

**WITTGENSTEIN ON SUBJECTIVITY: THE METAPHYSICAL SUBJECT IN THE  
*TRACTATUS* AND THE HUMAN BEING IN THE *INVESTIGATIONS***

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2010

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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# WITTGENSTEIN ON SUBJECTIVITY: THE METAPHYSICAL SUBJECT IN THE *TRACTATUS* AND THE HUMAN BEING IN THE *INVESTIGATIONS*

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University of Pittsburgh, 2010

Wittgenstein practices a *critique of language*, in a broad Kantian sense. This critique is animated by a fundamental concern with the human being, of which he sees language as an essential part.

## 1.

The first part of the dissertation shows that there is a thin, insubstantial form of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*. It is insubstantial because it rejects the possibility of any *substantial* (one sense of *synthetic*) a priori truth about the world.

The first stage of the argument shows that in both Kant and the *Tractatus* there is an *identity of form* between thought and reality. The second stage shows that the metaphysical subject in the *Tractatus* is a transcendental subject. In particular it shows that *Tractarian* solipsism, “The world is *my* world”, is an analogue and thin version of the transcendental unity of apperception.

## 2.

The second part of the dissertation studies a strand in the Private Language Argument in the *Investigations*, namely the temptation towards treating the *inner* (one sense of *subjective*) and the outer as independently intelligible (dualism of the Inner and the Outer). The focus is on the dualism of Sensation and Sensation-Behaviour.

The study aims to show that for Wittgenstein the deepest roots of this dualism lie in the very development of the capacity for the “I think”, of the intellect itself.

Wittgenstein gives two diagnoses of the dualism of Sensation and Sensation-Behaviour. His real target is the intellectualist conception of language, which constantly derives its strength from the predominance of the intellectual use of our language. The deepest roots of this intellectualism lie in our development of a language of sensations, where *the incision of language* is salient. This phenomenon is a cause for ambivalence: it is crucial for the development of an intellect but at the

same time also inflicts *cuts* between the inner and the outer, cuts that can easily tempt us into the dualism of the Inner and the Outer.

To heal the dualistic cuts, we must restore the concept of a *living* human being at the center of philosophy.

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## PREFACE

By far the most important intellectual debt of this dissertation is owed to John McDowell, both to his own written work and to his work as dissertation director. He has approached everything with characteristic care, penetration, and charity. His remarkable ability to keep in view vast stretches of the forest while at the same time concentrating on the trees, nay on the leaves and veins on the leaves, has been a particular source of inspiration. He has also been very kind. It is my fortune to have him as dissertation director.

Earlier in my time in Pittsburgh, Ted McGuire exercised a decisive influence in broadening my philosophical horizon and in confirming, quickening my instincts. His kindness and concern for me was also a crucial source of support during difficult times.

Stephen Engstrom and Anil Gupta, my other two committee members, have both been kind and helpful over the years, both intellectually and personally. I bear a warm sense of gratitude to them as well.

During the earlier stages of the dissertation Thomas Ricketts spent much time discussing my work with me and gave me useful advice, for both of which I am grateful. I miss those times.

Friends from whom I have derived intellectual benefit include Fabian Borchers, Greg Frost-Arnold, Kohei Kishida, Jo-Jo Koo, and Tyke Nunez.

My wife Dan Qu has been supportive throughout. It is my fortune that she not only supports my pursuit of philosophy as meaningful in itself but also has an appreciation of Wittgenstein. On occasion, she has also given me useful intellectual stimulation.

Our son, perhaps the only stone that has learned to talk, often imposed on me a healthy kind of diversion from intellectual work that is the specialty of a young child. Watching him grow has also provided occasions for philosophy. He figures, anonymously, in the last two chapters.

References in the style of “4.002” are to passages in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. Frequently I refer to individual paragraphs within a numbered passage, using the style of “6.2[2]”. References to sentences without decimal expansion are in the style of “*TLP* 4”.

References in the style of “§ 304” are to numbered sections in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*. I refer to individual paragraphs within a numbered section in the style of “§ 293b”. References to Part II of the *Investigations* use the style of “*PI*, p. 187”.

References in the style of “A89 / B122” are to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, with the A- and B-numbers referring to the first and second edition, respectively.

