite of the ordinary notion of
the will – a mere shadow, the recognition of which gains us nothing. How exactly does
such a will face a world, and how does recognition of it help us to do so?

The answer to this question in the Tractatus gives us the second of the tractarian
remarks that we need in order to understand why variable proximity of the will to the
world is intolerable: it is the claim that all propositions are of equal value (6.4). This
claim follows closely on the heels of 6.374 (separated only by the statement of logical
impossibility and the tractarian notion of color – no small heels!). At first glance, the
proposition would appear to be a straightforward claim about necessity: since the only
thing necessary is logic, and since logic is only a matter of the form of things and of the way in which they are described, and since logically atomic facts are independent of each other (as are, ontologically, cause and effect), it would seem to follow that no proposition is “more necessary” than another. None has special weight, so to speak, or more weight than another. And in saying this, we have quite quickly moved via the ambiguity of the word “value” from the register of logic and necessity to that of ethics and aesthetics. This in turn gives us an even fuller sense of why exactly the variable proximity thesis of the common sense conception of the will is so intolerable: it’s not just that it makes it seem that the will can do some things and not others, but rather (perhaps because of this) it makes it seem that some things are more valuable than others (perhaps because they are the things I can do or are connected to what I wish to do).

The consequences to be drawn from this two-fold intolerability are both counter-intuitive. First, it is “wrong” to say that I (as my will) can do some things more so than others (I can no more move this chair than I can move this mountain) and second, it is “wrong” to say that I ought to value this fact (my desire, say, to eat enough to live) or that fact (that that rock is on that spot of ground over there). And, of course, Wittgenstein’s ability to say that these things are “wrong” depends upon the correctness or greater worth of the tractarian perspective – a perspective that cannot move us (since Wittgenstein cannot will anything, nor can we) and that cannot have more value than another (since all things in this world are of equal value, and the Tractatus is something in this world).

It might be tempting here to claim that surely Wittgenstein “knows” that these claims are not true: of course, the ordinary person might insist, it makes a certain kind of
sense (in spite of what the tractarian claims) to think of ourselves as active, intentional beings with some autonomy and of certain things are more valuable than others. And in the way Wittgenstein talks in both the *Notebooks*, in the preface to the *Tractatus*, in the *Tractatus* itself, and even later in his lectures on ethics and elsewhere, it seems clear that he acknowledges our ability to act meaningfully (autonomously at time and at times with value). But to give into this temptation seems to fall short of the insight that Wittgenstein is attempting to articulate or even generate.

That this is so can be gathered from the final three entries on 4.11.16, in which Wittgenstein finally draws out the implications of the claim that wishing and willing are not exactly separate: although they are not the same (as the popular sense of the will often makes it seem), they are still connected, and this connection is not what we might expect unless we already accept that the will is (merely) an accompaniment. Wittgenstein writes,

> The wish precedes the event, the will accompanies it.

> Suppose that a process were to accompany my wish. Should I have willed the process?

> Would not this accompanying appear accidental in contrast to the compelled [gezwungenen] accompanying of the will?

Wittgenstein begins by reminds himself of the distinction between wishing and willing. He then notes that wishing could be seen as an action: it could be seen as something that I do and so something accompanied by a process within me (just as my moving my arm is accompanied by processes within me, such as those found within my nervous system). If this is so, then wishing might be an action of some kind, and if it is, then it too will be a manifestation of will – something “accompanied” by the will.117

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117 Again, for Schopenhauer, wishing is clearly a manifestation of will, for the will includes not just “definite acts” that lead to deeds and “explicit decisions” (*WWR I* 10) but also “desiring, striving, wishing,
If we treat the aversion to the variable proximity thesis as in part a matter of moving from the claim that the world is dependent (to some extent) on my will and toward the claim that the connection between the will and world is a matter of necessity (it is logically necessary that the two be independent of each other), then we can see here more fully both how deep the repudiation of the will-as-cause is (we don’t even cause our own wishes) and (more importantly perhaps) where the necessity is to be found. For we have here a distinction between the accidental accompaniment of a (physical) process and the compelled (gezwungenen) accompaniment of the will: we might be tempted to find ourselves (and our sense of autonomy) in the wish, but then we mistakenly find our freedom in accidence, when in fact that which is most “me” is not accidental but a kind of Zwang. We might here translate Der Zwang as “compulsion,” but then the danger is that “compulsion” might also be used to describe the process that accompanies the wish. Jones wishes for chocolate, we might say, only because of a compulsion s/he has – an accompanying neurophysiological process that makes it so it cannot (at the present moment) be otherwise. The adjectival gezwungene brings out this element more fully: it denotes something forced or compelled in the sense of being done under some kind of duress and so affected by someone or something else. However, the Zwang at work in or with the will is a different kind of force. Insofar as Zwang can also mean “necessity,” we can say that the will that accompanies all my actions is a force stronger than any accidental force (such as a physical process that compels me but that might, with behavioral or pharmaceutical modification, cease to compel me). We are not, in other words, talking of a certain group of people (such as anankastic personalities as opposed

longing, yearning, hoping […]” (10). A deeper question in this regard might be the question of whether intentionality is at stake: if it is true that I cannot even control my wishes, can I at least be active in what I turn my attention to, which could in turn affect what I wish?
to those without OCD) but of all people. We are all anankastic in the sense implied here. In Schopenhauerian terms, our actions simply manifest our will, our essence, our “what it is that we are,” which in the phenomenal realm is revealed only gradually over time within the empirical course of events.

I’m tempted to say that we are at the mercy of our wills – of that something unassailable beyond which we cannot go in our thinking and that we cannot truly bring into our thinking. And perhaps the plural is misleading: I am at the mercy of my will. The “my” might also be misleading here, implying as it does that I could perhaps be thought to be at the mercy of the will of another, except that “being at the mercy of another” is to think in the world, not at its limit. But the real danger is that I might think of this Zwang as a kind of non-logical necessity and once again as a cause. However, as 6.37 clearly states, there is no such force/necessity: “Einen Zwang, nach dem Eines geschehen müsste, weil etwas anderes geschehen ist, gibt es nicht” (6.37). It is the only mention of such a force in the final work.

But could there then be ein Zwang that does not cause but that instead accompanies? The notion of “accompaniment” seems stronger than mere accidence and yet it cannot be necessity. Instead, we might say that it is here, with this force, that accidence and necessity seem to meet. Or rather, accidence comes to an end: while things could always be otherwise, they are, right here and now, this way. And while it is not necessary that they be this way, they are in fact this way and no other. And just as what is could be otherwise (but stands this way right now), so what I experience could be

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118 “Anankastic Personality Disorder” is a clinical term for Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder, as “anankastic” is a synonym for “obsessive-compulsive.” The word “anankastic,” means “of, relating to, or arising from compulsion” is from the Greek anankastikos “compulsory,” which comes from anankastos “forced (from anank) + -ic (-ikos).” The negation, ananankastos, means “unconstrained.”
otherwise, but that does not change that fact that it is in fact what I am actually
experiencing. It is this feature of how things stand and of what I experience (of the world
as I find it) that I am trying to capture with the phrase “being at the mercy of things.”
And insofar as this Zwang is called “God or Fate,” it is at the mercy of God or Fate that
we find ourselves.

Faced with being at the mercy of things in this fashion, one mistake according to
Wittgenstein would be to think that accidence comes to a stop at what is necessary, with
“What is necessary” understood as “what science can describe.” The ancients, he claims,
did not make this mistake. At the same time, it would be a mistake to describe the insight
of the ancients as one into logical necessity: the world does not depend upon God or Fate
as an effect depends upon its cause or a \( p \) upon a \( q \) in a material conditional. Rather, what
is mysterious is that this is how things are and this is how I experience them, and
although I could it have been otherwise and most likely will not stay this way, it was not
otherwise and it is this way at the moment.\(^{119}\) This is not accidence, and it is not
necessity. Again, it is (for lack perhaps of a better word) what the ancients called “God”
or “Fate.” Following Schopenhauer, we might add chance – Zufall: how things happen to
have fallen out, for reasons we cannot fully surmise. It is \( \text{ein Zwang} \), but not of the sort at
work in logic or science or causality, although it is problematic for the modern outlook,
in that it marks a limit to science, one that raises the problematic and perhaps irresistible
question, What lies beyond?

\(^{119}\) Although there is not time or space to pursue this thought here, I am assuming that Wittgenstein
endorsed some form of what Plato scholars call “Heracliteanism.” This stems from the accidental, continent
nature of the way things stand: that they could always be otherwise involves, at the least, a weak
Heracliteanism, according to which, logically speaking, things are always subject to change, and if they do
not change, that itself is mere chance.
The Final Entries on the Willing Subject (9.11.16 and 19.11.16):

It would seem at this notion of the will, understood as a pure accompaniment without an object which marks my actions as mine, captures a crucial tractarian insight into how we must understand ourselves and how we can come to recognize the transcendence of ourselves and others. However, the only reference to such a notion of the will is brief and cryptic, stating that “[o]f the will as [bearer] of the ethical [reward/punishment] we cannot speak” (6.423). It is as if Wittgenstein more or less gave this notion up, or rather gave up on the need to talk about it, as if it were superfluous or perhaps even misleading. A sense of what might have motivated this decision comes from the final two entries in the Notebooks that make any mention of the will: the follow two sets of entries on 9.11.16 and 19.11.16. In fact, the final line of 19.11.16 is the last time we ever see mention of the willing subject in Wittgenstein’s early work.

There are just six lines total in these two entries: four questions and two statements. At issue for us is what leads Wittgenstein to drop this notion from the Tractatus. Is it this dismissal a direct result of his thoughts on 4.11.16, or does something new enter? And is it really “dropped”? In what sense? The clue, I think, is to be found in the notions of experience and compulsion (such that I can be seen as experiencing what I do as inescapably accompanied by my will) that open up at the end of the 4.11.16 entries and that offer a notion of the will not as attitude but, we might say, simply as the marker of what is mine.

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120 Wittgenstein does, however, discuss the “mystical” aspects of his work one last time: in the final entry in the Notebooks (10.1.17) he discusses (in five lines) the light that suicide throws onto the nature [Wesen] of ethics.
On 9.11.16, Wittgenstein registers two questions and two claims, all having to do with experience (Erfahrung), a notion that makes its first and only appearance in the Notebooks on this day:

Is belief a kind of experience [Erfahrung here and in the following lines]?
Is thought a kind of experience?
All experience is world and does not need the subject.
The act of will is not an experience.

The appearance of all three of these notions (belief as experience, thought as experience, experience as world, and experience not requiring a subject) may seem out of place, if only because, although the notions of belief and experience are explicitly dealt with in the Tractatus, they make no other appearance in the Notebooks as objects of reflection. Further, it has been some time since Wittgenstein focused on the notion of thought, and the notion of the subject has come up only in connection with the idea of the will as an attitude, which has been replaced at this point by the idea of the will as accompaniment (with wishing doing the work of our attitude toward the world). Finally, the notion of an “act of will” returns with a new feature asserted of it: such an act is not an experience (as claim that fits tidily with the tractarian notions of experience and “experience”). As usual, it is not entirely clear what motivates the sudden appearance of these notions after five days of diary silence, but the questions Wittgenstein asks help to set up the two claims on 19.11.16 and the final form his thinking on these issues takes in the Tractatus, in particular with respect to the notions of belief and experience.

121 They do make an appearance, but only incidentally. Thus, on 8.7.16, Wittgenstein speaks of belief in God without reflecting on what “belief” is; further, he routinely describes experiences without reflecting on whether certain things are experiences, although his reflections (in the case of the act of will, for instance) do raise the question of whether we are in fact experiencing anything when we speak of certain experiences (such as an act of will).
We can approach the 9.11.16 questions by recasting the final interrogative distinction of 4.11.16 in terms of experience. The distinction with which he ended on 4.11.16 was one between the accidental accompaniment of a process and the forced accompaniment of the will. In the Tractatus, experience (Erfahrung) is of facts, and since facts are accidental, what we experience is (the) accidental. This notion of experience is found in the first half of the two declarative statements on 9.11.16: “All experience is world.” If this is so, then the will, in being an accompaniment that is not accidental but “forced,” is something “outside” experience of the world. Thus, Wittgenstein concludes that “[t]he act of will is not an experience.”

We saw in the opening chapters why the tractarian would conclude that belief and thought are not experiences: they are not facts in the world that can be pictured by other facts, although this does not mean that they are not related to physiologically processes, such that we can project thoughts and specify beliefs. But this alone does not explain how we are to more fully understand acts of will as such non-experience or why Wittgenstein was led to suddenly frame the issue of the willing subject and its acts in terms of experience (or rather, of not being experience). In order to understand these things more fully, we should try go gain a clearer understanding of what a “non-experience” is.

As we saw in Chapter 4, in discussing the possibility of a transcendent, ineffable value and what we might call an “ethical space” or an ethical dimension to human existence, Stenius speaks in terms of a distinction between Erlebnis and Erfahrung, with the latter denoting our experience of facts and the former our experience of things that cannot be said. He offers the “feeling” of the world as a limited whole as an example of Erlebnis and that it points us toward “a symbol for the unreachable transcendent”
(Stenius 223). To this class of experience we saw that must add the “experience” that something is (the experience needed for logic) and the “experience” that this something is part of a world, and, further, the “experience” of such a world as a limited whole. While “ordinary” experience (experience in the strict tractarian sense of the term) is a matter of indifference and accidence (of how the world is, i.e., of what happens to be the case, which is all of equal value), these pseudo-experiences are a matter of there being such a thing to experience at all. It is awareness or recognition of what is needed for there to be any “how” – the conditions for the how, so to speak. For there to be experience of the “how” there must be something that is, and it must be a regular part of a limited, interconnected whole.

The “experiences” thus stem from our ability to recognize what can be gathered from looking at what shows itself in how the world is (however things happen to stand). Such “experiences” are “necessary” for us to understand logic, language, and the world that language can describe. They are also “necessary” if we are to see the worldly truly and fully and if we are to avoid various confusions. Further, these “experiences” do not come all at once and my having “had” them can be seen in what I do. Ultimately, these “experiences” would lead to a recognition of what is unassailable and thus of the transcendence that irreducibly marks the world and our lives in it. Such “experiences” are mystical only in the limited sense of being inexpressible, but they do not yet involve any intuitive access to objective, non-natural entities.

In Chapter 3, we saw that Stenius attempted to deal with such experience through an application of the distinction between Erlebnis and Erfahrung. The difficulty with Stenius’s attempt is twofold: it is not clear how the two would be distinguished in the
context of tractarian philosophy and it is not clear if the distinction would capture all the erlebt experiences. Stenius’s approach requires that we treat Erlebnis as emotions but not as facts. However, the tractarian can account for emotions – these are neurophysiological events or happenings that can be described. We might instead the distinction as a matter of experience without cognition, such that “regular” experience, in being experience of facts, is experience that can be thought and so pictured and said, while “pseduo” experience cannot be thought. This, in fact, is a distinction central to Schopenhauer’s distinction between thinking and willing. Here the idea would be that there is something completely subjective (in a transcendental sense) about such “experience”: it shapes how I view the world, but I can never rely upon words to fully convey to another just what it is that I underwent and why it shaped me the way it did and led me to experience the world with the valence I experienced. Thus, I could have an experience that could be pictured (described in terms of the facts that constitute it), such as an action, but that picture fail to account for the value I “experience” in the action itself.

What is at issue in such “experience” is something more than (or at least different from) the fact that some people do in fact (as the “everyday” person would say) give different weight to different experiences. For instance, we could perhaps account scientifically for the weight certain experiences have in a person’s life or for the way that one person experiences (i.e., reacts to) the same events or happenings differently from another. The individual has a biography that could account for the weight given to experiences and, as we saw in our discussion of the notion of “seeing as” from 5.5423, the same event or situation is not really the same for two people insofar as they attend to different facts and they do so in reference to different facts. Thus, two people might sit
down to watch *The Thing from Another World* on late night television, and one is slightly traumatized while the other is bored. This is not surprising if one person (the grandfather of the other) first saw the movie as a young child and was terrified by it (such that memories come back and influence the reception of this more recent viewing), while the grandson, who is accustomed to more physically intense and effect-laden movie productions, is bored by it. The tractarian notion of description would allow for a psychologist to account for these differences in this manner utilizing the tractarian notion of *Erfahrung* of the undergoing of some happening that can be pictured and in the more ordinary sense of *Erfahrung* as ongoing experiences that I undergo and from which I learn and draw meaning and build a sense of self. The tractarian approach thus does not preclude talk of the differing psychologically subjective perspectives of individuated human beings, although the way that we talk of such perspectives will need some reform (as we saw above in Part I).

The crucial problem, then, with the *Erlebnis/Erfahrung* distinction is that it could make it seem as if the tractarian non-experiences are subjective in the wrong sense: it might make it seem as if the “subjective” at is issue is psychological and not transcendental. The experience “*that* something is” is not subjective in the sense that it appears to *me* that there is something, but this is just my subjective take on this and in fact it’s not *really* how things are. Rather, this is an “experience” that is, so to speak, always available to someone who can think and who can recognize what is going on with the language with which s/he thinks. Further, certain activity, such as logical investigation, could not happen without this recognition or awareness. The “subjective” element emerges only when we realize that, in seeing what is there to be seen (that
something is), we are not looking at different facts. Thus, we could have two people attending to the same state of affairs (the same set of facts), such that there is no issue of what we might tempted to call “seeing as,” and yet there could be something different about the two people, insofar as the first is struck (while looking at or thinking about what is the case, i.e., about how things stand) by the “fact” *that something is*, while the other person takes no notice of this. However, if we were to try to put this difference into words (by saying, “The one person has the experience *that something is* and the other does not”), we would fail, since the supposed experience has no content – it points to nothing in the world and so is nonsense. (We would have no such trouble with emotional experience.)

If we wish to find some way of putting the distinction between tractarian experience and non-experience into words, we might simply speak of the experience of what can be said versus the “experience” of what can be shown. The presence of the latter can itself also only be shown. For instance, that I have an “experience” “that something is” can be seen in my (successfully) doing logical investigation: that I’ve seen what is there to be shown is itself shown by what I do. It is the mark of a kind of attention to the shape of things and to the way that they hang together in an orderly and thinkable fashion. And it is shown in how I put my words together: since the shape of things is not something that can be named, it must be shown by handling words in the right way (in a way that picture or logically mimics what stands before me and what can logically follow from that).

This connection of the non-experience of the shown with what I do can help us to draw another useful distinction between emotional experience and tractarian pseudo-
experience, one that brings us back to the *Notebook* entries of 4.11.16 and 9.11.16. Emotional experience will be accompanied by biological processes of the sort to which Wittgenstein refers (at the close of the 4.11.16 entries) as accidental (and so it is tractarian *Erfahrung*). This is distinguished from the compelled accompaniment of the will, marking what I do as mine and as the only thing I could have done, given who/what I am. This mark or feature of my actions (the mark of the will) is not something that can be put into words. And, as Wittgenstein writes on 9.11.16, the act of this will is not an experience. So would it be a pseudo-experience of the sort found in logic? In other words, the “experience” needed for logic is ultimately a matter of attention to the regular shape of things, and I show this attention in what I do, and what I do is the mark of this “experience.” So is the situation similar with the will (“that it is,” we might say): is the “act” of such a will a matter of an “experience” that one may or may not have, an “experience” which, if had, can be gathered from what I do? At first glance, it would seem unlikely: my will accompanies all my actions whether I recognize it or not. However, the same could be said of the “experience” needed for logic: it is always the case for us that something is; my failure to recognize this does not mean that the there is nothing there. The regular and limited shape of things is also always “there” regardless of my awareness of it. Thus, I could be said, on tractarian terms, to not be aware of the actual nature of my willing and so to not recognize my will and that way that it marks what I do. What we then need is a sense of what it would look like to see a person with such recognition. (We will look as an example of such recognition when we turn to Nora in the following two chapters.)
The questions would then be, “What is gained by coming to recognize the nature of the will and its acts? And what would be the sign of my having become aware that I cannot experience my acts of will and that my notion of the free will is grounded in ignorance and uncertainty but that my will accompanies all that I do? Further, does not the ‘seeing’ of the will as something ‘show-able’ not put into question the notion of what can be shown, if the shown is just a matter of the possibility of the world (that it is, that is has a regular shape, and that it is limited)?” The answers to these questions depend on what recognition of the will as accompaniment leads to – in other words, what would I do differently if I were to see that the will accompanies my action but does not cause it as an antecedent or influence it as an attitude. The argument that I will develop in the following three chapters is that such recognition is recognition of what I call “the stain of transcendence,” i.e. the way in which others (and myself) are not reducible to propositions and so to science and assaying. In this fashion, the “experience” of recognition at issue here is consistent with the others “experiences” of what can be gathered from what is shown, insofar as it too follows from a recognition of the “experience” of the world as a limited whole. Thus, we would move from the recognition that something is to the recognition that it is part of a world to the recognition that the world is a limited, unassailable whole to the recognition that we are each us marked or stained with a transcendence (an excess, we might simply say) that, if denied in what we do, denies who we are or can be.

Given this notion of experience and “experience,” we can answer the first two questions of 9.11.16 in the negative: no, belief and thought are not experiences, insofar as neither is a picturable event in the world that can be described given the tractarian
semantics. Thought is not described; it is projected. And beliefs are not described; they are specified. We can, of course, scientifically investigate the psycho-physiological processes that constitute believing (such that we specify as true what we do) and thinking (such that we are able to project pictures of the world). These reformations of our understanding of belief and thought are consequences of taking up the tractarian approach to the world.

A similar reformation is needed in our understanding of the will, and Wittgenstein finally begins to draw the lesson – to gather what can be recognized – regarding the will when he realizes that his tractarian reflections lead to this: the recognition that “[a]ll experience is world and does not need the [willing] subject” and that “[t]he act of will is not an experience (9.11.16). We have seen that the act of will is not an experience, and so what remains is to understand why the experience does not need the subject. What this recognition (that the subject is not needed) involves is implied in the final two questions that Wittgenstein ask ten days later on 19.11.16, the last day on which Wittgenstein will address the issues of the will and the subject. There he asks,

What kind of reason is there for the assumption of a willing subject?

Is not *my* world adequate for individuation?

The second question suggests that the reason to assume a willing subject is in order to individuate people from each other. That the will seems to do this is seen in the way that it marks my action as mine, although we might say that the will does this for everyone indiscriminately of who we are. But he idea of a “willing subject” is problematic primarily insofar as we might be tempted to think of this subject as something that it is not – as a kind of entity that that causes actions or that, in having particular attitude
toward the world (one that I could perhaps control), could influence actions. However, this is not the case. Indeed, it is quite the opposite: I am subject to my will just as I am subject to God or Fate. I am at its mercy. Wittgenstein captures this strange relation to the will in one of the early (and longest) “mystical” entries when he twice speaks of an “alien will [fremden Willen]” on which I feel (Gefühl) I depend and “on which I appear (erscheinen) dependent” (8.7.16). This fremde Wille, a strange or alien will, is strange only from the vantage of the ordinary sense of things, according to which I am independent (and free) in my willing and according to which there is nothing more known and immediately accessible than my will.

But if it is true for the tractarian that there is then no reason for the willing subject, since the tractarian already has the resources to account for individuation, why it is not that my action is adequate for individuation. Why do we need the seemingly more expansive notion of my world? An answer to this question should point the way toward the final tractarian stance on these issues, since, indeed, there is no mention of the willing subject and we instead have the claim that “the world is my world” is where the (non-psychological) I occurs in philosophy (5.641). We can connect this claim with two further ideas: the world as I find it (23.5.15; 20.10.16; 5.631) and a comment made on 2.9.16 about my Welt-Erfahrung. We have already seen how, if I were to describe the world as I found it, no mention could be made of my will, although my account of the world would include an account (or “report,” as he writes at 23.5.15 and 5.631) of what I can and cannot do. But an account of what I can and cannot do is insufficient – again, it is my world that marks the presence of the I, not simply my action (which, as we will see in the next chapter, will be marked by value; cf. 6.422). However, my world is not simply a
matter of what I do. As Wittgenstein writes on 2.9.16, taking up the idea of a report on
my world, “I want to report how I found the world. / What others in the world have told
me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world.”
Thus, my world is not limited to my actions or even my experience. It can logically
include all experience, although we might also note that anthropologically speaking it can
include all experience only in a trivial sense (as the form of all that could be said).
Existentially, however, my world is “shaped” by what I experience (“shaped” insofar as
what falls within my purview will be different from what falls within the purview of
another), and what I experience is not simply a matter of my action, as some (perhaps
much) of my experience is a matter of what I passively undergo. The Greek conception of
pathos (in its sense of “that which happens to a person” or “what one has experienced”) speaks
to this aspect of experience, as does German Erlebnis (as “what I live through”). It
is this experience – my experience – that gives me my world, and, insofar as my
experience and the language with which I can describe it (and that in the world to which
such experience and language enables and leads me to attend) plays a crucial role in this
giving, it marks it as mine, just as the will marks my actions as mine.

The insight that opens up here, then, is that the will in this metaphysical sense is
not just what accompanies my actions. It accompanies my experience, too. And this is
shown in what I attend to and what I do not attend to, and in what I see and do not see,
and how I describe my world. In this sense, my world is sufficient to reveal my will. My
world, so to speak, speaks for itself, and we need not invoke other metaphysical entities
such as a willing subject. Instead, we can attend to what I say and do (which I say and do
at the mercy of what I am and God/Fate).
Thus, this will is not an attitude toward some motivating piece of the world. This was the crucial problem with the notions of the will that Wittgenstein investigated in the 4.11.16 entry: they dealt with the will as needing to be “directed to an object” (as Schopenhauer writes at PE 12) and as acting only when occasioned by a motive. But, as we saw, the will cannot fasten onto the world in such a piecemeal sense – this idea is intolerable for the tractarian. However, there is no reason that it cannot be seen in a relation (of accompaniment) to the world as a limited whole, in the sense that remains in the *Tractatus* and that would be required for the possibility of the showing of the “mystical.” This would be closer to the notion of will in its transcendental sense, as an unalterable intelligible character with a unified stance toward the world, one that is revealed in over time in (but not in necessarily caused by or causing) actions.

The will in the sense of a willing subject or attitude thus drops out of the *Tractatus*, as “my world” is a sufficient notion. However, as if to compensate for this loss, or rather to refine the notion of the will, we have the introduction of two notions that makes no explicit appearance in the *Notebooks*: the idea of a “value of value” (6.41) and the idea that this value is found “in the action itself” (6.422). So while the will is not an attitude of the subject toward the world as a (limited) whole but instead is something that I *am*, and while the world is not something I value or have an attitude toward but rather something that I recognize or fail to recognize, the notion of the action itself, where the act of will is found, is where value is found. This does not mean that that the will creates value through intentional or attitudinal relations it takes up toward the world. Rather, the will *bears* value, as it if were a burden placed on it by another, such that what has value is what I do (in itself) within this world and this value is not something I control. And if this
aspect of the action itself is my will, i.e., simply me, then I am what bears value – a value that is not an attitudinal relation but rather something that I discover or “experience” in what I do and recognize, a value that is “borne” in my actions insofar as what I do is marked as good or bad, i.e., as something Angenehmes or Unangenehmes (6.422).

However, although the “will as attitude toward the world” account fails, it has lived on in the secondary literature and tends to support a rather specific view. This is the idea that the will looks out at the world and then chooses to accept it or reject it. Since the world is treated in such accounts as good and/or as unalterable by us, the only path to ethical goodness and happiness is to simply accept the world. Alternately, this notion of the will does not live on fully enough, as in reading that eschew the possibility of a transcendental will and value as meaningful or significant notions (as it the case in both early positivist readings of the Tractatus and the more recent deconstructive readings of the “New Wittgenstein.”) Numerous problems arise with both reading, but addressing them will require us to develop the tractarian notion of “the value that has value” and the way in which it seems to vanish upon reflection, only to stick around in the very heart of action itself. The following chapter looks at the way in which value, upon (tractarian) reflection, does not vanish so much as manifest is unassailable nature. Then, in Chapter 8, I develop an account of this value that has value by focusing on remark 6.422, one of the few remarks in the mystical part of the Tractatus that has no precursor in the Notebooks, will attempt to do just that. In the final chapter, I will develop the notion of the stain of transcendence as the mark of ethical and show the way in which Diamond’s New Wittgenstein, in missing the significance of this mark, endorses the very quietism of the interpreters (the positivist and the ineffabilists) that she seeks to refute.

122 Notable examples include Anscombe, Zemach, McGuiness, Hodges, and Stokhof.
CHAPTER 7: THE VALUE THAT HAS VALUE

“The ethical as such is the universal; as the universal it is in turn the disclosed. Seen as an immediate, no more than sensate and psychic being, the individual is concealed. So his ethical task is to unwrap himself from this concealment and become disclosed in the universal. Thus whenever he wants to remain in concealment, he sins and is in a state of temptation, from which he can emerge only by disclosing himself.” (Fear and Trembling 98)

Introduction:

I believe that the notions of experience and analysis can be used to shed new light on the tractarian notion of value. In what follows, I will for simplicity’s sake use the word “value” to refer to the “value that has value,” which is also “ethical and aesthetic value.” There are other notions of value at work in the Tractatus, such as (explicitly) the value of a variable and (implicitly) the relative value that things have for an individual given his/her unique psycho-physical constitution and development. However, in order to see how this is so, we must first start with the trouble that arises in the Tractatus with respect to value and the analysis of experience: the value that we experience seems to vanish upon analysis. For some (such as the logical positivists), the notion of a transcendent value vanishes completely. For others, such value can persist only as a ontologically queer entity that requires quietist conformism to the way the that world is. For Wittgenstein, however, I believe that what is at issue is a reform of the notion of value along the lines of his reform of other key concepts of traditional philosophical anthropology (such as belief, subject, and will). I will seek in this chapter to gain further understanding into this reform and into such issues as why value does not vanish as fully as might seem it should for the tractarian, why it is that we are tempted to speak of value in the first place, how value arises as an issue for the tractarian, and what a philosopher can do about it. My conclusion will be that the tractarian project depends on a dynamic and paradoxical relation to value: we must “experience” value that vanishes upon analysis if analysis is itself to be possible.
Also at issue in this analysis is the will and the way that it bears value. At the end of the previous chapter, I concluded that the notions of will-as-cause and will-as-attitude are replaced by a notion of the will that we could call “will-as-value.” With this phrasing I hope to capture not just the sense of “being at the mercy of things” (a sense which the causal and attitudinal notions of will fail to capture) but also the way in which the will is tied to the variable limits of the world and to happiness. Wittgenstein claims that this variableness and this happiness are somehow a matter of the will bearing value in such a way that the world as I find it can go from happy one moment to unhappy the next and can do so for reasons that cannot be described (although perhaps they can to some extent be shown). What I have in mind (and what I think Wittgenstein had in mind) is a process in which one wishes for or wants something and finds that the individual things that one does do not bring that wished-for something into being, only to find (after repeated failure, most likely) that what was needed was not a particular act of some kind but a change in one’s “way of life,” for lack of a better (or more tractarian) term. I do not intend by “a change in one’s way of life” a mere change of attitude, as if one decides to buck up in the face of failure and persist with whatever it is that one is doing, nor do I intend a mere change of tactics in how I approach the world and attempt to influence it. Both changes (changing one’s attitude from frustrated to hopeful and changing one’s tactics) miss the mark in that both still attribute a causal function to the will and both leave intact the dissonance between the world that one claims to want and the world that one continues to find oneself in. In viewing the will as a source of change, one treats oneself as all-sufficient – as the source of the problem and its solution, i.e., as having what is needed to solve problems ultimately of my own making. In the terms of
Wittgenstein’s beloved *Peer Gynt* (Ibsen’s last verse drama), one lives according to the motto of trolls (“To thine own self be all-sufficient”) instead of humans (“To thine own self be true”). Indeed, in the early post-Brusilov entries, there is very much a troll-like element of ethical solipsism – of self-sufficiency – in Wittgenstein’s notion of happiness, a form of solipsism that I believe has been shorn away in the *Tractatus*.

**An Exemplar for Our Consideration: Nora and Torvald**

By way of an introductory illustration to guide us through an investigation of these issues and those in following chapters, I wish to make use of the characters of Nora and her husband Torvald from Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. While various descriptions of Nora (and of Torvald) are possible, it seems plausible to say that, at the least, Nora wishes to be happy. She also wishes to be a good wife. To that end, when she finds out that her husband is ill and needs an extended vacation in order to recover, Nora does the following: (a) knowing (she claims) that he will refuse to take the trip in order to recover from an illness, she convinces him to take the trip for her (keeping his cure concealed from him) and (b) knowing that they cannot afford it, she borrows the money, and (c) knowing that Torvald would not approve of borrowing money, she keeps it a secret from him. This course of action is successful insofar as Torvald’s health improves, but it creates many problems. For instance, Torvald believes that a household built on deceit or borrowed money is a bad one. Torvald also thinks that his household is a good one, since he believes that they are debt free and that there is no deceit. Thus, the world as Torvald finds it is not the world as it is: he is in error about the facts (all of which have equal value). Nora, however, had faced a dilemma: either she could have watched her
husband’s health deteriorate due to his pride and values or she could have taken action that would require Torvald to lead a double life of sorts (one in which he believed his household to be good when it was (on his terms) bad). Nora seems not to have reflected on the consequences or implications of these actions: she acted, doing what was needed to both save her husband and conceal his salvation from him.

The event that puts Nora into crisis (insofar as the event will clearly trigger others that will eventually reveal what Nora has done to Torvald) is when Torvald, who has just been made manager of the local bank, makes it known that he plans to fire Krogstad, who happens to be the man who lent Nora the money for Torvald’s recovery trip. Krogstad plans to reveal the secret if Nora fails to get him his job back. Nora thus has a choice: tell Torvald the facts, or let Krogstad reveal the facts. She finds this state of affairs to be both “nonsense” and “impossible,” and she treats both courses of action (her acting in response to Krogstad’s threat or his acting on his threat) as also being “impossible.” Nora will not tell Torvald herself, but she learns that Krogstad is going to go through with his threat, and she then resolves to kill herself. However, she does not do immediately: she waits, since she first wants to see and be sure that Torvald will try to save her, most likely (as she envisioned it) by taking the blame upon himself. Only then will she kill herself, since it will be known that she is sacrificing herself for him in order to save him from sacrificing himself for her. (Thus, she will again save him, and this time the salvation will be a secret not to Torvald but only to the rest of the world). But Torvald, upon finally receiving and reading the letter from Krogstad that explains all, shows Nora something completely (for her) unexpected: he has no desire to save her or to take the blame upon himself. He clearly wishes only to save himself. This, we might say, is a fact. But upon
seeing this fact – and seeing what it shows about Torvald – everything changes for Nora. The world as she found it before Torvald revealed himself is a completely different world from the world as she finds it now. This change is highlighted when Torvald, soon after reading Krogstad’s initial letter, receives another one in which Krogstad gives Torvald Nora’s IOU: Torvald can now burn it so that no one need ever know about this “sordid” affair. Torvald’s mood alters completely, as he believes that he has now been saved (whereas all was lost just moments before), and he claims that tomorrow Nora will “see everything quite differently” (78), by which he means that she will see that it is all the same as it was before: they are a happy couple with a happy marriage and household and with a solid and respectable life. He in essence asks Nora to be a troll: to call “the same” what is entirely different.

Nora, however, refuses to see things differently from what they are: the man who she thought would sacrifice everything for her has refused to sacrifice anything. He is now a stranger to her. This is the state of affairs (the world as it stands) and although things could perhaps have been otherwise, they were not. And things could be otherwise once again: Nora accepts the possibility of what she calls “the miracle of miracles,” a transformation that would enable them to be married and happy once again. But it would be “false” for them to pretend that the miracle has occurred when it has not. Instead, Nora wishes to go and find herself, claiming that she has a duty to herself (“To thine own self be true!” as the Troll King puts this human duty in Peer Gynt). She is a mere “doll” to her

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124 Since he is a stranger, Nora no longer considers them to be married, as becomes clear in the final lines of the play. A marriage (a real marriage) is, she believes, one between two people who know each other, and since they clearly do not know each other (and she is very much “not there” to be known at this point by either herself or Torvald – she is concealed), they are thus no longer married. In relying upon such reasoning, she is putting the law into question, and so her rejection of their marriage fits with her rejection of contemporary laws. As she says in their final conversation, “I’ve also learnt that the law is different from what I thought; but I simply can’t get it into my head that that particular law is right” (83).
husband (as she was to her father and as her children are to her). But things have now changed, and she is no longer happy, and she will leave in order to educate herself and find herself, whatever that might mean (she cannot at present say).

Thus, in flash of insight, one that was silent and that was perhaps not even obvious until she began to speak, she changed. As the audience (or reader) of the play, we saw what she did. We perhaps realized this flaw in Torvald much sooner than Nora (although this might not have been the case had we been in the audience back in the 1880s and 1890s as the play premiered around Europe to great shock). And we cannot be sure of exactly when things clicked for Nora (although we might say that surely she must have sensed some of this somehow before this final conversion with Torvald). But it seems quite safe to say that we can see that something has changed. She acts differently and speaks differently and says different sorts of things. And she leaves her husband and her children. Her world has changed.

In a trivial sense, of course, this possibility of the world (of how things stand) changing is always there, since there is no (logical) necessity with respect to the way things are now. They need not be this way and they can be otherwise. If they stay the same, it is chance (so to speak), and how they will be next is largely a matter of God/Fate/chance (the only necessity being found in the mesh we use to describe things now, and all that we can predict is what follows from our mesh). The current state of affairs will, if experience is any guide, change in some respects. We get a day older. The weather changes. People are born and they die. So what is so significant about Torvald seeking to save himself? What is so significant about the fact that Nora leaves, slamming the door on her way out? Surely those facts are equal to all the others. How, then, are we
to understand the seemingly obvious – the “fact” that these actions and the propositions with which Ibsen describes them have some sort of ethical (and aesthetic) significance? “The heavy sound of a door being slammed is heard from below” (86) is a proposition, one that describes a possible fact, a possibility that is actualized with each performance of the play. Why might we insist that there is also something more to this proposition – a value that has value and that goes beyond a mere description of fact?

6.42: There Can Be No Ethical Propositions

At 6.42, Wittgenstein tells us that “there can be no ethical propositions.” Further, since ethics and aesthetics are one, this means that there can also be no aesthetic propositions either. In fact, no propositions can “express anything higher” (6.42), when “higher” is understood as a “value that is of value” or “the sense of the world” (6.4).

Setting aside for the moment the question of what “value of value” or “sense of the world” might mean (or if they could mean anything), we might first note that what Wittgenstein is responding to here is in part an experience in the world that seems readily available: we experience people saying things about what is good with respect to both personal conduct and artistic production. We thus experience (most likely on a regular basis) what we at first glance take to be ethical-aesthetic propositions.

So why might we wonder about these propositions? We encounter such propositions every day and some of them give us no pause. Others, of course, trouble us immensely. It seems to be this “troubling” that leads the everyday person to wonder (while a different sort of troubling (an intolerability) leads the tractarian to wonder). It is especially troubling when someone else’s sense of the good clashes with our sense, as it
does in the end with Nora and Torvald. Still, while personal struggles over values are
difficult, the fact that the problem of value arises is a seemingly natural phenomenon,
especially given our propensity to have divergent senses of the good and (if the tractarian
is correct) especially if these divergent senses have no sense.