For the *Tractatus*, I have used both the old Ogden-Ramsey translation (O-R) and the newer Pears-McGuinness translation (P-McG). For the *Investigations* I have used Anscombe’s standard translation. Sometimes I depart from these translations, always with a note when the departure is significant.

This dissertation is the result of my struggles with certain difficult passages in Wittgenstein. For those who like to chew on Wittgenstein’s text, here is a map of the dissertation:

The first part of the dissertation, Chapters 2-4, gives an interpretation of the 5.6’s. Chapter 3 is the core. Chapter 2 is a preparation for it and Chapter 4 strengthens it. (Chapter 1 is a brief introduction to the dissertation.)

The second part of the dissertation, Chapters 5-10, gives interpretations of certain passages in what is usually called the Private Language Argument. Chapter 5 is introduction. Chapters 6-8 concern § 304 and § 293. Chapter 9 considers § 244 at length. Chapter 10 tackles § 245.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Wittgenstein practices a *critique of language*, in a broad Kantian sense. This critique is animated by a fundamental concern with *the human being*, of which he sees language as an essential part.

That is the basic theme of this dissertation. It is a constant theme in Wittgenstein, earlier and later. The main difference is that whereas the human being in its *concrete* existence is very far in the background in his earlier philosophy, it walks right onto the center stage of philosophy in his later philosophy. Correspondingly, his philosophy of language is extremely abstract in the earlier work but very concrete in the later work.

In this dissertation I will not be concerned with how this fundamental change took place but rather focus on the two end-points of this change. So the dissertation naturally falls into two parts. The first part (Chapters 2-4) focuses on *the metaphysical subject* in the *Tractatus*, the sublimated human being whose language has a sublime logic, the second part (Chapters 5-10) focuses on *the concrete human being* in the *Investigations*, a being whose language is as much part of its natural being as its flesh and blood, its gait and posture.

The metaphysical subject in the *Tractatus*, to adapt a metaphor from the *Investigations*, only lives in the ether (namely, free from all contingency). Though its language is a part of the human, it only epitomizes the sublime in the human. By contrast, the later Wittgenstein leads the concept of a human being back to its real home, to the whirl of human organism.

Human organism has two main aspects, one social or communal and one natural. My focus will be on the natural aspect. This is not to imply that the social aspect of human organism and of human language is unimportant or separate from the natural aspect. It is just the contrary, on both counts. In fact, the meeting of the social and the natural is an important focus of my discussion of Wittgenstein's account of how we learn a sensation-language.

Throughout the dissertation, Kant figures importantly. This is explicit and central in the first part of the dissertation, but much less explicit and more diffused in the second.

This diffusion is no accident. It reflects the fundamental change in Wittgenstein, namely the diffusion or concretization of the human subject. The human subject is a subject that leads its life under its concrete, contingent circumstances. This diffusion or concretization also means that the critique of language, of the most important expression of the human subject, is not a task that can be done once for all.

Throughout the dissertation I understand Wittgenstein's critique of language in a therapeutic sense, in accord with the spirit in his later philosophy. I do not defend this therapeutic conception of philosophy, but simply work within it. Its proof has to be sought in its work.

## 2.0 TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM IN THE *TRACTATUS*, I

There is a fairly long tradition of reading the *Tractatus* in relation to Kant. In this tradition there are two main strands: a strand that finds the *Tractatus* basically Kantian and a strand that finds it basically anti-Kantian. The latter, more recent interpretation often explicitly sets itself in opposition to the former.<sup>1</sup>

My aim in this first part of the dissertation (Chapters 2, 3, 4) is to forge a third way between these two opposing interpretations. The question I will pursue is: In exactly what sense, if any, is there a transcendental idealism in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*?