But what would draw a (tractarian) philosopher into a fray over the nature of such
value? If it is intolerability of the variable proximity thesis, why does the philosopher not
just remain quiet and tolerantly bear the nonsense, realizing that s/he can only utter more
nonsense? What instead propels him/her into an attempt to show us that we don’t know
what we mean when we speak of value (that in fact we don’t know that we cannot mean
in such attempts)?

We can begin with the common story125 told about the Tractarian philosopher
with respect to value: such a philosopher would endorse a stoic harmony with what is the
case (a belief found in both the “standard” and “deconstructive” reading). Questions
immediately arise in response to this story. What if going along with what is the case
makes me unhappy? What if living under an illusion makes me happy? How are these
possibilities ruled out? These questions are never entertained according to the stoic
reading because the assumption is that if you are unhappy, then you are not in tune with
reality, and if you are not in tune with reality, you are not happy. However, this is simply
not what the Tractatus says. Rather, the Tractatus only says that if you are subject to
some nonsense, the most a philosopher can do (other than stating “natural scientific”
propositions) is show you that you have not assigned meaning to some signs in your

125 Again, I take this story to be the one told by commentators ranging from Anscombe and Zemach to
Hacker and Stokhof. Diamond introduces a similar quietist argument, although she does so utilizing a very
different interpretation of Wittgenstein.
propositions when you attempt to say something metaphysical (6.53). The *Tractatus* never says that we *must* do this upon encountering value or that we can *avoid* value or even that “what is the case” will, if seen, be valued in a positive manner and, if accepted, make us happy, nor is it clear how such claims could be adequately defended on tractarian terms.

Given 6.53 and the *Tractatus* itself, it nonetheless seems that the philosopher can engage in the process of analytic critique of value propositions. But this critique will always depend on more than just logic. For instance, what would *motivate* me, the philosopher, to attempt to show you anything? At the least, I must value the process of critique and/or I must value your well-being and find it impaired by your illusion. It might be said that this is not the kind of value in question. Rather, the sort of value that might motivate me is what Wittgenstein would later call hypothetical or relative value. In the context of the early work, we might call it a wish. I can certainly wish to show you that you are speaking nonsense, and yes, all things are equal, but among those egalitarian facts is this one: I wish to confront you, and lo and behold, I am doing it. Thus, my will manifests itself as it accompanies *this* act, for which I am responsible, although nothing can be done about it. (If a “value of value” is at work, it then presumably is to be found at this remove.)

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126 And a key problem here is the question of what puts the tractarian philosopher in a position to *know* that this is how things stand (what warrants his/her suspicion that you are making no sense) and what *justifies* the tractarian actually acting on this knowledge by confronting you with respect to your supposed nonsense. Even more troubling is the fact that the tractarian can say so little about happiness and can easily be faced with the question, Who are you, philosopher, to tell me that I’m not really happy? One can think here of Mrs. Linde, who plays a critical role in forcing the issue between Nora and Torvald: she claims that they must air everything out (as if their lies are a kind of nonsense). But who is she to instigate such confrontation?

127 This is a distinction he makes upon returning to philosophy after his eight-year hiatus; it is found in his 1931 Lecture on Ethics.
Further, I must present my analysis in a way that is likely to be successful in removing the illusion. There will thus be the need to pitch my analysis, and some of that pitch will rely upon what might (upon further analysis) be revealed as being just as illusory as the enervating illusion I wish to remove. (Further still, I must act as if the world depends upon my will – as if I can do what I will.) And what will I have shown when I’m done? In a way, I will have shown an absence. But it will be an absence that, if successfully shown, will be immediately filled by some new sense of the world and so by some sense of value. Thus, the origin of analysis and its success depends on what we value, in that the one offering analysis is motivated by some value and s/he will be targeting the value claims of another (or perhaps him/herself).

And how exactly might I remove any possible confusion over such value? At the very least, I’ll have to confront the location of value. Where is the value you invoke to be found when you make a claim about what is good or about what I ought to do? Is it in the sentence, in the facts, in the psychology of the speaker, or in an ontologically distant (yet intuitively available) realm? To what do terms such as “good” and “duty” refer? It might seem prima facie that we will find that there is no object that “good” names, but perhaps we can clarify what we mean, saying that by “good” we mean “tasty,” or at least, “it is pleasing to me.” But this is not what’s at issue in 6.4 and the comments on it. There, what’s at issue is not an attempt to use a word or words to denote some object or state of affairs in the world. Rather, the value in question is something that we might attempt to apply to facts – to certain facts among others, once all the facts have been accounted for.

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128 At least, this clearly seems to be the case. Value is found in the action; further, value is borne by the will, which is what I am. So, for there to be no value is in some sense for me not to exist. The point of analysis, however, is not to annihilate me. Thus, it seems safe to surmise that, upon analysis, this sense of the value of things vanishes, but some new nonsense will rush into to fill the vacuum left in the wake of analysis.
For instance, take the claim that a certain painting by Rothko is (aesthetically speaking) “good.” It’s likely that, if the tractarian pushes me to be more precise about what I mean when I say that a particular painting (say, one with contrasting shades of black) is good, I will assert further propositions that actually do picture facts – such as “The painting has contrasting shades of black” or propositions that picture the painter’s break with conventions of the time – and assign value to the fact pictured in the proposition.129

The notion of assigning value (other than true or false) to a proposition would strike the tractarian as odd, but that people are tempted to do this is what seems to motivate the comments in 6.4s: they are comments on 6.4 (“All propositions are of equal value.”), which in turn is a comment on 6, which gives us the general form of proposition. Further, the 6.4s follow other comments that deal with the nature of this general form. The essence of the general form is that a proposition says that something is the case. All such propositions are equal in that they show the possibility of some “how” and say that it is true. Whether a particular proposition is in fact true is a contingent matter. Thus, “how” the world is (that it is truly this way) is contingent. But what would it mean to say that it is good that it is this way? I might quickly respond that if the world happens to be as I wish it, then it is good, but the tractarian could then further wonder why a world that happens to meet my wishes is good. (What makes my wishes worth meeting or realizing?) Value in this sense (a value not having to do with truth or with the value of variables but that is yet somehow applied to a fact) would be an attempt to speak not to how something is but to the “fact” that it is. It is as if, having said “how” something is, we then say not that it is true but that it is good. However, logically

129 Or you might claim that your spouse, as your spouse, has certain duties. It is a fact, then, that Nora is Torvald’s wife, and Torvald takes this fact to create certain obligations. We’ll turn to the notion of obligation in the following chapter when we turn to Prichard and proposition 6.422.
speaking, all propositions are of equal value, and, if all propositions are of equal value, then the idea that some cannot be of more value should be evident. So why does Wittgenstein continue his discussion of value? Is it because he is aware that this is not in fact evident to people or is it because a “value of value” is somehow necessary, but not as a property of propositions?130

It seems to me that the answer is “both”: it is both not fully clear to the everyday person that the tractarian philosophy has this consequence and it also somehow “necessary”131 that there be this sort of value. However, if value cannot be a term in a proposition or attributed to a proposition as a whole, then that to which value is ascribed is not clear. It could then perhaps be that a “value of value” can never apply simply to a single proposition but is instead intended to show a non-logical relation that a single proposition has to all others that describe my world: it would have more value than them. But a single proposition can never have more value than the other propositions of the world. There is no fact in the world that “gives” it this value. The value in question – a value that permeates all propositions just as logic does – must thus come from somewhere else. And what else, other than language and logic, is in a relation to my world as a whole? The only answers available in the Tractatus are me (the subject) and God/Fate. A frequent move made at this point132 is to focus on the subject and to claim that, since the subject is beyond the world and in relation to it, “value” simply shows the relation between subject and world, as “true” shows a relation between propositions and

130 As Stokhof has pointed out, necessity is the primary focus of the comments on proposition 6: Wittgenstein deals with non-logical claims to necessity, showing how either they can be reduced to logical necessity or are nonsense.
131 “Necessary” is of course not the right word, insofar as there is only logical necessity. Thus, the notion of necessity in quotation (the “necessary” or pseudo-necessary) is meant to point to the sense in which what is as it is cannot be otherwise (the notion of necessity that the ancients called “God” and “Fate”).
132 This move is made by Zemach, Brockhaus, Hodges, and Stokhof.
state of affairs. However, while truth is shown in a fact-fact relation, neither item in the value relation is a fact, and while the proposition that is true depends (for its truth) on the state of affairs pictured, the “axiological subject” seems to constitute its world in part by somehow delimiting.

What are we to make of this? First, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between particular human agents who act (and think) in the world and the subject. If the latter is (simply) a limit, it is not clear how it can have a relation to the world other than one of limiting. How can it also value it? How can its being the limit of the world also give the world value? The move frequently made here is to claim that the subject is a will. However, while such a Schopenhauerian view is entertained in the Notebooks, I argued (in Chapters 5) that such a view has been dropped in the Tractatus. This does not mean that value does not have a relation to the will; however, if it does, then the will is not something that I control but to which I, the human agent, am subject. It would be, at most, an “alien will” (the characterization used in the Notebooks), one that “makes” me do things, as if I am forced to value things for reasons that cannot possibly (from the logical point of view) be clear to me.

If this is so, we might expect that the less said about the will and value the better, since they are not there to be pictured or known. Anything said about them will be illusory nonsense and will take us, the tractarian might say, from the task at hand, which is (at least in part) the removal of such illusions. So why then is value and the will (as its bearer) mentioned, and at point in the text where we ought to be wary (given all that has preceded this) of such invocations?

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133 This move is also made by Zemach, Brockhaus, Hodges, and Stokhof.
We might think here of Nora. Nora, we might say, could take various courses of action, but they would all fall under the two categories of “stay” and “leave.” She could stay and be quiet or she could stay and try to work thing out through conversation. She could leave and kill herself or she could leave and try to educate herself and see if she can’t understand herself and the world around her (81) and come to a point where she can judge what is right and good (83). So she decides to leave and to live. Why? As the world stood for her at that moment, what was its Sinn, such that she took this particular course of action and not another? Does the “meaning” or “sense” of life – the value that has value – have any influence on what we do? And why was this action – this “duty to herself” – more valuable and more sacred than others?

Given proposition 7, we might expect a tractarian to be silent here. And, in fact, Torvald is reduced to a kind of silence, but only a logical one. This is evident in the dialogue that closes the play; however, they do both speak at great length, and we might (contra the standard and new interpretations of Wittgenstein) wonder why Torvald (or Nora, for that matter) ought to be literally silent at this moment of crisis. Nora has explained her reasons for leaving: she must educate herself (something Torvald cannot do) and she cannot live with Torvald any longer (as he is now a stranger to her and she does not wish to live with a stranger). Then, in the final lines of the play (and their conversation, we find both logical silence and the necessity of speaking.

HELMER. Nora, can I never be anything more than a stranger to you?
NORA [takes her bag]. Ah, Torvald, only by a miracle of miracles …
HELMER. Name it, this miracle of miracles!
NORA. Both you and I would have to change to the point where … Oh, Torvald,
I don’t believe in miracles any more.
HELMER. But I will believe. Name it! Change to the point where …?
NORA. Where we could make a real marriage of our lives together. Goodbye.

[She goes out through the hall door.]

HELMER [sinks down on a chair near the door, and covers his face with his hands]. Nora! Nora! [He rises and looks round.] Empty. She’s gone. [With sudden hope.] The miracle of miracles …?

[The heavy sound of a door being slammed is heard from below.]

Much of this passage is logically silent: yes, there are (imagined or potentially enacted) facts presented, and both the silence and the facts seem (we might say) to be “loaded” with value, both ethical and aesthetic. The prose (we might say) is economical yet powerful, with an austere beauty, and it is a modern exemplar of ethical discourse. But any attempt to voice this ethical and aesthetic value will be “nonsense” from a tractarian perspective. Also, some of what Nora and Torvald utter may be nonsense, although much of what they say has sense. The notion of “being a stranger,” for instance, can make sense. We can define the term “stranger” as “someone who I do not know,” and then we can list the facts that show that Torvald and Nora did not in fact know each other. But the notion of a “miracle” or even a “miracle of miracles” (“the most wonderful thing of all” in a different translation) is more difficult, and seems to be just the sort of thing that is nonsense (a claim supported by the 1931 lecture on ethics). The idea of “changing to a certain point” is also problematic: it is not clear what such change would or could be if Torvald means that he could intentionally alter his character. Further, given the nonexistence of propositional attitudes, combined with the will-independence of the world, the claim “I will believe” is pure nonsense. The word “empty” uttered by Torvald most likely refers to the absence of other humans in the room, and it carries clear metaphorical weight, but this can be described in terms of the possible states of affairs it
is intended to picture (such as despair and anxiety). Then there is the door slamming. The unity of ethical and aesthetic value is best captured in that final stage direction: the off-stage slamming door is powerful in both registers, and is often referred to as “the door slam heard round the world.”

But in looking for the value in the words we are making a mistake, since it cannot be found there. Instead, we must keep in mind that actions, not words, are the locus of the value of value: “There must be some sort of ethical reward and ethical punishment, but this must lie in the action itself.” And we should also remind ourselves that speaking words is of course an act. Thus, while speaking can refer us to the world, it is also be seen as an act and so it can (according to the tractarian) also have value and in it can be found ethical punishment/reward. Further, Wittgenstein writes first not of the will but of such action. It is in actions that value must be found, and so the will involved in value is simply the will involved in action – the will as accompaniment. Thus, the possibility arises of dispensing with the metaphysics of the will and simply focusing on actions. We can then ask: if value cannot be attributed to propositions, then how can it be attributed to actions, and how can an attribution of value to an action be (at the same time) an attribution of value that permeates the world?

Actions are facts and so can be pictured by propositions. However, Wittgenstein’s claim entails that there will always be a component of the action that is not available to picturing simply because it is not part of the logical structure of the world. This is the very feature of acts that so vexed him near the end of his writings on the will and value in the *Notebooks*. This “unavailable” component will be one that is, logically speaking, not

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134 In the context of tractarian silence, it is perhaps worth noting that in the first draft, the play ended in silence; the door slam was added in second draft.
a component at all. It is thus “beyond the world,” with “world” understood in the technical sense as that which can be logically said and experienced (in the tractarian sense). We thus have the perplexing notion of a value that seems to come from “beyond” and that I “experience” and to which I can somehow react even though what I react to is not (logically) available to me in a way that could be described. It is entirely singular: it is there for me, but it is not there for thought. Yet although it is not there for thought (and so not in the world), I find it has some impact on my world and on what I am given to think about – or rather on what I take up in thought. For instance, Nora suddenly entertains the possibility of leaving Torvald in order to educate herself, and, Torvald attempts to convince her to stay by using moral argumentation, she finds herself uttering things about a “duty to herself,” which captures for her the sense that she must do what she is about to do. That which opened up this possibility to her, leading her to speak in this way, and that which fills her with the certainty that this is the right thing to do are not there “in the world” or “in what is said,” yet they are made manifest all the same. Yet although her responses to Torvald mark a kind of certainty that she experiences in her action, she cannot logically “say” what this value or certainty is or that it is clearly there. It is shown.

Nora’s defense of herself also captures the way in which this value is not something that teleologically orients me: it does not direct me to some end but is found in the action I take (even if I believe I am pursuing some end). In fact, not only does such

135 The will can react to this “experience” since it can react to nonsense in the sense of spontaneous engagement in action as a result of an encounter with a pseudo-picture that actually has no propositional content and so no meaning (as it points to nothing in the world).
136 And again, there is nothing wrong for the tractarian with saying that this happens: for instance, I have wants and desires, and these provide ends toward which my energy (my actions and plans and so forth) are directed and oriented.
value not point me toward some end; it cannot be tied to the future except insofar as the picture I have of the future is part of the world as I find it right now. This notion of value takes into account the radical logical disjuncture between what is happening now and what will happen next. The absence of access to the future seems to point to something intrinsic and limited to the present moment: it’s a matter of how things are right now. At the same time, this does not mean that my sense of how things happen right now is devoid of what I presently think of the future and of what expectations (what wishes) I might have. It is rather that the value does not come from that future, a future that logically may not arrive as I wish it. This is the radical logical disjuncture (at least, with respect to temporality, and so perhaps one disjuncture among many) in which Nora finds herself: she seems fully aware of the logical meaningless of her hopes for and thoughts about the future. She is thus guided by the value found in her actions at the present moment, and that moment is shaped by her recognition of the logical meaningless of that hope.

So it is not simply a matter of me (or of Nora) as the psychological entity that has preferences. It is not that Nora simply prefers to go find herself – and prefers it strongly enough to abandon her children. She finds such a preference to be bad, and she is acting to some extent against her preferences. But she is not doing so because of an addiction of some kind or a natural need that overrides her rational decision-making. For instance, I can imagine situation in which I ignore my valuation of my preferences for reasons beyond my control – reasons grounded in my physiology. Highly addictive drugs such as heroin provide an example of this sort of preference. I prefer heroin (this is revealed, say, in my behavior) but I could still find this preference to be bad. (I could then find this act
of “finding the preference to be bad” to be bad: perhaps I would prefer that I just get over my judgmental preferences.) This seems to be the case with Nora: she is aware that most people (at the time) would find her preference (to educate herself at the cost of abandoning her family) to be bad, and she is not even sure herself that it isn’t, but she also feels that it is something she must do. However, the source of this “must” is not something physiological – it is not even something she can fully articulate (and certainly not in words that have tractarian sense). Indeed, she is at the mercy of something beyond what can be said and that nonetheless claims her: she is becoming aware of the anankastic, unassailable side of existence.

So she does have reservations about her preference, yet she is willing to set those reservations aside. It is not that she has some sort of absolute certainty that she is doing the right thing, but her reasoning does come to an end and she acts. An attempt to find a remove at which the evaluative process comes to an end could go on indefinitely, since there could always seem to be that extra vantage from which a more authentic value should arise. This vantage would not in any case provide what we want here, which is some glimpse or understanding of the will bearing value in an action. And it is tempting to say that there (where the will bears the action found in the value that it accompanies) is where things come to an end, but this would be to suggest that the will (or the value) is a cause of the action. But how can value be present in a way that so fundamentally shapes what we do and yet not be a cause and not be something to which we can refer?

In this, value is no less puzzling than other kinds of “experience” in the *Tractatus*. And just as there is no thinking subject according to the Tractatus, there is no valuing subject (no will-as-attitude). It could be that we should not speak of the subject that *does*
value but that *is* value. And I – the human agent who thinks and speaks – am not the subject. Instead, I am, as it were, subject to being subject. I am subject to subjectivity, meaning that I am destined to feel some particular, singular way over which I have no control and to which I can at best respond as if groping in the darkness until some insight strikes or some certainty takes hold.\(^\text{137}\) If this is so, then value can never be a problem that I encounter and attempt to vanish and vanquish through analysis. The attempt to say something logically sensible about value will perhaps vanish – the sense of some logical sense of what was said will be revealed to have never been there – but the “experience” will remain, as might the need to attempt to convey it to others as we are called upon by them to account for ourselves. Indeed, this is the sort of “experience” that gives one access to what the *Tractatus* makes manifest, such that one might then have the need to demonstrate to others that certain of the signs they use have no meaning, i.e., no reference to objects in the world.

Of course, there will have been no experience in all this. Experience here is experience of facts – of what can be described (and of what can be otherwise). This notion of experience remains in the *Tractatus* as far as can be gathered from the few uses

\(^{137}\) Here the story of John Marcher in Henry James’s “The Beast in the Jungle” comes to mind. The “beast” is the future event that will suddenly give Marcher’s life meaning, and the “jungle” is the world (what is the case) out of which it will suddenly leap. It is his “fate” and the “law” of his life: “It isn’t a matter as to which I can *choose*, I can decide for a change. It isn’t one as to which there *can* be a change. It’s in the lap of the gods. One’s in the hands of one’s law – there one is. As to the form the law will take, the way it will operate, that’s its own affair” (James 513). Marcher’s acquaintance (and later friend) Miss Bartram agrees, saying that “of course one’s fate is coming, of course it *has* to come, in its own form and its own way, all the while. Only, you know, the form and the way in your case were to have been – well, something so exceptional and, as one may say, so particularly *your own*” (513). (This fate and law is also discussed on 507, 520-521, 524, 528-529, 531, and 540.) Marcher spends his whole life waiting for this experience, only to realize (if he even realizes correctly) that he missed the moment – or rather, that the moment is his recognition of the moment having been missed. His life now has meaning insofar as he recognizes that it is sign of the life that has no meaning and insofar as he has this one experience in which he realizes that his life has been devoid of experience.
of the word. \(^{138}\) Further, as he concluded on 9.11.16, “The act of will is not an experience.” If the act of will is somehow involved in the bearing of value (the value of value found in actions), and if the act of will is not an experience (although the action is), then what is our relationship to that which is “borne” by the act of will? What is our relationship to the value of value found in action?

We might by way of illustration try here to imagine what Nora experienced upon slamming the door: “I left home and slammed the door, and suddenly everything made sense. I felt safe. I had hope. I knew I was doing the right thing.” There are experiences here – the leaving of the house; the slamming of the door – but there is also something missing in our picture of these facts (the picture we get from Ibsen), insofar as Nora might try to put her experience into speech (perhaps by writing a play) but find that (upon a closer look, and so upon analysis and/or from the perspective of another) there is “nothing” there where she most wishes to point us and place emphasis. And she readily acknowledges this. How, we might ask, did she know this? She ultimately could not say, and yet the certainty is there. But, as with the “experience” that something is, this (the “experience” that “what is” has value as it is or has (in my experience, in my action) the value it has) is no experience at all. Such “experience” is in part the source of the problems that we (as good tractarians) must attempt (because of their intolerability) to vanish. Or rather, since it is not there as we wish to speak of it, what the tractarian must do is help the other to realize his/her mistake (in the hope, I’d imagine, that it will help

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\(^{138}\) At 5.634, Wittgenstein says that no part of our experience can be a priori, since what we can see and describe can be otherwise. At 6.363, he writes that natural laws (such as the law of causality) are “shown” insofar as they harmonize with our experience (better than other possible “laws”). And at 5.552, Wittgenstein attempts to speak of another kind of “experience” that is no experience at all – this is the “experience” needed to understand logic, and it is simply the experience that something is, which is no experience at all. Finally, at 5.553 he speaks of there being no experience by which we can decide certain logical questions.
the other to act well and find the happy world), while at the same time seeing what is there to be seen.

This fits quite well with the tractarian’s commitment to a kind of ineffabilism. Hacker, in defending the legitimacy of the claim that the tractarian is an ineffabilist (contra the New Wittgenstein claim that he was not), offers not only the abundant evidence from the *Tractatus* itself, but, even more tellingly, two letters from the correspondence between Engelmann (one of Wittgenstein’s closest friends in his early period) and Wittgenstein. Hacker observes that “[a]ropos Uhland’s poem ‘Graf Eberhards Weissdorn,’ Wittgenstein wrote: ‘The poem by Uhland is really magnificent. And this is how it is: if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then nothing gets lost. But the unutterable will be – unutterably – contained in what has been uttered’” (Hacker 2000, 372). Hacker concludes (rightly, I believe) that “[t]his suggests that [Wittgenstein] took very seriously indeed the idea that there were things that are inexpressible” (372). The New Wittgenstein rejection of such ineffabilism is premised in part on the claim that the correct philosophical method given in 6.53 (to say only what can be said and to demonstrate to others when the signs they use have no meaning) is *all* the tractarian would do. However, this assumes that the tractarian would refuse to see what is there to be shown – would in fact refuse the very idea of the show-able.139 This is not so: demonstration that a sign is meaningless is not inconsistent with the claim that we have the ability to see what is made manifest through what we say (or with the claim that

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139 The idea the early Wittgenstein (or good tractarian) rejected everything contained in the *Tractatus* (within the “frame” of the preface and propositions 6.53-7) is another central tenet of the New Wittgenstein proponents. Thus, he would reject the claim that the mystical can be made inexpressibly manifest. Numerous commentators (Hacker 2000, Proops 2001, Hintikka 2003, and Koethe 2003 (and, to a limited extent, Costello 2004)) have shown that this position untenable, especially insofar as it actually relies for support upon claims that Wittgenstein makes in the *Tractatus*. 
nonsense, in drawing forth certain reactions from the will which get us to turn our
attention to certain salient features of the world, is useful in this context). As Engelman
himself noted in his memoir:

I attach immense significance to the way in which he formulated his
impression [of the poem]. It seems to me indeed that his discovery of what
a proposition cannot make explicit because it is manifest in it – in my view
the essential core of the Tractatus although only adumbrated in the book –
has found a lasting expression in this letter. (Hacker 2000, 372; quoting
from Engelmann 85)

Thus, the “experience” that attunes us to the value that my world (as it stands) has for me
will play a role in what I choose to say to others, especially insofar as I want them to see
what I think is there to be seen (such as the oppressive treatment of men who treat me as
a doll, as a less than human, as not marked by transcendence).

But if this is so, then what vanishes upon analysis would not be value or the
“experience” of value, a value and an “experience” which seem (prior to our being
subject to a tractarian analysis, at the least) to permeate our lives. In fact, prior to seeing
what the tractarian wishes us to see (prior to achieving the insight in which we see that
there was nothing there, so to speak) the entire activity of analysis will seem infused with

140 So is Anscombe right and Stenius wrong – is the inexpressible made manifest in propositions or special
kind of nonsense? It would seem this adds further support to the claim that Ansbombe, not Stenius, was
correct with respect to the relation between sense and the inexpressible: it is not that nonsense makes the
inexpressible manifest; rather, it is actual propositions that do this (since showing is a feature of
propositions). Yet Stenius also seems to be onto something insofar as nonsense plays a crucial role in
getting us to attend to the world in the right way. And Wittgenstein’s choice of words is perhaps
infelicitous: value is not in the propositions (6.41-6.42), but Wittgenstein does speak (his letter to
Engelmann) of the inexpressible being “contained” in what is said. This is not actually too problematic,
since the logical form of the proposition is also contained in the proposition but expressible by the
proposition. Thus, in saying that value is not in the proposition, this means that there is no sing that
corresponds to an object that is value and no state of affairs that is value. But it also means that in speaking
of value we do not need to point to another world beyond this one – value is indeed found “in” the world of
experience, insofar as value is found in the action itself, and since the action is a fact, then the value must
be found “within” the world in the sense that we can describe the fact. Thus, we do not necessarily need to
utter nonsense to make value manifest, although seeing how pseudo-propositions fail to say sensibly can
shift our attention in a way that enables us to gather what is there to be seen.
this sort of “experience.” And to some extent, this makes sense: if value is found only in
action (only in experience, even if we cannot have an experience of it) then such analysis
suggests the need to actually experience something in order to find the value it has for
one. This claim seems slight less banal if it means that one needs to actually experience
what it is like to see that something is not (that a value of value is not there), but this
would of course be no experience at all. Thus, one must experience one’s “experience” as
being no experience at all. But this does not mean that value ceases to permeate our
lives or, via our action, infuse “my world.” And in the case of Nora, it is precisely this
“experience” that, as a doll, she has had no experience (or rather, no “experience”) at all,
that leads her to stand fast in front of Torvald’s moral reasoning. So there are two sense
of “no experience at all” at work here (that, as a doll, her experience of the world is
limited, and, as such, she has no gathered what is there to be seen), but this “experience”
can show one the need for experience, experience that will be different insofar as it is part
of a process of self-discovering and critical awareness. And this is precisely the sort of
experience that Nora has had: Torvald attempts to dismiss Nora’s resolve to leave him as
a matter of inexperience, as his argument begins, “Oh, you blind, inexperienced …,” but
she cuts him off, readily assenting and claiming, “I must set about getting experience,
Torvald” (82).

Put this way, such analysis of value pseudo-experience serves to reinforce the
uncanny sense that I do not have a will that is a causal force or an attitude that I can
control, since it does not seem that this insight comes when I willingly (so to speak) seek
it. This sense of the uncanny is intensified to the extent that the pseudo-experience in
question seems to dislocate me, placing me outside the world, for the sudden change or

141 Again, the story of Marcher and his “beast” seems highly apropos.
insight involved in “experiencing my experience as no experience at all” requires that nothing in the world has changed and so something somehow not in the world has changed … namely, me. Further, at least one condition for coming to experience such a thing would, perhaps, be coming to know more about the facts of the world, since I would presumably have to have some experience of what could and could not be said before I could sufficiently gather what can and cannot be said. It might not require that I go so far as to investigate the language by which I describe the world, but it would perhaps be necessary to look more closely at the world, as if looking more closely would change my language (meaning my access to the language that I understand) and so would change me and the limit of my world, “waning” or “waxing” it in accord with the value that is found in that change.

Nora’s world clearly “waxes,” while it is Torvald’s that, in his refusal to see what is there to be seen (the stain of transcendence that marks his wife, making her more than a mere doll), “wanes.” One might argue that the facts about Torvald do not change over the course of the play, and so his world could not change; rather, Nora is able to see what she could not see before – she looks more closely at the world, so that it comes to be her world, i.e., so that her world (the world as she finds it) comes to more fully coincide with what it is (with both what is actually the case and what is possible within it but not being actualized at present). In part, the sign of this happening is seen in her finally seeing that Torvald is not a perfect husband (or not even her husband – he is a stranger to her), and she can see this in part because of things she has learned about the law (that the law is not what she thought it was; thus, it’s possible that Torvald might not be who she thought he was). But this means then that there is something that changes – there is a new fact
present: Nora sees facts she formerly did not see. She sees Torvald not as a kind and loving husband but as a controlling and selfish man. This (that she sees this) is a fact. This is how things stand. What is problematic about Torvald, then, is that new facts are present – the world has changed – and he refused to see it. He also refuses to see long-standing facts that have been put before him with greater clarity and force. And, of course, there is the “fact” about Nora, i.e., that which can be gathered from what is made manifest in her actions. (There is hope, of course, for Torvald, as is evidenced by his growing recognition (in the final lines of the play) of what he is failing to see, although his motivation still seems to be to keep things the same.)

So what has changed for Nora and Torvald? Is it simply that multiple perspectives are possible on the same facts, such that the facts are inert until taken up within a subjective perspective? We ought not to embrace a radical perspectivism too quickly here. Wittgenstein, at the end of his dismissal of propositional attitudes and just before dealing with the “experience” needed for logic, discusses a seeming instance of “seeing as,” in which two people seem to see the same fact but see it differently. This takes place 5.5423 regarding the following figure:

![Diagram](image)

As we saw in Chapter 2, the claim at 5.5423 is that what we might call the ordinary account of this square (that I see the same fact now one way and then another, or that I see the fact one way and you see it another) is incorrect; rather we see two distinct facts. The difference is logically irrelevant subjective difference in the focus of the individuals,
and our ability to focus on different things (and change our focus from one thing to another) is a natural capacity and not something mysterious.

We have something similar at work with Nora and Torvald (on a much larger scale) insofar as Torvald, for instance, is like such a box, the constituents of which can be put together to provide different “fronts.” Here, though, something more is at work – a shift of focus that involves something much deeper and more significant that looking at a square figure differently and so seeing a different square. It is not a matter of seeing one fact and then another that is similar in that it is composed of the same parts (but structured differently), but rather of seeing a fact in relation to other facts or failing to see it in such a light. The world as I find it might thus not be how it actually is, and this difference will not be a matter of failing to see how some objects can be arranged into different but similar facts; it will be a matter of looking at some facts and not others, such as the fact that Torvald says that he is a good man but not at the fact the he keeps Nora from gaining experience. Torvald’s character looks different, then, when it is put into relation with other facts at which one might not rather look. Thus, part of what is part of what is crucial in the kind of attention to the world that Wittgenstein associates with the ethical is our ability to focus on the full extent of what they facts are and how they stand together.

There is another, related kind of attention: contemplating the fact as a whole as opposed to a part of a whole. It seems at first glance that this attention is the opposite of the one just described: it is not a matter of finally paying attention to neglected facts and revising how the world stands as a result; rather, it is the act of (so to speak) cutting the fact off from the rest and regarding it as the only fact of my world. The passage where
Wittgenstein discusses this kind of contemplation comes in the *Notebooks* on 8.10.16, less than a month before the extended entries on the will-as-attitude. There are just three entries for the day, and the first is a version of 6.4:

As a thing among things, each thing is equally insignificant; as a world each one equally significant.

If I have been contemplating the stove, and then am told: but now all you know is the stove, my result does indeed seem trivial [kleinlich]. For this represents the matter as if I had studied the stove as one among the many things in the world. But if I was contemplating the stove it was my world, and everything else colourless [blaß] by contrast with it. (Something good about the whole, but bad in details.)

For it is equally possible to take the bare present image as the worthless [nicthige] momentary picture in the whole temporal world, and as the true world [die wahre Welt] among shadows.”

In these entries Wittgenstein is concerned with the possibility of ethics and with how we can separate the good from the bad. The next day’s entry makes it clear that Wittgenstein believes he is on the trail of the connection between ethics and the world, and the following entries (three days later) make further clear that this connection is found in a recognition that all things have equal value (they “stand on the same level”) such that what happens is neither good nor bad. This leads to the conclusion that the claim “Man is the microcosm” is true – “I am my world.” Another three days pass and he takes up this line of thought again, claiming that things are what they are and nothing else and that things have significance only in relation to my will. It seems to be an informal argument: The claim “Things acquire “significance” [Bedeutung] only through their relation to my will” is followed by “For ‘Everything is what it is and not another thing’” (15.10.16). If there is value, and the value is not found in the things, then it must come from
somewhere else, and the will seems to be the only possibility. This sets us on the path that will consume Wittgenstein’s attention until 19.11.16.

In the case of the passage on 8.10.16, we have another instance of “taking as.” In this case, it is a matter of whether I take a fact or facts as a facts in the world and so as a fact among facts or as the world and so as having significance. At 6.41 Wittgenstein will call the significance of the world “the value that has value,” as value that arises in what I do. One thing that I can do is focus on some facts and not others. Thus, the possibility arises that my world can “wax” or “wane” as a result of my focusing exclusively on some facts and not others. In the case of Nora and Torvald, this is certainly the case: almost all other facts fall away, and the focus is exclusively on Nora’s desire to leave and Torvald’s history of having infantilized her. This is, at that moment, their world, and even then they do not focus at all times on the same facts. It is the divergence of what is focused on versus what is dismissed as blaß (anemic), kleinlich (narrow-minded; mean; petty; quibbling; small-minded; stingy; fussy), and nicthige (futile; inane; null and void). These qualities of significant and substantive and worthy versus anemic and petty and inane are ultimately a matter of what is or is not entertained in the look these two take at what is there to be seen.

It is worth noting, in terms of the paradoxical or ironic status of the Tractatus itself, that the problem is phrased in terms of the whole being good while the details are bad, when the problem to be dealt with is the “fact” that the detail can be seen as the whole and good whereas when it is seen as a detail within a whole it is bad (or at least futile, inane, null). It has value or purpose or significance when seen as a (or the) whole and none when it is seen otherwise. So the part (the detail) can be seen as the whole (the
stove can be or become my world and the true world) even though, objectively, the stove really will be just a trivial detail about the world as it is. There is thus the suggestion that the world as I find it is not necessarily that world as it is – all that is the case – since I do not focus on everything, and what will be crucial is what I focus on (excluding other facts) and what I bring within my purview and connect with other facts that I see.

One can see the way in which this reflection on the stove on 8.10.16 leads to the notion of the will-as-attitude that is entertained on 4.11.16, since it might seem that that to which I attend, creating a sense of value (such that some things are bedeutende or nichtige) as it does, is a matter of my exerting my will in order to view the world from a certain perspective, which frames things in a certain way, such that they are significant or inane, which in turn leads me to act one way and not another. Yet, as we have seen, there is something intolerable here for the tractarian. We are more at the mercy of the how things appear to us than such a free and causal notion of the will would allow. Further, the tractarian could not bear to say that the world as it stands could is one in which some things actually are nichtige (since they are equal). Nor could they bear to say that what appears fussy to one (Torvald finding Nora’s quest for experience to be inane) is the value of the whole for another (Nora), since this seems to require an epistemic flexibility fit for trolls. In this respect, then, the value is not in an attitude we take toward the world or in that on which we focus; rather, it arises from what we attend to or fail to attend to.

We picture to ourselves a world, and we do so more or less fully, and the value arises with the act that gives us the world as it now stands. This allows for the possibility of flexibility and change, both of which Nora takes advantage insofar as she sees this and
then brings it to Torvald’s attention. It is a matter of being true to her world and thus to herself.

Recall that the trolls live by the motto “Be enough for yourself!” and not “Be true to yourself!” The idea, as the trolls enact it, is that one should be able to call dirt “gold,” ugly “beautiful,” and imprisonment “freedom.” At first, it seems that Peer Gynt, given his remarkable prevaricative nature, seems well suited for this sort of life. And there is a kind of simplicity to it, one in which one learns to do with very little, since one is prepared to say that it is enough. It’s this basic ability to entertain the possibility that black is white, filth is clean, big is little, and so on (39) that enables one to be all-sufficient while not having much (but perhaps enough). However, Peer, like Nora, does not last long with such falseness, since, when it no longer suits him (or when he no longer believes it) he gives himself away, calling ugly “ugly” and thereby offending the trolls, just as Nora gives herself away, offending her husband. Both refuse to call things what they are not and in so doing they refuse to accept things (the way others do things, such as the trolls or Torvald) as they are.

The problem that Nora has arises precisely when the fussiness ends; previously, she had distracted herself with the quibbling and failed to see the whole. Upon seeing the whole, she is unable initially to put into words what now silently but strongly claims her. However, she does not grope blindly – she is able to put to use the same kind of moral discourse that Torvald uses in an attempt to show her that she is wrong. She uses the language of duty, and speaks of a duty to herself. She presents this duty to herself as one that overrides her duty to her husband and her children. However, remark 6.422 clearly
puts the ordinary notion of duty into question, suggesting that there is some nonsense there. How, then, can we understand Nora’s claim to have a duty to herself?
CHAPTER 8: THE ILLUSION OF OBJECTIVE VALUE

Tractatus 6.422, Prichard’s Illegitimate Question, and Tractarian Despair

Introduction:

Interpreters of the Tractatus have struggled with Wittgenstein’s remarks on value, will, and the subject since the text first appeared. The struggle gained renewed energy with the publication of Wittgenstein’s notebooks from WWI in 1961 and the revelation in 1969 that Wittgenstein had once confessed to Ludwig von Ficker that the point of the Tractatus is an ethical one: “der Sinn des Buches ist ein Ethischer” (Wittgenstein 1969, 35). Nonetheless, the precise nature of Wittgenstein’s ethical point or purpose still eludes us. Indeed, it is not clear whether the Tractatus is supposed to have an ethic in any traditional sense or whether its purpose is to aid in an endeavor that, while itself not constituting a full blown ethics, is nonetheless ethical in nature. In trying to settle this issue, much work has been done to move beyond the influence of Frege and Russell and investigate other possible sources for Wittgenstein’s ethical point. The chief source that has been investigated is Schopenhauer, although some work has been done on the possible influence of Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy. And even where lines of influence are clear – as in Schopenhauer – it has not always been entirely clear what Wittgenstein has accepted or rejected and why.