My answer is: there is a special, *insubstantial* transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*. This form of transcendental idealism is marked by a very strong anti-Kantian element, in that it rejects the possibility of substantial or synthetic a priori truths about the world, but it remains Kantian in that it still seeks to make manifest the inseparable connection (a) between thought and reality and (b) between mind and world.<sup>2</sup>

These two facets of the *Tractatus*, one anti-Kantian and one Kantian, are the two main lines along which my answer will be developed. I hope that the 'squeeze' between these two lines will sharpen our sense of the distinctive insubstantiality or 'emptiness' of the special sort of transcendental idealism I find in the *Tractatus*. The effect of this 'squeeze' can be summed up in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> Representatives of the first, Kantian strand include Stenius (1960), Maslow (1961), Engel (1970), Hacker (<sup>1</sup>1972, <sup>2</sup>1986), Ferber (1984), Pears (1987) and Moore (2003, 2007). Two significant representatives of the anti-Kantian strand are Sullivan (1996, 2004) and Felber (1998). I use the labels 'Kantian' and 'anti-Kantian' in deliberate abstraction from the question as to whether Wittgenstein seriously read Kant before completing the *Tractatus*. The question has its own interest, but it cannot be very important given the general permeation of Kant's philosophy in Wittgenstein's cultural milieu.

<sup>2</sup> I use the words 'reality' and 'world' interchangeably, as does Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. The word 'synthetic' has of course a richer range of meaning in Kant than just 'substantial'. This becomes clear when the *active* or *productive* role of the Kantian transcendental subject comes into consideration. But otherwise the two terms can and will be used interchangeably.

Kant's distinction (not drawn by the *Tractatus*) between general logic and transcendental logic as follows. Logic, as it is conceived in the *Tractatus*, is (i) like transcendental logic and unlike general logic in that it does not abstract from its relation to reality but reaches right up to reality, but it is (ii) unlike transcendental logic and like general logic in that it is utterly empty and carries no substantial a priori with it.

The rest of this part of the dissertation is structured as follows.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will give an initial answer to the question of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*: the basic *Tractarian* conception of the proposition already shares an insight with transcendental idealism, namely that there is an *identity of form* between thought and reality ((a) above). This initial answer also shows that if we are to find any kind of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*, it must be *thin* or *insubstantial*. This is because the *Tractarian* conception of the proposition is also deeply anti-Kantian in that it has a built-in rejection of the substantial a priori.

But this initial answer does not address a characteristically transcendental idealist topic: the *subject*. To do that, a second, deeper answer is needed. This will take us to a particularly difficult passage in the *Tractatus* (5.6's). By reconstructing crucial remarks in this passage, I will demonstrate how an extra insight is introduced and combined with the initial insight ((a)) to reach Wittgenstein's own version of transcendental idealism, namely what he calls solipsism. This extra insight, I will also show, is a special version of the fundamental Kantian insight of the transcendental unity of apperception. This demonstration (Chapter 3) achieves (b) above, thereby completing the core of my overall interpretation.

Chapter 4 has two parts. In the first part I briefly discuss two anti-Kantian interpreters of the *Tractatus*, Peter Sullivan and Michael Felber, so as to claim them as allies who in fact strengthen my interpretation. In the second part I suggest a partial answer to a large, remaining question that goes far beyond the concern of this dissertation. This suggestion also serves to further ground the most important part of my interpretation (Chapter 3) on the text of the *Tractatus*.

My focus in this part of the dissertation is on developing my own interpretation. As a result, my treatment of other relevant commentators is briefer than they deserve and, except in the cases of Sullivan and Felber, largely compressed into the notes.

I will not be concerned about what is called the *resolute* reading of the *Tractatus*. This reading, which is of considerable merit, lays great emphasis on Wittgenstein's remark toward the end

of the *Tractatus* (6.54) that his sentences in that very book are *nonsense*. I will proceed as if 6.54 were not written. After all, the book is meant to be read from beginning to end – one needs to go through it all before finding resolution, if any.

## 2.1 INITIAL ANSWER: *LANGUAGE AND REALITY*, FIRST SECTION

In the middle of the *Tractatus* we find a remark with a Kantian ring: “All philosophy is ‘critique of language’” (4.0031). This Kantian ring, I think, is both genuine and deep. We can gain an initial appreciation of its genuineness and depth as follows.

To begin with, it should be clear that Wittgenstein’s is not a critique of this or that particular language, but of *any* language. That is, this critique abstracts from the contingent features of particular languages (e.g. German and English) and is concerned only with what is common to all of them, namely, with the *essence* of language. The essence of language, to put it most generally, is to represent or depict reality: a proposition (the basic unit of language) is a picture of reality. The inner working of this essential function of language constitutes what Wittgenstein calls the *logic* of our language. Misunderstanding of this logic is what causes our philosophical problems (*Preface*, 4.003). The critique of language is to perform the salutary function of solving, or better, dissolving these painful problems — by perspicuously exhibiting the logical order that our language always already has (5.5563).