In this chapter, I wish to add another philosopher to the list of those at whom we should look in trying to better determine the ethical nature of the Tractatus: H. A. Prichard. While there is no record of Wittgenstein having read Prichard, I shall argue that 6.422 bears some uncanny resemblances to Prichard’s essay, “Does Moral Philosophy
Rest on a Mistake?”, which was first published in the journal *Mind* in 1912. In looking at these resemblances, and in looking at what Wittgenstein might have found useful and at what he seems clearly to reject in a view such as Prichard’s, I believe that we can gain further insight into the ethical point of the *Tractatus*. In fact, I believe that imagining how the early Wittgenstein might have read this essay will show that the ethical point of the *Tractatus* is intimately tied to the activity of description and the removal of illusion.

6.422:

Proposition 6.422 runs as follows:

The first thought in setting up an ethical law of the form “thou shalt …” is: And what if I do not do it? But it is clear that ethics has nothing to do with punishment and reward in the ordinary sense. The question as to the consequences of an action must therefore be irrelevant. At least these consequences will not be events. For there must be something right in that formulation of the question. There must be some sort of ethical reward and ethical punishment, but this must lie in the action itself.

(And this is clear also that the reward must be something acceptable [Angenehmes], and the punishment something unacceptable.) (6.422)

The proposition occurs in the context of comments on proposition 6, which gives us the general form of proposition. Much of the tractarian commentary on proposition 6 deals with the issues of necessity and method. We learn (if it was not obvious already) that the tractarian philosopher is committed to the claim that there is only logical necessity (6.37) and that the method for investigating this necessity is investigating all regularity (6.3). This has implications for supposed nonlogical notions of necessity, such as those found in natural science, mathematics, and ethics.
The statements on ethical (and aesthetic) value are in fact comments on 6.4, according to which “[a]ll propositions are of equal value.” The claim of 6.4 follows from the nature of a proposition: each proposition presents a possible state of affairs and says that it is true. This is all that propositions can do, and in doing this they are all of equal value; none has greater weight or significance than any other. However, a seemingly possible *prima facie* counter-example would be moral laws. Thus, someone might say that some propositions, such as “Thou shalt not kill,” seem to clearly have greater value and significance than other, “merely” empirical propositions. Wittgenstein thus turns to investigate this notion of a “value that is of value” – or what he calls *der Sinn der Welt* – at 6.41:

> The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. *In* it there is no value – and if there were, it would be of no value.
> If there is a value that is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. For all happening and being-so is accidental. (6.41)

If this is so, then ethical value must be transcendental. In other words, it must lie outside the world and be inexpressible.

At this point we could perhaps assume that, since this notion of value violates the logic and semantics of the tractarian philosopher, there can be no such thing. We saw this happen with the notion of soul or subject found in “contemporary superficial psychology” (5.5421): the existence of such a soul would lead to violations of the truth-extensional nature of language and so there can be no such thing. In the case of ethical value (as “ordinarily understood”), what would be violated are the claims that there is only logical necessity and that all propositions are of equal value. With respect to the first claim, we find that, on the one hand, ethics could be subject to logical necessity only if there were
ethical propositions in which regularity could be found, while on the other hand, if there is to be only logical necessity, then there cannot also be necessity of a different sort, such as ethical necessity. With respect to the second claim, we saw in the previous two chapters that there cannot be anything in the world that gives more value to one fact (or picture of a fact) over another.

Yet Wittgenstein does not in fact make the negative move and claim that there is no necessity with respect to a “value that has value.” He does quite the opposite, insisting, in 6.422, on a series of what *must* be the case, even though the force of these “musts” does not seem to be grounded in logical necessity. He uses the word five times in the span of just seven sentences. The following *must* be so:

1. The consequences of an action must be irrelevant.
2. There must be something right in the formulation of the question “And what if I don’t do what I ought to do?”
3. There must be some sort of ethical reward and ethical punishment.
4. Ethical reward and punishment must lie in the action itself.
5. Ethical reward and punishment must be something acceptable/pleasant.

What exactly supports the force of these uses of “must”? Why *must* any of these things be so? And why, in fact, would “And what if I don’t do it?” be our first question upon encountering a supposedly ethical proposition of the form “That shalt do (or not do) *x*.”?

In response to the last question – regarding why the question of why I should do what I ought to do would be our first thought – I believe that an answer can at least in part be found by looking at Prichard’s 1912 essay. It is in Prichard’s essay that we first find this question formulated in this way. In fact, Prichard’s critique of the usual responses to this question can help to shed light on the movement of thought in 6.422,
and Prichard’s own response to the question can help to shed light on the response that
the tractarian philosopher.

The Move From 6.421 to 6.422:

The move from 6.421 to 6.422 may well make sense on its own terms. 6.421 states that ethics cannot be expressed, but upon being told this (or reading this) our first
instinct might be to say that this is not so: there are moral laws such as “Thou shalt not
lie.” We might then expect the tractarian philosopher to offer us a logical analysis that
shows that this cannot be so. However, we do not here receive a logical analysis, one in
which we are shown that there are signs for which no meaning is given (cf. 6.53). Instead,
we are told what our first thought would be, as if the tractarian philosopher is a
psychologist (and so not, on his/her terms, a philosopher at all) or even a mind-reader:
“And what if I do not do it?”

As a thought, this interrogative proposition pictures a fact – one in which I fail to
do what is (supposedly) morally forbidden. Thus, clearly I could do the forbidden thing –
it is logically (and most likely physically) possible. Further, what the tractarian envisions
at 6.422 is not an attempt to express (ausdrücken or aussprechen) something ethical but
rather to set it up (Aufstellung). Perhaps the connotation of not simply saying but of doing
something more (arraying; installing; deploying) is misleading, insofar as aufstellen has
the sense of attempting to establish something (as if what is suddenly at issue in 6.422 is
not simply an attempt to say something but to say something that, in being said, has
established a kind of necessity, one that perhaps didn’t exist until the right formulation
was found, i.e., until the words were arrayed or deployed in just the right way). It would
not then be a simple matter of deploying signs (with meanings) in order to say something but rather a matter of deploying signs to say something that, in being said, sets something up. It would be as if it *makes* a fact instead of simply *picturing* one.\(^{142}\)

It could be that this reads a bit too much into the notion of “setting up” an ethical law. However, *aufstellen* can also mean “to draw something up in order to prepare it for use.” Thus, even if this process does not establish something, there is nonetheless still the sense of trying to deploy signs in the right way. This then gives us the sense that that there is something at which we’re looking or at which we aim with our words: the formulation that is the “right” one will be the right one because it points at the fact in the right way. However, the “fact” that we here attempt to picture is an odd one, since it is the “fact” of obligation. It is the “fact” that I should do (or should not do) whatever this ethical law requires (or forbids). It is a “fact” that seems to have something necessary about: it necessitates that I do (or don’t do) something and it makes sense only if my will is connected with the world (since telling me that I must not lie does little good if my will cannot keep by body from lying).

But again, we do not in 6.422 get what we might expect from logical analysis: we are not told that there is no possibility of such a “fact” or of such necessity. Instead we are addressed in terms of what we might be likely to think, i.e., as psychological subjects, in terms of relevance, and in terms of what *must* be the case. Being told what our first thought is is especially odd, as if such a thought is somehow necessary when attempting to set up an ethical law. Why does Wittgenstein proceed in this way? And do we know

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\(^{142}\) Of course, since pictures are facts, in making pictures to ourselves we make facts. What I mean here is that a something is brought into the world through the act of making a picture, but (on technical tractarian terms) nothing is in fact being pictured. It is not, then, that we are making a picture but that in making a picture, we make the fact that it ought to be picturing. In the next paragraph I look at the more plausible idea that there is something we are in fact attempting to picture: a “fact” of a different sort.
enough about the tractarian to explain the claim that the first thought we’d have upon attempting to set up such a law is “And what if I do not do it?” This question seems to conform to 6.53 insofar as it can be seen as an attempt to look for the objects to which my signs point. But this does not seem enough, as it does not explain my urge to look for such a thing in the first place.

It is here the Prichard can help us to make more sense of what brings us to 6.422 and of how Wittgenstein proceeds in the seven sentences of this commentary on 6.42 (where he claims that there can be no ethical propositions and that propositions cannot express anything “higher”). For Prichard, the sense that I ought to follow such a law “arises in our unreflective consciousness” and so we take up our obligation with “unquestioning confidence” (Prichard 16). So what changes us? Prichard claims that “inevitably the appreciation of the degree to which the execution of these obligations is contrary to our interest raises the doubt whether after all these obligations are really obligatory” or whether the sense of obligation is itself an “illusion” (16). We want, in other words, for our confidence to be restored, and so we seek proof in the form of an argument that will convince us in spite of our doubt that we are in fact obligated. This desire or “demand” for such proof is (for Prichard) “illegitimate” since it rests on an erroneous understanding of the moral.

We have, then (according to Prichard), an immediate and certain sense of things (“I ought to do this”) that is undone when it conflicts with what we desire. This conflict then leads to another desire: the desire (or demand) for some proof that I must set aside my desire and do what I (supposedly) ought to do. As we will see below, this demand is (in part) what is at issue in the final discussion between Nora and Torvald – a discussion
that is the first real conversation they have ever had as two (equal) adults. First, however,
I wish to look at the way in which Prichard helps us to make sense not just of this “first
thought” but of the entire trajectory of 6.422. Further, in seeing not just how Wittgenstein
is here similar in his thinking to Prichard but also where he diverges, we can come to
have a better sense of what that value (both aesthetic and ethical) is for the early
Wittgenstein and the tractarian philosopher.

Let us now look more closely at Prichard’s 1912 essay.

Prichard’s Question:

Prichard’s 1912 essay is based on a dissatisfaction that arises when one begins to
wonder what moral philosophy is really about (as Wittgenstein does in the 6.4s). Prichard
argues that the problem is that such philosophy “consists in the attempt to answer an
improper question,” and so the “existence of the whole subject, as usually understood,
rests on a mistake […]” (Prichard 1).

The dissatisfaction arises from the feeling that carrying out an obligation can
sometimes be irksome, and this irksome feeling leads to the same kind of question that
Wittgenstein asks at 6.422 (“And what if I do not do it?”):

[…]

If thoughtful, he [the person who is irked by the supposed obligation] inevitably puts to himself the question: “Is there really a reason why I
should act in the ways in which hitherto I have thought I ought to act?
May I not have been all the time under an illusion in so thinking? Should
not I really be justified in simply trying to have a good time?” (1)

If such a person continues to feel that s/he should act in these ways, then s/he “asks for a

proof that this feeling is justified” (1). The question then is “Why should I do these

143 It is difficult here to not think of the 6.5, which remarks that “[f]or an answer which cannot be expressed
the question too cannot be expressed.” 6.51 then elaborates, claiming that “doubt can exist only where there
is an answer, and this only where something can be said.”
things?” Moral philosophy is seen as “an attempt to supply the answer, i.e. to supply by a process of reflection a proof of the truth of what he and they have prior to reflection believed immediately or without proof” (1-2). Thus, the recognition of a conflict of duty with the satisfaction of inclination leads us to question duty and to wonder if it is in fact not simply an illusion. It is just such a conflict that is assumed at the start of proposition 6.422.

For Prichard, there are two types of answer to the question “And what if I don’t?”: when we see all the facts of the matter, doing an action $A$ is seen to be either conducive to our goodness/happiness or as being/bringing about something that is in itself good. Thus, “the reason “why” is stated in terms either of the agent’s happiness or of the goodness of something involved in the action” (2; emphasis added). Prichard refers to the first option as “justification by profitableness.” The latter is intrinsic goodness, and it in fact seems (at first glance) to be the same answer that is offered in 6.422.

The first tendency, then, is to answer the question in terms of consequences and desires, i.e., in terms of consequences that we do (or should) desire. Prichard calls this tendency “natural” and offers the following anthropological account of it: When we are faced with the question

“Why should we do so and so?” we are satisfied by being convinced either that the doing so will lead to something which we want (e.g. that taking certain medicine will heal our disease), or that the doing so itself, as we see when we appreciate its nature, is something that we want or should like, e.g. playing golf. The formulation of the question implies a state of unwillingness or indifference towards the action, and we are brought into a condition of willingness by the answer. And this process seems to be precisely what we desire when we ask, e.g., “Why should we keep our engagements to our own loss?” for it is just the fact that the keeping our engagements runs counter to the satisfaction of our desires which produced the question. (3)
For Prichard, this answer fails because it does not result in convincing us that we should do this but in making us want to do it. It is perhaps something we should want because it is “for our advantage, or, better still, for our happiness,” but Prichard wants to know why we should be convinced in this manner.

The tractarian philosopher, however, does not spell out an argument for this response to the question, but it s/he endorses a conclusion similar to Prichard’s: the claim in the third sentence of 6.422 implies that we must reject the tendency to answer the question in terms of consequences that follow from the action. The tractarian philosopher would be able to add a further premise in support of this argument: since talk of consequences is in essence talk of the regularity of a logical system, then talk of consequences is talk of propositions and not in fact of ethical value – of that which would supposedly move me to perform a certain action (prior to any experience of the action) or of that which is found in the action itself (discovered only in the experience of the action). This insight, of course, leaves open (as we read the third sentence of 6.422) the question of whether such value is anticipated or found only in experience.

According to Prichard, the former (the claim according to which we anticipate some value and this anticipation makes us want to do or not do the action) fails. Since this answer fails, the other option for Prichard is to turn to a notion of intrinsic goodness. Here we are pleased because we appeal not to desire but to “something impersonal and objective” (3), i.e., to intrinsic value. Prichard rejects the claim that this intrinsic goodness could be found in the events to which the moral act leads, since then we have the same problems we had with the first response. Instead, the intrinsic value response must be that “the act is good in itself and that its intrinsic goodness is the reason why it
ought to be done” (5; emphasis added). Prichard claims that this has always been the stronger argument, appealing as it does to the sense of immediacy that our moral convictions entail. Further, we are often most willing to ascribe intrinsic goodness to moral actions.

These steps in Prichard’s argument can help us to make some sense of both the order and the content of the fourth, fifth, and sixth sentences of proposition 6.422. The tractarian philosopher would seem to agree that the “consequences” (that to which a good act would lead or that would motivate us to perform the good act) cannot be “events,” whether those events are simply things we desire because they bring us advantage or whether those events themselves are intrinsically good. To reduce ethical value to what is desired is to reduce it to something empirical (to the accidental happenings of the world), while to place ethical value in some future event is also to reduce it to a possible state of affairs or even simply to a picture of what could logically follow from what can be said to be the case right now. This would then leave us with the notion offered by Prichard: the idea that ethical value is a matter of the intrinsic value of the action itself, which is explicitly stated in the sixth sentence of 6.422.

However, this response to our first thought (“And what if I do not do it?”) fails for Prichard since it leads to the problem faced by the Kantian good will. The problem here is that when we approve of certain actions as good, we do so, according to Prichard, “in respect of the motive” (6). We are thus dealing with actions that have been completed and for which the motive is (assumed to be) known. These actions will be motivated either by a sense of duty or by “a desire prompted by some good emotion” (6), benevolence in particular. This then leads to a supposed dilemma, which I’ve recreated as follows:
Horn 1: If the first case, then we attribute goodness to an action only if it is done from recognition that it is right, and then the goodness of the action is explained by – and does not explain – the sense of obligation.

Horn 2: If the second case, then we attribute goodness to an action only if it is done from an intrinsically good desire, and then we believe that we ought to do that which is prompted by a desire to do it, which is the justification by profitableness that we have already rejected.

Prichard claims that this dilemma stems from the fallacy of assuming that the value of an act has anything to do with motives. The proper notion of action is, for Prichard, not what he calls the fuller sense (of a physical act, including the (psychological) motive “behind” the act) but the narrower sense (“the conscious origination of something”). According to the narrow sense of action, the same action can be occasioned by different motives. Reflection on the ought thus “inevitably” involves thinking in “abstraction from the motive” (7). Whenever we act, we will most likely act from a motive, but we are not interested in what motivates me to perform a certain (moral) action; we are interested in why I ought to do it, regardless of what does in the end motivate me to do it. This continues to resonate with 6.422, as the tractarian philosopher also removes the source of ethical value from any consideration of motive: such value is not found in the motive with which we perform the action but rather in the action itself.

What I have so far looked it is only the negative part of Prichard’s essay (explaining what moral value is not), and I believe that it enables us to make sense of the order of claims in 6.422. However, when we turn to the positive part of Prichard’s essay, in which he attempts to answer the question of what moral value (and, by extension, moral philosophy) is, we begin to see where and how Wittgenstein (and the tractarian philosopher) would depart from Prichard’s approach. Prichard will ultimately endorse a form of intuitionism that currently goes by the name of either moral pluralism or moral
particularism (depending on how we interpret the specifics of Prichard’s stance). Thus, to
the question of “What is moral value?” Prichard answers that it is something nonnatural
that I intuit. We have already seen that the tractarian would be wary of such intuitionism,
and by developing Prichard’s answer we will be better able to see why.

Prichard’s Answer:

The answer that Prichard supplies to our question (“And what if I don’t?”) is
really quite simple:

The sense of obligation to do, or of the rightness of, an action of a
particular kind is absolutely underivative or immediate. The rightness of
an action consists in its being the origination of something of a certain
kind A in a situation of a certain kind, a situation in a certain relation B of
the agent to others or to his own nature. (7)

The answer involves the originating of something of a certain kind, and entails that we
may have to think through the consequences of the action to see what would really result
from the action and to see all the relations involved in the situation in which we would
originate A. Thus, that that moves me is not something found in the action itself; rather, I
am moved by an immediate apprehension of some quality found in the complete state of
affairs that I will originate. Two kinds of activity are necessary for me to do this. I must
survey the acts “by which [I] shall originate A in a relation B”; doing this involves no
moral thinking (rather, in distinction from such thinking, it involves “general” thinking).
However, this does not mean that no moral thinking is involved, since this survey also
involves the “appreciation [of] the obligation [to do this] immediately or directly” with
“the appreciation being an activity of moral thinking” (8). This appreciation (or
“apprehension,” as Prichard also describes it) “is immediate, in precisely the sense in
which a mathematical apprehension is immediate [...]” (8; emphasis added). Prichard then concludes that “[b]oth apprehensions are immediate in the sense that in both insight into the nature of the subject directly leads us to recognize its possession of the predicate; and it is only stating this fact from the other side to say that in both cases the fact apprehended is self-evident” (8; emphases added). In other words, there is some nonnatural feature (a predicate) that certain possible actions in certain possible situations possess.144

The tractarian would agree with possibility and necessity of the first activity: there is an investigation of the natural facts, in which I get a clear sense of where things now stand and what is likely to follow from various actions insofar as it affects me and/or others. The tractarian would also agree with Prichard that this is thinking: it is the picturing of facts and the prediction of what is likely to follow from what is the case right now. But for the tractarian there is no “general” as opposed to “moral” thinking. There is just thinking. And there is no “moral” thinking, since there are no ethical propositions. Further, apprehension of a predicate (if by predicate we mean some object that can enter into a configuration with others and so form a fact) is not thinking. Finally, value is not an objective, nonnatural entity that we grasp through a faculty of intuition (a faculty that he also rejected with respect to mathematics and logic: there are no mathematical or logical objects that we intuitively apprehend).