But *language*, insofar as the essential function of depicting reality is concerned, is the same as *thought* for the *Tractatus*. What is thinkable is also sayable, and *vice versa*. A thought just *is* a meaningful proposition (*TLP* 4).<sup>3</sup> Of course there are differences too. For example, a thought has

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<sup>3</sup> In the terminology of the *Tractatus*, one should say “senseful proposition” rather than “meaningful proposition”. But the latter is more natural in ordinary English.

I have taken the “is” in *TLP* 4 to express identity. One may think that this is over-reading and insist that *TLP* 4 leaves open the possibility of something unthinkable but sayable. However, this possibility is ruled out by 5.61[4]: what cannot be thought cannot be said either. This gives us a right to treat *TLP* 4 as an identity.



psychic constituents. But such differences are from the logico-philosophical point of view utterly inessential. Language and thought are exactly equal in their power to represent reality.<sup>4</sup>

Now of course one can string words together without any genuine thought in them, but such a string of words can only be nonsense: it is not a meaningful but only a pseudo-proposition. And a central task of the critique of language is to expose pseudo-propositions, in particular those that seem to be deeply meaningful. In doing so, the critique draws a line between sense and nonsense, thereby fulfilling its aim of drawing a limit to thought — from within (since one cannot think the other side of the limit).<sup>5</sup>

This essential sameness of language and thought enables us to put the *Tractarian* critique of language squarely in Kantian territory. This is because it is now a critique of thought; but central to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is also a critique of thought, or more exactly, a critique of pure thought about empirical reality. Now the analogue of Kantian empirical reality in the *Tractatus* is what it calls simply 'reality' or 'the world', at which language or thought is intrinsically directed. So there is a close kinship between the two critiques. Their negative ('critical') functions are also similar: Kant's critique is meant to deflate pretensions to transcendent knowledge, the *Tractarian* critique is meant to deflate pretensions to transcendent meaningfulness.

We may sum up these affinities between the *Tractatus* and Kant by describing its critique of language as a Critique of Pure Language.<sup>6</sup>

But if the remark 4.0031 has a deep Kantian ring, another remark, also on the nature of philosophy, shows a deeply *anti*-Kantian stance: Philosophy is not a body of *doctrine* but an *activity* (4.112[2]). What this means is not only that philosophy is no scientific doctrine, but also that it is no philosophical doctrine. To use Wittgenstein's own words (4.112): "Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions".

This stance is anti-Kantian because, by rejecting the very possibility of philosophical propositions, it rejects the possibility of propositions that are true philosophically, namely, true a priori.

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<sup>4</sup> This point is made more explicitly in *Notebooks* (12.9.1916) and in a frequently quoted letter to Russell on 19.8.1919 (included in *Notebooks*: see p. 130).

<sup>5</sup> This is how Wittgenstein describes the aim of the *Tractatus* in the third paragraph of its *Preface*.

<sup>6</sup> This apt expression is from Erik Stenius (1960, p. 220), who credits it to Peter Geach.

Since for the *Tractatus* a genuine proposition (i.e., excepting the tautologous logical propositions) is always contentful or substantial, this amounts to rejecting the possibility of substantial a priori truths about reality. Yet securing just that possibility is a central task of Kant's in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, a task that is to set metaphysics on "the sure path of science", whose details he also tries to work out (e.g., *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*). So the *Tractarian* critique is not, in contrast to the Kantian critique, also a *Prolegomenon* to any future metaphysics.

However, this non-doctrinal stance is so far only what Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus*, or 'preaches' as unfriendly commentators sometimes put it. There is still the question of whether he actually does what he says. To answer this we have to move beyond the two general remarks just considered.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 INITIAL ANSWER: LANGUAGE AND REALITY, SECOND SECTION

The anti-Kantianism in the *Tractatus* can be brought out in many ways. The shortest, but also the deepest, way to cut to the core of it is to consider something fundamental to the work: its conception of the proposition. A genuine proposition, on this conception, is a picture of reality, of a fact. It may represent the fact truly, or again falsely. Whether a particular proposition is true or not has no interest for philosophy but only for natural science, but that a proposition *can* be true and *can* be false (called its *bipolarity* in the wartime *Notebooks*) constitutes its very essence from the philosophical point of view. To make sense at all (to state a proposition) is to say something capable of being true and capable of being false.

From this deceptively simple conception many important implications flow. One is just that there can be no substantial a priori truths (the anti-Kantian element). For any genuine proposition *can* be false; so none *has to* be true, namely true necessarily or a priori.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The distinction between saying and doing involved here is just the ordinary one. It has nothing to do with the resolute reading of the *Tractatus* as apparently saying things but actually only performing an act. My mention of 'preaching' is meant to forestall this misunderstanding.

<sup>8</sup> In interpreting the *Tractatus*, I treat the notions of necessity and apriority as equivalent. This fits both Wittgenstein's and Kant's

(It is no objection to note that logical propositions are necessarily true. For they say nothing (4.461); so there is nothing said by them that is true: they do not state substantial necessary truths. They are rather empty tautologies that are neither sense-full [*sinnvoll*] nor nonsensical [*unsinnig*], but sense-less or, more colloquially, without sense [*sinnlos*, 4.461].)

But this conception of propositions as by nature bipolar, given how absolutely central it is to the *Tractatus*, presents a serious challenge to readers who want to find a transcendental idealism in it.<sup>9</sup> For it will be pointed out that transcendental idealism, at least in Kant's own hands, has as a central plank a doctrine meant just to secure substantial a priori truths about the world. But then what still entitles us to find transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus* when it rejects the very possibility of such truths? Or to reorient the question towards Kant, how can we erect a *Kantian* line of defense against this anti-Kantian charge from the *Tractatus*? (This is what I called the squeeze between the two main lines.)

An initial answer to this question can be given by working from both ends (namely from the *Tractatus* and from Kant) towards a meeting point. This initial answer is of a very general nature and needs to be supplemented by a more detailed and deeper answer. This second answer will be given later (in Chapter 3). But first let me give the initial answer, in two halves.

The first half is actually already contained in the *Tractarian* conception of propositions. The point is again deceptively simple: A proposition is a picture *of* reality, *of* a fact. This means that a proposition is, by its very nature, directed at a fact. We may call this fact-directedness the intrinsic intentionality of propositions. Since language is nothing but the totality of propositions (4.001) and the world is nothing but the totality of facts (1.1), the fact-directedness of propositions is just the world-directedness of language, i.e., *its* intrinsic intentionality.

One may think this leaves open the possibility that, though language is intrinsically directed at reality, reality or at least *some* facets of it might outrun language. That is to say, there might be

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use of these two notions. For the *Tractatus*, logic alone is a priori (5.4731 and 6.3211, parenthetical remark) and logical necessity is the only necessity (6.37). So these two notions do not come apart. (I am here excluding possible questions regarding the necessity or apriority of such *Tractarian* preoccupations as absolute value, the meaning of life, of the world.) This togetherness of these two notions neatly fits Kant, for whom necessity is one of the two infallible marks of the a priori (B4).

<sup>9</sup> To quickly appreciate how central bipolarity is to the *Tractatus*, recall that its entire account of truth-functionality is built on bipolarity.

facts that are in principle beyond language, facts that might *be* but could not *be described*. These facts would be ineffable realities.

But this possibility is illusory. This is because reality is nothing but the totality of facts (1.1), *any* of which we can picture to ourselves. That is the implication of 2.1: “We picture facts to ourselves”. If there is still a lingering worry here (e.g. in the form of a worry about drawing that implication from 2.1), it ought to be completely dispelled by something given prominent display by Wittgenstein, namely what he calls in 4.5 the general form of propositions: *things stand thus and so*. For that is just to say: *reality* is a certain way. So the general form of a *proposition* just *is* the general form of *reality* (as we might call it).<sup>10</sup> In other words, there is an *identity of form* between language and reality, neither outrunning the other. Further, this identity is entirely empty because the general form of a proposition is only a *general form*: it does not in any way *specify* how reality is.