Thus, while both Prichard and the tractarian reject the notion that there is moral knowledge of the sort that would enable us to prove that we must perform a particular action, they diverge insofar as Prichard believes that this sense of obligation is objective,

144 Also, this feature is not a “right-making” feature, i.e., there is not some feature that, when present, makes an action obligatory. Rather, the feature that I directly apprehend just is the very obligatoriness of the action.
attaching to certain kinds of actions categorically, and that this is what we can see and show to others. It might at first seem that the tractarian philosopher would support this notion of an objective, absolute, and necessary character of value that can be seen and shown. In his recent book on the ethics and ontology of the *Tractatus*, Martin Stokhof attempts to make such an argument. However, this conception of ethical value can only (at best) be inferred from the logic and ontology of the *Tractatus*, perhaps in the following way: “Everything that is subjective, relative, and contingent belongs to the world of facts; if ethical value were subjective or relative or contingent, it would belong to our world, but that is explicitly denied in the *Tractatus*. Value must therefore be objective, absolute, and necessary.” Yet even Stokhof asserts that value is not an intuitable entity in the *Tractatus*. Thus, it would seem that he misreads the negative characterization of value at 6.41: value is not subjective, relative, or contingent merely in the negative sense of being nonsubjective, nonrelative, and noncontingent. But this does not necessarily characterize an objective, universal, necessary entity: nothing positive is expressed by such a characterization.145

Yet there is a positive insight that follows from what Prichard has said, and it seems to point toward what Wittgenstein might have had in mind when he spoke of an ethical point to the *Tractatus*. Prichard actually calls it “the negative side” of his reply to the question of why we ought to perform some action:

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145 Stokhof attempts to offer a more positive characterization of value by speaking of “a nondiscursive access (Stokhof 300 nt. 76) to value, an access that is not “some kind of revelatory link” (243). This is plausible, although this form of access can also be used to describe our access to all that is shown: it is thus our access to logic, ontology, the subject, and so on. It alone does not distinguish value from other things to which we have access. However, Stokhof is not able to offer much more. He rightly refuses the ontological temptation, i.e., the view that ethical values are ontologically transcendent and outside the world in the sense that they are “in some otherworldly, platonic realm” (236; 245) and that they constitute “an ontologically separate domain by themselves” (242). But he also refers to the nondiscursive access to value as “a kind of noncognitive knowledge” (297 nt. 43), which seems to invoke the very otherworldly realm of (intuitably accessible) ethical values that Stokhof is elsewhere to reject.
The negative side of all this is, of course, that we do not come to appreciate an obligation by an argument, i.e. by a process of non-moral thinking, and that, in particular, we do not do so by an argument of which a premise is the ethical but not moral activity of appreciating the goodness either of the act or of a consequence of the act […] (9)

The point I wish to draw from this “negative side” of Prichard’s response is that ethical engagement with another person does not take place through arguments that would change how the other person thinks. Instead, we would need descriptions: if there is something to be made sense of or something to be seen, it can only happen if we have the clearest picture of things (of, say, a wife’s ability to recognize that her husband has infantilized or objectified her). And, as Prichard’s examples show, the clarity here is not (to speak in tractarian terms) one of reducing the world to logical symbols, but rather using language to concretely and explicitly capture the state of affairs before us and the states of affairs that could logically follow from various possible actions. (Prichard would, I think, agree with this positive insight that emerges from the negative side of his argument; it is at least consistent with the conclusions he draws in the essay.)

I will return to this notion of description and its relation to the ethical in the Tractatus (and specifically in 6.422) in a moment, but I first wish to pick up a second insight that the early Wittgenstein could have taken from or recognized in Prichard. This insight comes from Prichard’s critique of Aristotle. Aristotle is, for Prichard, disappointing because Aristotle does not do what we as moral philosophers want him to do, viz. to convince us that we really out to do what in our non-reflective consciousness we have hitherto believed we ought to do, or if not, to tell us what, if any, are the other things which we really ought to do, and to prove to us that he is right. Now if what I have just been contending is true, a systematic account of the virtuous character cannot possibly satisfy this demand. (13)
He thus faults Aristotle for leading us to think at times that he can satisfy this demand when in fact it cannot be satisfied. And this, for Prichard, is precisely the problem: we experience a demand that we cannot satisfy, and we become frustrated when we cannot satisfy it.  

The solution to the problem is then, in essence, to see that there is no problem at all. In other words, Prichard ultimately offers a solution that is markedly similar to the one found in the 6.5s: the tractarian claims that for questions that cannot be asked, there can be no answer, and for problems for which there is no solution, the only solution is coming to see the problem vanish. The perceived question or problem or demand is seen as illegitimate and, as such, an illusion. Prichard likewise concludes that this demand (to give some answer to the question of why I ought to do something) is “illegitimate,” i.e., one that arises when we wonder whether the very demand to do something is itself an illusion:

The sense that we ought to do certain things arises in our unreflective consciousness, being an activity of moral thinking occasioned by the various situations in which we find ourselves. At this stage our attitude to these obligations is one of unquestioning confidence. But inevitably the appreciation of the degree to which the execution of these obligations is contrary to our interest raises the doubt whether after all these obligations are really obligatory, i.e. whether our sense that we ought not to do certain things is not an illusion. We then want to have it proved to us that we ought to do so, i.e. to be convinced of this by a process which, as an argument, is different in kind from our original and unreflective appreciation of it. This demand is, as I have argued, illegitimate. (16)

There is no knowledge that “would satisfy this demand,” and so there is no moral philosophy in this sense. Any search based on this “mistake” is “doomed to failure” (16).

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146 Were Prichard a philosopher of a different temperament, he might have noted that this experience is closely related to the existential attitude of despair discussed by Kierkegaard. It is a recognition of this existential aspect of an unsatisfiable demand that further differentiates Prichard and the early Wittgenstein; I develop this below.
Yet the similarity to the tractarian philosopher ends here, as Prichard fails to take what should be the next logical step: he should see that the idea that we must do something because of some objective, intrinsic feature of states of affairs or actions is also an illusion. Instead, Prichard argues only that the mistake is “supposing the possibility of proving what can only be apprehended directly by an act of moral thinking” (16; emphases added), but he continues to hold fast to the ideas that there is something objective that we can apprehend and that such apprehension is a form of thinking. Further, this demand is (for Prichard) “inevitable until we have carried the process of reflection far enough to realize the self-evidence of our obligations […]” (16). Once we gain this realization, we are to see that moral philosophy consists of the “positive knowledge” of this self-evidence with respect to both obligations and the goodness of certain dispositions (such as virtues). It may not seem like much. However, “since this knowledge may allay doubts which often affect the whole conduct of life, it is, though not extensive, important and even vitally important” (16).

So if I am really convinced that I should do something, the doubt will not arise. And if the doubt arises, then I must look at the situation more closely, and this will require that I have the intellectual and linguistic capacities to more fully describe the situation and what follows from actions taken within it. This in turn will enable me to experience the “remedy” for the problem: “The only remedy lies in actually getting into a situation which occasions the obligation, or – if our imagination be strong enough – in imagining our selves in that situation, and then letting our moral capacities do their work”

147 Of course, as the later Wittgenstein would say, thinking comes to an end and we act – so how can we be certain that we’ve taken our action far enough? Again, the tractarian would reject the idea that the supposition of an objective, intuitable, nonnatural entity would do us any more than the supposition of the possibility of moral proof.
Thus, if I have doubt that I ought to do A in situation B, the remedy is not “any process of general thinking” but “getting face to face with a particular instance of the situation B, and then directly appreciating the obligation to originate A in that situation” (17). We have here the same analogy that Anscombe uses in her attempt to explicate the tractarian view on ethics: she claimed that the subject looks at the world as if it had a face, which can be happy or sad. However, the world (in itself and as it stands) is neither good nor bad. There is no face, since there is nothing in the world that can (according to the tractarian) do the work that Prichard believes value must do.

Wittgenstein Beyond Prichard:

What would it be like to follow the Tractatus beyond Prichard and take seriously the radical implications it may have for ethics? It seems highly likely that the tractarian philosopher (and the early Wittgenstein) would agree with much of Prichard’s critique of the usual responses to the question of why I ought to perform some action and with the way that Prichard shows the question to be illusory and offers, in its place, a remedy that involves more clearly describing situations. But we would then need to join these insights to a more challenging insight: that there is nothing objective and necessary about what is revealed in such situations.

If value were objective and necessary, then the force of the “musts” in 6.422 would speak to what is revealed in a logical analysis of the sort that Prichard offers. But the tractarian philosopher leaves us with something completely different. The source of value is found in the action itself and not (simply) in a set of relationships (among states of affairs that follow from the action, in which the action takes place, or which precedes
the performance of the action) that has, as an apprehensible quality, a sense of obligation about it. Further, the value found in the action itself will have something ‘pleasurable’ or ‘acceptable’ (*angenehm*) about it. However, that may well vary from person to person and from situation to situation in a way that would render illegitimate an attempt to offer a list of those actions that we must – objectively speaking – do or not do.

Prichard clearly fails to take the next step on the tractarian ladder – the rejection of the objective nonnatural property. We can see this insofar as the mistake being made with the respect to the question “And what if I don’t do it?” is one of demanding proof. Such proof will fail, according to Prichard, because there is only something to be seen, and this something is an objective nonnatural property. However, for the tractarian, the mistake is not simply a matter of demanding proof where none can be offered but persisting in the belief that there is something objective that is there for all to see and that can be known. But even if this is so (even if the tractarian is right), it is not clear what we gain by following the tractarian in going a step beyond Prichard: we do not give up the sense that there is something to be shown/seen, but only that this something is objective and knowable; we remain with something nonnatural (insofar as it is not something that can be described in the propositions of the natural sciences) and transcendent. But is there nothing positive that can be said here? Is the tractarian insight purely negative: the insight simply that there is no proof of the moral and no moral knowledge or experience or objectivity? If this is so, on what basis can the tractarian nonetheless entertain the possibility that there *is* a “value that has value,” and that if there is such a thing it is found “beyond” the world “in the action itself”?
If there is knowledge, it would be only a pseudo-knowledge, something akin to the pseudo-experience of logic. (This is the route toward which Stokhof points.) Here grammar seems to trip us up: if there is something at work (even something that can be seen but not put into sensible words), it seems hard to evade the sense that there is some sort of access to it and so, at the least, a knowledge available by “acquaintance,” so to speak: the kind of “knowing” or certainty that comes from having undergone something, even if no one else underwent quite the same thing. It is this “subjective,” even singular sense of value to which the tractarian seems to point us, a notion of value more radical than what Prichard was willing to entertain. Indeed, I believe Wittgenstein accepts in a more radical form the negative side of Prichard’s project, an acceptance that precludes the possibility of accepting Prichard’s positive insight. Prichard doesn’t carry his negative insight far enough and so fails to fully realize the radical and challenging dimension of that positive side.

So what, again, does this leave us with? What I would like to suggest here is that we are left with an account of ethics (and aesthetics) that is both more rigorous than what Prichard envisioned but perhaps also more in tune with actual ethical and aesthetic experience. What I would like to suggest is that Wittgenstein carries the particularist element in Prichard’s thinking further toward its consequences, something Wittgenstein could do since he was not as troubled by the metaphysical difficulty of some of his conclusions. But in order to make sense of this claim, it might be helpful to first offer some contemporary philosophical taxonomy of Prichard’s stance.

Prichard was a moral intuitionist. He was one insofar as he endorsed a nonnaturalist moral realism (there are moral properties and they are not natural ones), a
foundationalist moral epistemology (according to which such properties are knowable in virtue of their self-evidence), and ethical pluralism (the belief that there is an “irreducible plurality of fundamental duties, good, and virtues.” However, pluralism has an epistemological side as well as this ontological one: not all pluralists believe that we can systematize this irreducible plurality and thus produce a set of rules that can be applied in any circumstances. Thus, moral particularists (as opposed to moral pluralists, such as Ross) believe that such systematization is not possible, and ultimately everything hinges on the particular circumstances in which we must judge as moral agents (and it hinges upon them in a way that cannot be systematized). As Dancy, the chief proponent of moral particularism, puts it: “Moral Particularism, at its most trenchant, is the claim that there are no defensible moral principles, that moral thought does not consist in the application of moral principles to cases, and that the morally perfect person should not be conceived as the person of principle” (Dancy 2005).

Prichard’s uneasy position results from his emphasis on the particular circumstances while also believing that the moral properties of those circumstances are knowable. As a result, “Prichard defended a kind of particularist moral foundationalism, according to which our knowledge of obligation and of value is grounded in our (non-inferentially) apprehending particular cases in which these properties are present. These particular apprehensions are the basis on which we come to grasp the self-evidence of general moral rules” (Timmons 2003). If we can grasp such moral rules, then it would seem that we could codify them (in the fashion of Ross) and work to apply them consistently and rationally in varying circumstances. For the tractarian, however, the emphasis would have to be entirely on the circumstance, as there is nothing there that

148 The three criteria and the quote are from Timmons 2003.
cannot be said. Or rather, if there is something there beyond what can be said, it can be shown (“contained”) in what is said but it cannot be known in the sense that Prichard requires. Prichard is, in essence, looking in the wrong place for a value that has value. He is looking for something out in the world, instead of “within the action itself” or “at the world as a whole.” He seems at first glance to be treating such value as something more ordinary and approachable than (for the tractarian) it actually is, but in actuality he is making it more mysterious than it needs to be: one attends to the circumstances (as Nora and Torvald attempt to do) and then one acts. What one, such as Nora (and perhaps, in the end, Torvald, as he does let her go), sees, is not a value that has value but the world as it stands, including the transcendence that marks human activity and possibility within it, a transcendence that might be defined simply as our ability to see (in our natural, everyday experience) more than we can put into words (although this “more” is not some thing that we see) and the “fact” that things could always be otherwise. It is the denial of this transcendence that is, for the tractarian, the unethical act.

**Tractarian Despair:**

What the tractarian thus offers us is the illegitimacy of the demand that Prichard himself makes: the demand that there be something of value in the world, i.e., in what happens as it happens. The tractarian claims that we will come up empty: this demand can no more be satisfied than the demand for proof of our obligations. It is the sort of demand that can lead to the kind of despair that Søren Kierkegaard details in *The Sickness Unto Death*. While I do not here wish to put too much emphasis on a connection
with Kierkegaard,\(^{149}\) there are some basic ideas from that text than can help us to put into words what is at work in the “next step” taken by the tractarian toward the transcendent.

While I hesitate to simplify Kierkegaard’s conception of despair, the following characterization fits (I believe) what is at work in the 6.4s and in the step beyond moral intuitionism: despair stems from the fact that the self is related to itself and to another (a “Power,” in Kierkegaard’s terms) on whom it depends, and despair is ultimately reducible to “despairingly willing to be oneself” (147). This despair is eradicated when the self is willing to be itself in recognition of its dependence on this Power.

At first it seems that the despair is over something – namely, over a self that I wish to be rid of because it did not become what I wished it to become, a despair that initially nearly drives Nora to kill herself and a despair that seems to afflict Torvald at the end of the play. Kierkegaard uses the example of a man who desires to be “Either Caesar or nothing” and then becomes “nothing.” Kierkegaard is careful to note that the despair is not at the failure but at having to live with the self that failed:

Thus when the ambitious man whose watchword was “Either Caesar or nothing” does not become Caesar, he is in despair thereat. But this signifies something else, namely, that precisely because he did not become Caesar he now cannot endure to be himself. So properly he is not in despair over the fact that he did not become Caesar, but he is in despair over himself for the fact that he did not become Caesar. [...I]t is not the fact that he did not become Caesar which is intolerable to him, but the self

\(^{149}\) There is some evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein had already begun to read Kierkegaard while composing the *Tractatus*: the primary piece of evidence is a letter from Bertrand Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, December 20, 1919. In *Letters to Russell*, we read: “I had felt in his book [the *Tractatus*] a flavour of mysticism, but was astonished when I found that he has become a complete mystic. He reads people like Kierkegaard and Angelus Silesius, and he seriously contemplates becoming a monk. It all started from William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*” (Wittgenstein 1974, 82). More speculative evidence is found in the fact that one of those to whom he donated money during the First World War (in the summer of 1914) was “Theodor Haecker, whose German translations of Kierkegaard were published in *Der Brenner*” (Monk 1990, 109). According to Monk, these translations “did much to stimulate the interest of Austrian intellectuals in the Danish philosopher before the First World War” (109). *Der Brenner* was one of the journals in which Wittgenstein later tried to publish the *Tractatus*, and the editor – his friend Ludwig von Ficker – was the one who distributed Wittgenstein’s anonymous donations.
which did not become Caesar is the thing that is intolerable; or, more
correctly, what is intolerable to him is that he cannot get rid of himself.
(152)

It is a matter, then, of failing to “possess” himself and so be himself (152). It is a failure
that would have occurred even if he had become Caesar: he would then “have been rid of
himself in desperation” (152) but this is no better (or different, in the end) than his
inability to be rid of the failed self, since in both cases he is desperate to be who/what he
is not. In both cases, the facts (that he did or did not become Caesar) are not the source
of the despair (of the unhappy world, the tractarian would say); rather, the source is found
in what the despairing person does: he denies himself insofar as he cannot bear himself
and wishes to be what he is not.

But this is only the beginning. It is not enough that I desire to not be myself or to
be rid of myself. I do not fully suffer despair until I despair not (simply) at willing to not
be myself but (rather) at willing to be myself: “A despairing man wants despairingly to
be himself. But if he despairingly wants to be himself, he will not want to get rid of
himself. Yes, so it seems; but if one inspects more closely, one perceives that after all the
contradiction is the same.” It is all the same since to want to be oneself (not rid of
oneself), if it happens despairingly, is to not really want to be oneself. It is a self that one
does not really want to be, hence the despair. Yet one is also not able to end the despair
by simply being content with being what one is not, because (for Kierkagaard) a force
stronger than us compels us to be what we are:

That self which he despairingly wills to be is a self which he is not (for to
will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair);
what he really wills is to tear his self away from the Power which
constituted it. But notwithstanding all his despair, this he is unable to do,
notwithstanding all the efforts of despair, that Power is the stronger, and it
compels him to be the self he does not will to be. But for all that he wills
to be rid of himself, to be rid of the self which he is, in order to be the self he himself has chanced to chose. To be self as he wills to be would be his delight (though in another sense it would be equally in despair), but to be *compelled* to be *self* as he does not will to be is his torment, namely, that he cannot get rid of himself. (153)

I may be able to distract myself from my despair, but I cannot do this forever and I will eventually find myself “nailed” to myself and forced to confront the torment of which I cannot rid myself and the delusion in which I believe that I have succeeded in ridding myself of this torment. It is “eternity” that nails me in this fashion and forces me to confront my torment and delusion, and it does this because having a self is “eternity’s demand upon [the self]” (154), and this demand can ultimately not be avoided. This is where things come to an end and we must act, but it is a demand that can (unlike the demand for proof or something objective that can be seen) be satisfied.

This, I believe, is what we find “in the action itself” that is borne by the will and that changes the world in a way that brings or withdraws happiness. It is the harmony found in the immediacy of what I do with who or what I am, which is shown in my world; unhappiness is the rejection of this. Despair may not be entirely analogous to what Wittgenstein calls unhappiness, but a similar dynamic is at work: there is something in what I do that claims me, and turning away from this demand – what Wittgenstein calls the “performance” of the “task” – is to deny something inescapable. The demand, then, is that I assent to what I am as it is revealed to me in what I do. Or, as Kierkegaard puts it, “to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair” (153). This is something singular – something available only to me that I can nonetheless struggle to articulate through a process of something like a description of the world as I find it, a process that we might also call *verdichten*, i.e., the process of thickening, concentrating,
or solidifying. Embracing who or what I am cannot happen if I am at odds with the
world, and in order see the world I must be able to picture if fully. But this does not mean
that that I must simply harmonize with the world, since the world can be otherwise and I
might just play a role in what it will become. The tractarian believes that to the extent that
I embrace my world, I can get a better sense of the circumstances in which I must act and
in which my desires are shaped and thus of the task it sets for me, and to the extent that I
can do this I will be happy. This process of solidifying (in language) the world as I find it
also enables me to share it with another so that they too can recognize what is there to be
seen.

The danger of ignoring my world and what I am goes back to the danger of
believing that all can be assayed (the danger of 6.371-6.372): I might believe that I can
assay (by a kind of science or technique) what it is that I must do and whether what I do
will bring me despair or make me happy. In believing this, I run the risk of willing myself
to be something that I am not, thus tearing myself from what is unassailable – the Fate on
which my world and its happiness depends and the value that is borne in how I act within
it. And I must act before I can “experience” the expansion or contraction of my world
that follows upon the value of what I’ve done.

These insights do not invite quietism, since they do not involve an abnegation of
the need to speak (however logically silent my words may be) or to act (however much
the value “experienced” in what I do cannot be pictured). I might will myself to be
someone who remains silent, but if what claims me compels me to speak, then such
silence will only be a kind of despair, one that “wanes” my world. The notion of the
waning world comes from 6.43, where Wittgenstein speaks of the value in my action as
one that changes the limits of the world: the world “must so to speak wax or wane
(zunehmen oder abnehmen) as a whole” (6.43). The implication is that what expands my
world makes me happy and what diminishes it makes me unhappy. It might be possible to
think that this is not such a direct correlation: abnehmen, in the sense of amputation,
might involve cutting off something, such as an illusion. However, it is not clear that the
illusion is a part of my world: it might be a fact that I am subject to an illusion, but this
would limit me, since I’d stop short in a way that seems to miss something vital. To
“amputate” this illusion would open me up to what I’ve been missing – it would expand
my sense of the world as I find it. Further, abnehmen carries it with the sense of decline
and fall, meaning that the world – my sense of what is possible – fails me in such a case.
It is a kind of closure to what is and what can be. Kierkegaard describes despair as a
condition in which “being is related to the ability to be as a fall” (148), such that we
might think of the abnehmend world as a fallen one, one in which I waste away.

And what must I do when I face a fallen world, a world in which I may well
despair because I wish to be something other than I am? How do I become attuned to that
which may not appear to another? How, in other words, do I become open to that which
claims me, to the Fate or Power to which I am subject and without a recognition of which
I cannot be happy? And how do I begin to grope for the words that, in terms of reference,
cannot but fail to hit their mark? One thing may perhaps be certain: the sign that I have
hit the mark will be found in my action – in the action itself. It will be an action in which
the self and its dependence on transcendence has been accepted, and this will, for the
tractarian, be marked by the absence of despair – by a feeling of being calm and
collected. Indeed, as the later Wittgenstein would say, thinking comes to an end and we
act. For Prichard, there is supposed to then be something seen that moves me, whereas for Wittgenstein there is “nothing” (meaning that language cannot enable me to fully say what I have undergone); instead, what is crucial is what is “experienced” in the act of seeing the circumstances and perhaps in coming to a decision or feeling some new desire take hold of me, such that I begin to will to be that self that I truly am.

Such a willing is not a matter of being correct insofar as it is not a matter of there being some objective feature of the world that would make what I do right or wrong (insofar as I acted in accord with or contrary to some feature of the world, one against which others could judge me) or that obligates me to do something (such that I must do it). First, there is no value out there in the world – there is nothing that could do what Prichard wants. Second, since the tractarian insists that there is still a value of value, we must look elsewhere, and we see that it is in the action itself, meaning that my will bears this value. Third, the world changes (for me) as a result of what is borne, and this may remain mysterious to another, in spite of what I might feel compelled to say in an attempt to give an account of myself – an attempt that may, in spite of its being logical nonsense, be successful in showing to another what I am about. Indeed, such an attempt may be crucial if I am to avoid the despair of not being what I am and of being disengaged from or ignorant of the world as I find it.

Nora’s (Pseudo) Conflict of Duties:

Prichard, of course, is hardly indifferent to disengagement from or ignorance of the world. He is quite clear regarding the importance of the “preliminaries,” i.e, the general thinking in which we follow out the consequences of a proposed action and take
into account our relation to others involved in the situation. With respect to seeming
conflicts of duties in which I believe there is an obligation present while another does not,
Prichard argues that one reason the other might fail to see the obligation (assuming that I
am correct in seeing it) is “due to the fact that, owing to a lack of thoughtfulness, what I
have called the preliminaries to this recognition are incomplete” (citation). If the other
does not see the world as it stands, s/he cannot possibly see the obligatoriness of
proposed actions within the state of affairs.

Prichard, in explaining conflicts over whether duty exists, actually appears closer
to the tractarian philosopher than his insistence on an objective, apprehensible feature
seems to warrant. Indeed, the real difference might simply be that the tractarian believes
that we gain nothing in talking of something objective or of it as “predicate” or “feature”
of what we see. But in case of such conflict, both the Prichardian and the tractarian will
most likely act the same way: they both have to get the other to see the world more fully,
and this involves getting the other to see facts s/he is ignoring or give up false beliefs
(saying that something possible is actual when it is not) and illusions. What then claims
us when this is all said and done is not something that we can articulate, but we can react
to it. Nonsense such as talk of an objective feature of obligatoriness might be useful in
getting us to look at the world in a new or useful way, but it can just as often cause
problems, as when we feel we have access to such features and can dispense with
demonstrating something to the other and simply impose it upon him/her.

Prichard thus rejects that there are actual conflicts of duty in this sense. He also
rejects the idea that there are conflicts of duty in a different sense: there cannot be two
possible actions within a given situation both of which are equally obligatory. In the 1912
essay, he claims that, when it seems that there are two such actions (ones that in typical situations are each obligatory), when they are both options one will have a greater degree of obligatoriness: “obligation admits of degrees, and that where obligations conflict, the decision of what we ought to do turns not on the question ‘Which of the alternative courses of action will originate the greater good?’ but on the question ‘Which is the greater obligation?’” (Prichard 17) For instance, I will most likely find that telling the truth and acting to save the life of another are obligatory, but I could face a situation in which I must lie in order to save a life. Prichard’s claim is that in that situation, one of the actions (lying to save the life or sacrificing someone for the truth) will have more obligatoriness (a view that anticipates Ross). This might sound a bit odd and even unnecessary: Prichard could say (as he will in his 1928 essay, “A Conflict of Duties,”) that within a situation, only one possible course of action will have the feature of obligatoriness; the other actions will be wrong. Thus, there is nothing intrinsic to telling the truth that makes it good; rather, this action’s goodness depends upon the situation in which the action is performed. We, in other words, look at the world and see what must be done.

This would be closer to the course that the tractarian would take. For the tractarian, “The facts all belong only to the task and not to its performance” (6.4321). My sense of what I must thus arises from an engagement with the world, but the world itself does not “tell” me what to do, and the value of what is found not in the world but in that performance. It is thus made manifest only when I act, such that ultimately any action will, ethically speaking, be a leap of faith, as I cannot “experience” its value until it is performed. I cannot predict that value as Prichard’s view seems to require. It is thus a
process of constant discovery and experimentation, one that comes up against something ultimately unassailable. It the process in which Nora engages.

Nora faces two duties – three, if we accept the frequent claim that the final proposition of the *Tractatus* (“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”). This is often interpreted as a *duty* to be silent, although it is not clear how this can be so. Given the semantics of the *Tractatus*, we cannot *help* being silent when we try to talk about ethics – logically, we will not be saying anything. This, however, does not mean that we cannot, in saying what can be said, make the inexpressible manifest; it also does not mean that nonsense will not be helpful in orientating another toward what is there to be seen. Claiming that the *Tractatus* posits a duty to be silent also ends up being unnecessarily paradoxical, as the *Tractatus* is then an immoral act. I thus take Wittgenstein to be stating a necessary consequence of the logic and semantics of the *Tractatus*, not issuing a moral imperative to be literally silent, since we could just ask, “And what if I’m not?” Certainly Nora (and perhaps Torvald) would have been worse off had she remained silent. To do so would have been an act of despairingly wanting to be herself, i.e., of despairingly willing to be a self that she is not.

Thus, Nora faces two duties, the duty to her family and the duty to herself. It is (not surprisingly) Torvald who introduces moral language into their conversation. He has already tried various tactics in order to convince Nora that she must not leave. He argued that she is inexperienced, and she noted that that is precisely the problem (he keeps her inexperienced, and then uses that inexperience to keep her from doing anything he doesn’t want). He wonders that she doesn’t care what others will think, but she points out that what others will say does not change the fact “that this is necessary for me” (82). At
the introduction of this notion of what is necessary for her – not for some future end or external goal, but simply for her as such – Torvald cries out, “This is outrageous! You are betraying your most sacred duty” (82). The outrage of her notion of necessity is that, in essence, there is nothing she need do for herself: her only obligations are to her family. Nora draws this out by asking Torvard what he considers this sacred duty to be; he asks if it is really necessary to tell her, and then he tells her: it is “your duty to your husband and your children” (82). Her duty is to her family, to others: she must tend to them?

We might here ask a question that echoes Wittgenstein’s at 6.422: And what if she does? What if she remains at home, ignores what the world as it stands, and denies herself experience and the insights that come from seeing how things could be otherwise and how she is not in fact a “doll”? There is something wrong with that “duty,” as Nora now sees it. It denies her – it denies who she is and who she could become. Nora directs Torvald to this denial by appropriating his nonsensical language of duty, stating, “I have another duty equally sacred,” namely, “My duty to myself” (82). By this she means that she recognizes herself as an individual, one capable of having experiences and learning and taking action, and one who is not reducible to some static essence (such as “woman” or “spouse” or “mother”) that determines what she must be or do. Her duty is thus to develop her ability to “think things out for myself, and get things clear” (82). Only when things are clear will she know what to do next. Right now, she is unknown to herself, and this is where she must begin, and in accepting this, she does not despair.

In presenting herself thus, Nora does not demand anything, even if she is trying to get Torvald to see something. Rather, the one who makes demands is Torvald, and it is also Torvald who (first) attempts to move another with the nonsensical moral
propositions. But it is Nora who is attuned to what, in tractarian parlance, can only be shown. Further, it is Nora who, in attempting to articulate her “experience” of what she has come to see for Torvald, gives us a sense of what taking the next step (beyond Prichard) involves: it involves giving up hope that there is an objective feature of the world without giving up the belief that there is a value of value – that there is a place where thinking comes to an end, which we might call call God or Fate. This articulation is vital to her experience, and it shows how logical silence (speech that is nonsense) need not require or entail actual silence (the literal absence of speech). It may have been possible for Nora to have simply left without saying anything. Granted, Torvald demands that she account for herself – that she show that she understands. But it is not simply Nora’s fate at stake here. What she gives voice to is something with which many struggle: it is the struggle of women in particular, but perhaps anyone who has their individuality denied and who is treated as less than human (like a doll, or like a part of a large whole) can see themselves in Nora. What Nora thus shows is what it is like to be oriented to something transcendental – something that is not an objective feature of the world but that claims one in a way that compels one to search, however gropingly and blindly, for the words (as well as the deeds) that reveal the world as one finds it.

One could perhaps imagine a scenario in which Nora does silently leave, but in this that is made less possible by the demands of Torvald. The demand emerges initially because he cannot believe that Nora was motivated by love – he cannot believe that she was thinking for herself and out of concern for him and that she (not he) may have been right. Thus, when Nora claims (as she’s trying to flee) that she did what she did (she borrowed the money for their trip from Krogstad without telling or even consulting
Torvald) out of love for him and that she will not now let him take the blame (which he has no intention of doing), Torvald dismisses her account of her love as a “paltry excuse” and her desire to take the blame as “play-acting” and demands that she give an account of herself and show that she understands what she has done: “You are staying here to give an account of yourself. Do you understand what you have done? Answer me!” (75) She has given an account, but he will not accept it, and so something more is needed. It is this demand that begins Nora’s awakening: faced with the insufficiency of her account of herself (one given despairingly), she is forced to confront more fully who and what she and her world are. Thus, with her gaze fixed upon him and her face hardening, she replies, “Yes, now I’m really beginning to understand” (75). What follows is the account she gives of herself, although it is not at all the sort of account that Torvald would have expected.

Torvald responds to her words by calling the situation “a terrible awakening,” although he seems to be referring to an awakening of his own: upon seeing Nora’s determination and stubbornness, he realizes that she is not the good doll that he thought and wants. He proceeds, on the basis of her fixed stare and profession of dawning comprehension, to call her “a hypocrite, a liar, worse than that, a criminal” (75) and accuse her of having “[n]o religion, no morals, no sense of duty” (76). He is surprised to find that this is all that he gets for all that he believes he has done for her. But what most bothers him is that she has now “ruined [his] entire happiness, jeopardized [his] whole future” (76). (His world has waned as he has seen it for what it is and then rejected the task that it has put to him.) He again asks Nora if she understands what she has done to him, and she replies with a simple “Yes.” The irony is that Torvald does not himself
understand what she has done to him: she has, in essence, *seen* him for what and who he is – a tyrant, one who has kept her in a doll-like state, a state in which her development as a person has been stunted. Stanley Cavell has referred to this as a “pre-mortal” state in which the capacities for entering into moral judgments and moral conversation are lacking. However, in her attempt to give an account of herself and what she has come to understand, she has her first moral “experience” and enters into a moral (and often logically silent) conversation. As she puts it later in the conversation, it is their first “serious talk” (79), the first one in which they’ve both acted in the recognition that she might be an adult and perhaps even an equal.

Torvald’s stance – which alters little in the rest of the conversation – is summed up in terms of perspectives on the world and in terms of sameness and difference. He wants to “put things right,” and his plan for doing this is to keep the “thing [...] hushed up at all costs” (76) – just the sort of thing he finds morally reprehensible. But this reveals his deep concern for remaining concealed and maintaining appearances, and he commands Nora to continue to participate in this maintenance (as if she were still a “doll” and as if she had a “duty to conceal” or even simply “appear” rather than “be real”):

And as far as you and I are concerned, things must appear to go on exactly as before. But only in the eyes of the world, of course. In other words, you’ll go on living here; that’s understood. But you will not be allowed to bring up the children, I can’t trust you with them. [...] From now on, there can be no question of happiness. All we can do is save the bits and pieces from the wreck, preserve appearances .... (76)

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150 “I might put the point [...] by claiming that Ibsen [...] is announcing that the task before humanity is no longer for the mortal to put on immortality, but rather for the pre-mortal (the songbird and the doll, for example, but Helmer’s behavior I equally, let’s say, mechanical, or in Emerson’s term, conforming) to put on mortality, to become responsible for their lives of finitude, to become intelligible to themselves and to each other” (Cavell 2004, 263).
At this point the doorbell rings and the maid soon brings in a letter in which Krogstad has sent back Nora’s IOU. Torvald believes that he has been saved and that they can put the incident behind them, but his essential claim remains the same: “Tomorrow you’ll see everything quite differently. Soon everything will be just as it was before” (78). What are we to make of this constellation of world, action, and happiness found in Torvald’s sense of what *must* happen in this moment of crisis?

Torvald sets forth two demands that he sees as necessities: First, things must appear to go on the same as before in the eyes of the world; second, two things must change in actuality: she must not bring up the children and there can be no question of happiness. The first necessity implies deceit and dissembling, insofar as things are very much *not* the same as before – they are quite different. That this is so is reinforced by the differences that *must* be accommodated, if in secrecy: Nora’s inability to raise children and the inability of anyone (or perhaps just Nora) to be happy.

This advocacy for dissemblance is striking given the appearance of moral fortitude that Torvald has worked to display both in his public life and in his home. With respect to Krogstad (who functions as a double of sorts for Torvald), Torvald speculated on the effects dissemblance much have upon one forced to sustain it. In the case of Krogstad, Krogstad “years ago” got, as Torvald put it, “mixed up in a bit of trouble” (25). In Torvald’s view, Krogstad then “dodged what was due to him by a cunning trick. And that’s what has been the cause of his corruption” (33) – namely, his having chosen to evade punishment by cunning rather when he could have “honestly confessed his guilt and took his punishment” (32). As Torvald explains it near the in the first act of the play:

PLEXMER: Just think how a man with a thing like that on his conscience will always be having to lie and cheat and dissemble; he can never drop
the mask, not even with his own wife and children. And the children –
that’s the most terrible part of it, Nora.
NORA: Why?
HELMER: A fog of lies like that in a household, and it spreads disease
and infection to every part of it. Every breath the children take in that kind
of house is reeking with evil germs. (33)

The act of dissembling, according to Torvald, will infect a person and those close to him.
It will spread a “fog” that infects reality, and on tractarian terms this will be because it
will prevent people from seeing things as they stand, which is a preliminary to
performing one’s task in a way the brings something angenehmes. Torvald calls such an
infectious person “morally depraved” (33). It would seem, then, that Torvald would avoid
endorsing a course of action that requires them to never drop the mask. Granted, the
“never” is not endorsed by Torvald – presumably, in order to avoid the spread of
infection, the mask must at times be dropped. It must be dropped in private, in the
household.

Upon learning that he is saved, however, he then accepts Nora’s excuse (she did it
because she loved him) and explains (largely to himself, it seems) that she was merely
irresponsible because inexperienced. He forgives her and takes great satisfaction in doing
so, saying that

[f]or a man, there’s something indescribably moving and very satisfying in
knowing that he has forgiven his wife – forgiven her, completely and
genuinely, from the depths of his heart. It’s as though it made her his
property in a double sense: he has, as it were, given her a new life, and she
becomes in a way both his wife and at the same time his child. That is how
you will seem to me after today, helpless, perplexed little thing that you
are (78).

During this speech, Nora was not in the room – she had gone into the spare room and was
changing clothes. Torvald assumes that is for bed (out of formal wear and into
nightclothes), but (as we soon learn) it is so that she may leave (she has changed into
everyday wear). She explains that they have a lot to talk about, that she has a lot to say, that he does not understand her, that she did not understand him until tonight, and that she wishes him to listen. She begins by noting that this is the first time after eight years of marriage that they have had a “serious talk” – that in those eight years they have not “exchanged one serious word about serious things” (79). And by a failure to deal with “serious things” she does not mean the sorts of worries that burden everyday life but rather an absence of an attempt to “get to the bottom of anything.” Torvald expresses wonder at what such a thing could be for Nora, and Nora replies that this is just the point: “You have never understood me” (80), meaning that he has no sense of what is serious for her or that to which she’d like to fathom. Instead, she explains how she has learned – first with her father and now with her husband – to acquire their tastes and do tricks for them, just like a doll. Her life has been taken up with what she now sees is blaß, kleinlich, nichtige. And, having always thought she was happy with such a life, she now realizes that she was not. Instead, she had (at times) fun – she had fun when he played with her just as her children do when she plays with them. And just as she is his doll, she treats their children like dolls.

Torvald, in an attempt to take control again, asserts that there is truth in what she says and that things will now (contrary to his earlier plan) be different: “Play-time is over; now comes the time for lessons” (81). But Nora quickly points out that he is not the one to teach her lessons, and she is not the one to teach the children. She must instead educate herself. This is, she says, the “problem [that] needs solving first” (81). “If I’m ever to reach any understanding of myself and the things around me, I must learn to stand alone” (81; emphasis added). The problem is not a question that needs an answer that can
be given didactically (as Torvald wishes to give it) but that can only be solved by Nora herself doing something.

Torvald, believing her to be insane, yells out (among other things), “I forbid you!” (81) But Nora simply responds, “It’s no use forbidding me anything now” (81). Torvald continues to attempt to reason with her, but the very strategies that previously worked only make her point: “Oh, you blind, inexperienced …” he cries out, to which she responds, “I must set about *getting* experiences, Torvald” (82).