We can recast the identity in this way. There is an inseparable connection between language and reality: language is what represents reality and reality is what is represented by language — they are intrinsic *reciprocal correlatives* of each other and cannot be understood in isolation.

Since for the *Tractatus* language and thought are essentially the same, this inseparable connection is also one between thought and reality.

And this latter connection brings us to the second, Kantian half of the initial answer, namely to show that transcendental idealism does seek to make clear the inseparable connection between thought and reality in a way congenial to the *Tractatus*, that is, consistently with its anti-Kantian element. If this can be shown, then we have a right to find a thin form of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus* (though only in an initial sense).

I propose to find this second half of the initial answer in Kant’s definition of what he means by a transcendental deduction.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein does just that in a slightly different but closely connected context – in 2.18 he calls *logical form*, which is intrinsic to any picture whatever, also *the form of reality*. Later in 5.4711 he equates “the essence of a proposition”, “the essence of all description” and “the essence of the world”.

<sup>11</sup> I choose this particular passage not because it is more important than other relevant passages but just because its formulation is convenient for drawing the analogy with the *Tractatus*.

In this definition (A85 / B117), Kant announces that he will call “the explanation of the way in which concepts can relate to objects a priori their *transcendental deduction*”.

I will take the liberty of reading this definition in a particular way, even if this reading is not Kantian in the narrower sense. After all, we are trying to find a Kantian element compatible with the anti-Kantian element present in the *Tractatus*. Accordingly, the justification for my treatment of Kant’s definition will be highly analogical in nature. It suffices if we can find in the *Tractatus* something we can call the *spirit* of transcendental idealism. I will reinforce my analogical argument by considering an objection later.

I will bring out this spirit of transcendental idealism by bringing out three points of analogy between Kant and the *Tractatus*.

First, by “objects” in the above definition Kant means objects of possible experience, which he also calls phenomena. These together constitute empirical reality or nature, whose analogue in the *Tractatus* is what it calls simply “reality” or “the world”. For the *Tractatus*, the world is constituted by the totality of facts (1.1). *Tractarian* facts are thus the analogue of Kantian objects. (It must be emphatically said that the analogue of Kantian objects as phenomena in the *Tractatus* is not what it calls “objects”. *Tractarian* objects are very peculiar, and nothing in Kant corresponds to them.)<sup>12</sup>

Second, the concepts of which Kant wants to give a deduction are of course only those concepts that he calls pure, not those that he calls empirical. Pure concepts have their source a priori in the mind, constituting the very forms of thought of objects. These concepts are, by Kant’s Copernican revolution, at the same time also the forms of objects of thought. A thought without any pure concept figuring in it is not a thought at all.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The *Tractarian* notion of objects is technical and difficult. I will not attempt any treatment of it in this dissertation. The Kantian notion of an object is much closer to the ordinary notion (the same applies to “objective” and “objectivity”). By default, I will use the words “object” etc. in their Kantian senses, treating these as not relevantly different from their ordinary senses.

<sup>13</sup> By “thought” in this context I mean thought that is directed at objective reality. For Kant, a thought directed at objective reality is a thought that, in favorable cases, yields *knowledge*. Such reality-directed thought differs from the kind of idle or mere thought that one may indulge in as one pleases provided only that one is free of contradiction (Kant’s footnote on Bxxvi). Thought that is directed at reality bears a responsibility towards it: the responsibility of being faithful to how things really are. Idle thought, since it exempts itself from that responsibility, is not directed at what we can *know*. Only reality-directed thought, thought with knowledgeable content, has an analogue in the *Tractatus*; hence my restriction.

I will take this Kantian distinction between pure and empirical concepts to have an analogue in the *Tractarian* distinction between *formal* and *material concepts*, the former of which are also captured by logical forms. For the *Tractatus*, a thought without any formal concept figuring in it, without any logical form, is not a thought at all. The reason, in terms echoing Kant, is that formal concepts are the very forms of thought. In the more technical *Tractarian* terms, the reason is that a formal concept is captured by a *variable* and that a proposition is also an instantiation of a variable (and in that sense “contains” a logical prototype that is the variable).<sup>14</sup>

So to summarize: the pure concepts in Kant are at once the fundamental forms of thought of objects and of the objects of thought themselves while the formal concepts in the *Tractatus* are at once the fundamental forms of thought, which is intrinsically fact-directed, and of the facts themselves, which are intrinsically thinkable.