He then tries a new tact with moral reasoning (at which we’ve already looked). His next move is to assert the teachings of religion, but she claims that she cannot determine whether these are right and that it is precisely this ability to judge such things that she wishes to develop.\(^{151}\) Then Torvald, in his final attempt to reason with her, asks if he might not “at least stir [her] conscience. I suppose you do have some moral sense?” he asks her (83). It is hard not to think of Prichard here: it as if Torvald is not invoking some capacity to see the objective moral features of the world, as if he can see them and as if, if she cannot, there is then something wrong with her. Indeed, Nora claims that she does not know if she has this sense. Things are not at all what she had thought they were – not her ideas and not the law and not society – and she “must try to discover who is right, society or me” (83; emphasis added). Sure enough, upon hearing what she must discover (that it is who is right and not simply what Torvald and society says is right), Torvald accuses her of being “ill” and “delirious” and “out of her mind,” and to these accusations she responds by claiming that she has never “felt so calm and collected” (83).

\(^{151}\) An echo of Nora’s claim is found in the *Notebooks* on 2.9.16: “I have to judge the world, to measure things.”
Torvald believes that he can conclude only one thing from this apparent sanity when he believes there should be dementia: Nora does not love him. “Exactly!” she exclaims. And it is only now that Torvald has begun to understand that she can explain to him what has changed and when: “It was tonight, when the miracle didn’t happen. It was then I realized you weren’t the man I thought you were” (84). She had believed that, upon learning of her business with Krogstad, he would stand up to Krogstad and take the blame upon herself; she would not allow this sacrifice and would instead take her own life in order to spare his future. It was when she realized that he values his honor (or, even worse, perhaps just the appearance of it) more than her that she realized she had “been living with a stranger” (85), one concerned only with what happened to himself. He has revealed himself as what he is: an egoist not concerned with the transcendence that marks and moves another.

Nora does not rule out the possibility that he can change: although she refers to this as the “miracle of all miracles,” she realizes that one day they could be able to know each other and be happily married. She now knows better than to rule out such a possibility. But she also knows better than to think that one can simply will such a change and make it happen on command. One cannot demand such change of one’s self (that one, in essence, suddenly become another person) and expect it to happen; one must start from where one is. It is possible that one will change as a result of what one suddenly sees (as Nora has), but one cannot control or anticipate such moments. One can only respond to what one sees as it becomes manifest. To demand that one suddenly see something or that one make oneself something that one is (for the tractarian) to ignore the lessons of the tractarian outlook on life: it is to deny that the world can be otherwise and
to deny that although the world is all that is the case, seeing that involves seeing what
transcends that world, making it possible that it stands as it does. To demand that I turn
away from such things, as if I am a static essence that can be gathered from a single
intuitive moment, or that I can be reduced to a set of facts, are both illusions, ones that
are a source of despair insofar as they turn me from what I am.
CHAPTER 9: THE STAIN OF TRANSCENDENCE

Diamond’s Mistaken Interpretation of Alymer and Demands on the World

The world is all that is the case, as Wittgenstein boldly asserts at the beginning of the text. And yet, all that is the case does not seem to be the end of the matter. In fact, if we take this to be the case, as the “the whole modern Weltanschauung” (6.371) does according to Wittgenstein, then we stop short. We stop short of what is unantastbare, which seems to go by various names but which actually, in not being an object, can have no names: the unassailable, the inexpressible, the mystical, ethical value, God, and Fate. Given what I have so far argued, it should not be surprising that Wittgenstein regards the entire Tractatus to also be unantastbar: “the truth of the thoughts communicated” in the Tractatus, he says, seems to him to be “unassailable” (Preface). Further, he says that the value of the work consists in the expression of these thoughts and the unassailability of their truth. The scientific view thus stops short of the “experience” of these things and so of all that is most vital to the Tractatus. In fact, it stops short of the Tractatus itself. For, while the scientific spirit of the Tractatus may have lived on, the true spirit of the text is, as Wittgenstein famously wrote in a letter to his friend Ludwig von Ficker in 1919, ethical. It as if his point was not to help science so much as to protect the sphere of the ethical from science, for science, in stopping short, actually goes too far: it thinks it can explain everything, and in doing so it attempts to eliminate the inexpressible and perhaps even to explain to us what we should and should not do.

But how then are we to make sense of an inexpressible ethics? How do we make sense of the kind of “experience” involved here, when, according to the Tractatus, it cannot be an experience since one can only experience facts? And how can we make
sense of the way in which this mark, this stain of the ethical and the transcendental, this something that we might wish was not there, pervades the text, making it such that one cannot simply tear it away by refusing to read the last pages?

I wish to approach an answer by way of yet another text, “The Birthmark” by Nathaniel Hawthorne. This text is used by Cora Diamond in her exegesis of the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus*. Her aim is to show that the positivists missed this ethical purpose. She also wishes to argue against those who might turn Wittgenstein into a Platonist, for whom there is an ineffable realm of truth and value toward which we can gesture with language. However, I believe she goes a bit too far, in that she argues that Wittgenstein thought the entire content of the text was erroneous: in doing this she throws out the baby Wittgenstein with his tractarian bathwater and unintentionally undermines her own argument. She thus misses the non-platonist way in which the tractarian can really mean what s/he says, and in doing so she endorses a form of quietism that belies the ethical purpose of the *Tractatus* in that it allows us no room to wish or work for things to be otherwise than they are: her claim is that the one ethically bad thing for the tractarian is to make demands on the world, i.e., we should accept the world as it is, and to attempt to make it otherwise is (since it cannot be done) bad. She uses the Hawthorne story “The Birthmark” to illustrate her claims.

The “Birthmark” is about a scientist named Aylmer. Aylmer is “proficient in every branch of natural philosophy” at a time when “the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle, [and] it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy” (177). Many believed that this science would progress
“until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself” (177). Aylmer is very much a man of his time. And already we can see that, for the tractarian, there is something suspicious about Aylmer: it is not for us to make worlds, since that things happen as they do is due to a “necessity” called “God” or “Fate.” Further, if these worlds are made “for himself,” there is a danger that he will attempt to treat the world as a source of satisfaction, such that he is not only destined to frustration but also likely to overlook the transcendence of others in the world who are not there as objects for his pleasure or (re)making.

Nonetheless, he manages to leave his lab just long enough to persuade a woman of near-perfect beauty to marry him. Her name is Georgiana, and her beauty would be perfect were it not for one thing: “in the centre of Georgiana’s left cheek there was a singular mark, deeply interwoven, as it were, with the texture and substance of her face. In the usual state of her [pale] complexion […] the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, […],” and so our narrator refers to it as “a crimson stain upon the snow” (178). It is shaped a bit like a small hand, and men who loved her likened it to the touch of a fairy, who “left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that were to give her such sway over all hearts” (178), while envious women likened it to a bloody hand that destroyed her beauty. Those men who did not love her all the more because of it found that – given her beauty, charm, and good moral nature – it was something with which they could easily live.

At first it did not bother Aylmer, but as time went on, he seeing her otherwise so perfect, […] found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary
and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. [...] In
this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife’s liability to sin, sorrow,
decay, and death, Aylmer’s sombre imagination was not long in rendering
the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than
ever Georgiana’s beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.
(179)

It was “the spectral hand that wrote mortality where he would fain have worshipped”
(179). Of course, from an empirical perspective, the stain is just a birthmark: it is a lesion
resulting in discoloration of the skin in this one spot, which happens to on her face. It is a
fact, of equal value with all other facts. Aylmer, however, wants Georgiana to be
something she is not: an object, one that odes not decay or age or make mistakes or cease
to give him delight. In Ibsenian terms, he wants her to be a doll, one more perfect that she
is with the stain, and, in refusing to see her for who she is, he is decidedly troll-like.

He obsesses over this flaw until finally one night Georgiana hears him cry out
during a dream: “It is in her heart now; we must have it out!” he cries (180). She
convinces him to relate the dream to her, and he admits that in the dream he had been
“attempting an operation for the removal of the birthmark; but the deeper went the knife,
the deeper sank the hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of
Georgiana’s heart; whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or
wrench it away” (180) Georgiana, who had never been bothered by the birthmark before,
has come by this point to hate it as much as Aylmer, and so she agrees to let him do
anything to get ride of it, even if the stain goes, as she says, “as deep as life itself,” – even
if it “take[s] refuge in [her] heart” (181). Both are convinced that, because of his
scientific prowess, he can surely remove this one little mark. Aylmer even seems
thankful for the mark, as it has “led [him] deeper than ever into the heart of science”
(181), as he has had to push his scientific powers to the limit in order to devise a way to remove the mark.

However, as his assays upon the mark begin, its strength amazes him. Days pass, during which Georgiana is locked away in his labs and subjected, often unknowingly, to his treatments. The whole process is obviously weakening her. Aylmer pushes onward and finally devises a concoction for her to drink which he is sure will succeed. She drinks it and falls asleep, and as she sleeps the mark slowly fades. When it is gone, Aylmer cries out in triumph, waking her. “My peerless bride,” he yells out, “it is successful! You are perfect!” (192) She in turn informs him that she is dying.

For Diamond, this story illustrates the sense in which the *Tractatus* is ethical. She argues that it is ethical insofar as “[t]he understanding that it is meant to lead to is supposed to be a capacity to “see the world in the right way.” That is, it is a matter of not making false demands on the world, nor having false expectations or hopes; our relation to the world should not be determined by the false imagination of philosophy.” (Diamond 2000, 168-169). The making or not making of such demands displays what she calls “an ethical spirit, an attitude to the world and life, [that …] may be seen in the things that people do” (153-154). Diamond argues that the making of such demands makes one unhappy because the world is independent of my will, i.e., because “the world does not meet conditions [I] lay down” (154). In the case of Aylmer, his ethical spirit (or lack thereof) is “first obvious in his response to the birthmark on his beautiful wife; but it is also meant to be seen by us in what he goes on to do, seen to be the spirit in his destructiveness of life, goodness, beauty” (154). His is, she claims, an evil will.
It is not clear why Diamond reduces the story to this one claim: that Aylmer lays down conditions or demands on the world that the world cannot meet. It is even more odd that she uses this “fact” as a means of refuting those who try to suggest that we can use language to gesture at some ineffable truth or some ineffable value, for what she is relying upon is just such a presentation: her Aylmer is not some real person whom she has seen in action; rather, he is entirely a product of language, and the lesson she wishes us to take from Aylmer is in fact taken from a literary product, a set of propositions (some of which are nonsense and some of which have sense) that shows us the very thing she wishes to suggest cannot be shown by “linguistic gesturing.” Odder still (given her claim that the *Tractatus* is nonsense that the early Wittgenstein gave up) is that her criteria for the evil will (and her interpretation of Wittgenstein’s ethical view) rests entirely on what the *Tractatus* claims, i.e., it relies upon those very claims in the text that are supposed to have been dialectically overcome. It rests on such claims as “there is no value in the world” and “the world is independent of my will.” Oddest of all is her attempt to remove the very mark of transcendence that makes the text what it is. She engages, in her reading, in an attempt to remove this stain – just like the positivist whom she critiques for having done the same. The surgical method differs – it is supposedly dialectical – but the outcome seems to be the same.

The problems continue: she relies upon a traditional notion of causality in spite of premising her argument on the will-independence of the world. Thus, she speaks of us in terms of the things we aim and desire and intend to do, as if we believe that my will can change the world, as Aylmer’s will seems to change his. It is also not clear what we should do when faced with such an evil will. If I hope or wish or desire that Aylmer not
succeed in destroying his wife, am I evil for having this hope? Is it false of me to demand that Aylmer not be who he is? What separates a false hope from a true one, especially if we do not have an ineffable realm of metaphysical truths to which to turn? To some extent I find Diamond’s approach to be positive: it does not seem that Wittgenstein’s point was to deny human action or to deny the attempt to engage in a critical resistance to what we might call evil or unhappiness. But I believe that the route Wittgenstein takes to this is quite different from what Diamond suspects. I agree with her that Wittgenstein does not mean to deny the anthropological reality that we are people who have desires, aims, and intentions and who can alter the facts because of the actions to which those intentions lead. But if this is the case, then the call to not make “false” demands on the world is a bit unclear and seems to confuse the logical independence of the world from the will with powerlessness.

Diamond attempts to make things a bit more clear by turning to yet another story in which a character is granted wishes and begins by wishing for a nicer hut and then ends by wishing to be God since she is offended that the sun and moon rise whether she wills it or not. Diamond argues that the true evil may be sensed in the first wish, but what is evil here is not something “inconsequential or close to home, not as something very bad which one could get accustomed to, but something terrible, black and wholly alien that you cannot even approach” (166). Presumably, then, not every desire or demand or expectation is bad. For instance, I do not think that she would have us believe that Wittgenstein or Hawthorne, in writing their texts, expressed an evil will insofar as they may have had some desire or expectation to show us something. Quite the opposite. And Wittgenstein would hardly condemn science and its aim to describe the world and
perhaps even ease some suffering in the process. It is also not clear that the desire to remove a birthmark is as such evil. (If that is so, then this does not bode well for a society increasingly obsessed with plastic surgery.)

I think that the point that Diamond misses is that tractarian evil is not simply a matter of not resting content with how the world stands or even with the conditions by which the world operates or comes to be what it is. Rather, it is a matter of stopping short as if all had been assayed or could be assayed. Aylmer goes too far precisely because he has stopped short (as did Torvald). It is thus not evil to want things. One can, for instance, have faith that one’s text might mean something to another without being upset if it turns out to not be the case. One might even demand, so to speak, a cure for a disease, and be moved by desire to alleviate unnecessary suffering. It is not clear that this is evil. Likewise, one might act to resist Aylmer or Torvald – one might wish that it were not so that such a man is as he is and so engage in some philosophical demonstration (as did Nora) in the perhaps naïve (yet potentially successful) hope that he might be persuaded to see his errors. No, what seems evil for the tractarian is the denial of the unassailable, the denial of the mark of the transcendental which one experiences when one understands that the world is limited.

Such an understanding seems to permeate the *Tractatus*, which in fact begins with a clear recognition of it: “The world is everything that is the case.” A professor at Salzburg, having heard that I would be talking about the *Tractatus* while there, passed me in the hallway and recited this line, wondering what on earth Wittgenstein could have thought he was doing by boldly asserting this contentious ontological claim without argument. I would argue that he does so precisely because the purpose of the text is
ultimately to bring one to the recognition of what this claim means, and nonsense can be useful in pursuit of that end. The inaugural tractarian claim thus helps to show the mark of the transcendental insofar as it helps to turn our attention to what can be gathered from what is the case. We encounter this mark more directly in Wittgenstein’s *Notebooks*, where, just before announcing that ethics is transcendental, he wrote: “What is the objective mark of the happy, harmonious life? Here it is again clear that there cannot be any such mark that can be *described*. This mark cannot be a physical one but only a metaphysical one, a transcendental one” (30.7.16). My claim is that, for the tractarian, this mark does not mean that there is some nonnatural objective realm that we could with sufficient training intuit. It simply means that science is not the end of the matter, and that this is clear to anyone willing to look.

If this mark is in fact one that cannot be described by science, then it cannot ultimately fall under its power either. Its very hiddenness from the gaze of science becomes a source of power and insight. Such an insight is at work when Wittgenstein describes a book called, “The world as I found it.” If he were to write this book, he would have to report on all the parts of his body that obeyed his will and those that did not. However, of the subject of this book no mention could be made. If the subject is the world (i.e., if “I am my world” (5.63)), then this makes sense: a world would not be possible without the subject, and its withdrawal from what can be described means that it cannot be contained, controlled, fixed. The failure to find it is thus a kind of success on its part.
Aylmer has a similar book, a portfolio in which he recorded all his studies – everything as he found it. We learn in fact that Aylmer had, before meeting Georgiana, studied human physiology. However, our narrator tells us,

Aylmer had long laid aside [this pursuit] in unwilling recognition of the truth – against which all seekers sooner or later stumble – that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make. (182)

Aylmer recorded all his investigations in a journal, which Georgiana finds. As she reads it, “she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed” (187). However, neither Georgiana nor Aylmer recognize the success evident in the failure: it was the recognition of the excess, the transcendence that makes us what we are. It is in its essence unspeakable, unassailable – it can no more be mastered that it can be legitimately invoked in the attempt to master nature or another. But with the attempt to remove Georgiana’s birthmark, Aylmer forgets his earlier, unwilling recognition and returns to these pursuits, now hoping to “acquire from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world” (187). It is a sway over the spiritual world in the sense that he wishes to undo what fate has made happen.

We can see an even bolder contradiction of Diamond’s efforts to eliminate the idea that linguistic nonsense can show something meaningful when we recognize that Hawthorne, in order to show what he himself is after, forces the birthmark to take on metaphoric significance beyond any natural birthmark (especially when he shows Aylmer himself doing this). By the end of the story the birthmark is “the mystery of life” and “the
bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame.” As life flees in the face of the attempt to master its mystery, our narrator tells us that “had Alymer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial” (193).

Alymer and Hawthorne give same significance to this mark: it is not nichtige but rather a mark of transcendence and life itself, but they respond to it differently, primarily because Aylmer does not realize that this is not the sort of thing that one can remove from life. It is as if life is not possible without such transcendence, or at least as if it cannot flourish if such transcendence is denied. The different responses, or failure, of Alymer and Hawthorne are thus a matter of what the do in the light of what they recognize. Alymer tries to assay it and turn it into something picturable and controllable and so eliminable. Hawthorne seeks a recognition of the need to respect this ineliminable aspect of existence and the way in which our happiness demands a recognition of it. It may involve my laying down conditions for existence, as Nora does when she in essence shows that she is going to find herself, even if it means the scorn of society; she is no longer content to live otherwise. It is not clear how Diamond could refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy and even need of such “conditions.” The conditions that are instead at issue not so much the ones that we lay down on the world but rather those that, transcendentally, are at stake in the possibility of a world; the evil or unhappy acts stems, for the tractarian, from the failure to recognize those conditions and the “experience” they entail.

Wittgenstein’s Tractatus is failure similar to Hawthorne’s, and since he seems willing to accept the stain of transcendence, his work has a happy ending. His text seems destined to fail insofar as it claims that we cannot say what can only be shown and that
we must silent whereof we cannot speak. Yet he says a great deal about what can only be shown – although if he succeeds in saying what can only be shown, then he has failed yet again. But another way to look at the text is to see it as not saying what can only be shown but, in saying what can be said, showing the inexpressible, and in putting forth nonsense, helping us to see that. One must, for the tractarian, come to see the world as a delimited whole that can be described and one must come to see that this description is only the beginning: it is the preliminary for seeing my world, which I am, and thus for taking up the task that it offers to me, the performance of which will make my happy. And if we stop short of thinking everything all the way through, we miss the mark of the transcendent, the birthmark of the text, the crimson stain upon its pure logic, which, if unrecognized, makes the performance of the task impossible.

This mark is, I would like to suggest, the mark of being human – of not being reducible to facts, to states of affairs, to scientific description and of being able to describe facts and states of affairs in ways that open us up to the recognition of the limits of such description and the value of such recognition and such limits. We might be suspicious of attempts to say too much about this mark or to say anything too definitive, for such assays can be attempts to remove the mark and reduce or destroy that which it marks. And we may well be suspicious of the presence of some such something, but that need not render us any less susceptible to it. One of the finest legacies of human effort are these very attempts to show, works whose simple showing becomes the message, works for which there is no particular thing at which they might point. And in their failure to fully add up, in their failure to transmit some codified truth that remains stable over time, they succeed more than their authors might have hoped.
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