Third, I shall take the notion of *explanation* in Kant’s definition in a particular way, namely as *making manifest* or *making clear* (which is at least warranted by the etymologies and common usages of the English word ‘explanation’ and the German word ‘*Erklärung*’). This way of taking the transcendental explanation is meant to detach it from a heavy-duty role assigned to it by Kant, i.e., to explain the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge. What in the *Tractatus* corresponds to this explanation, so detached, is *making-itself-manifest* or *showing*. *Showing* is not *saying* (that is, making substantive sense). But it can still be explanatory in the sense of being illuminating or elucidating.

Of course this way of taking the notion of explanation blocks the basic thrust of Kant’s Copernican Revolution. For it in effect denies that there are “only two” possible ways of explaining how thought and what thought is about conform: either thought must conform to what it is about or the other way round (B124-5).<sup>15</sup> Rather, it takes a third way (*showing*), refusing to choose between the two directions of a linear grounding, as Kant does. Nonetheless, there is an (attenuated)

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<sup>14</sup> Strictly speaking, Wittgenstein does not speak of material concepts but only of formal concepts. But he does contrast “concepts proper” with “formal concepts”: 4.126. He also contrasts formal (or internal) properties with material (or external) properties, the former of which are captured by formal concepts and the latter by concepts proper (2.0123–2.034, 4.122–4.128). All this gives us a right to call “concepts proper” also “material concepts”.

<sup>15</sup> It is true that at B167-8 Kant mentions a third possibility: some sort of pre-established harmony between the categories and nature. But he mentions this third possibility only to dismiss it (on the ground that it would rob the categories of their necessity).

analogy between Kant and Wittgenstein: philosophy is to explain or make clear the intrinsic conformity between thought and reality.

Together, these three points of analogy entitle us to find a thin transcendental explanation in the *Tractatus*, i.e., a making-manifest of the intrinsic connection between *logical forms* and *facts*. This is a making manifest of the very “*logic of facts*” (4.0312) or, awkwardly but more carefully, a *letting-the-logic-of-the-world-make-itself-manifest*.<sup>16</sup>

We must let logic manifest itself. It cannot be represented or described in language, because any language or description *presupposes* logic. If anyone tried to put logic into propositions (i.e., to represent logical form), he would have to station himself with propositions outside logic (4.12), that is, he would have to think illogical thought, which is of course impossible (*cf.* 5.4731). Or to put it from another angle, trying to escape to the viewpoint of a meta-language only leads to a vicious regress (language, meta-language ...). Such regress must not be started. Rather, logic must take care of *itself* (5.473) — right on the ground floor of our language.<sup>17</sup>

In Kantian terms, to make manifest the logic of reality is to make manifest the intrinsic connection between the *subjective a priori* forms of thought and *objective* reality, or between thought and reality. This making manifest also takes place within thought itself, since the critique of pure reason is and can only be a critique *by* pure reason itself. Philosophy must take care of itself.

To summarize, there is a significant commonality between Kant’s own transcendental idealism and the *Tractatus*: they both seek to explain or make manifest the inseparable connection between thought and reality, or let that connection manifest itself. The kind of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus* is thin or empty because it is purely formal: the general form of propositions and of reality in no way dictates *how* reality must be. We may call this thin transcendental idealism the *spirit* of transcendental idealism.

This completes the initial answer.

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<sup>16</sup> This is more careful (i.e., better prevents misunderstanding) because *making manifest* might be wrongly taken to be yet another form of saying (saying by stealth, e.g., by gesturing, by whistling).

<sup>17</sup> The idea that logic itself cannot be stated in propositions is just what Wittgenstein calls his “fundamental idea” in the *Tractatus* (4.0312), the idea that the so-called “logical constants” do not represent or *go proxy for* anything. This fundamental idea, like the idea of bipolarity, came to Wittgenstein very early, as he later recounted. “Logic must take care of itself” is the very first sentence in his wartime *Notebooks* (on 22.8.1914).

### 2.3 INITIAL ANSWER: *LANGUAGE AND REALITY*, THIRD SECTION

But one may feel cheated. The argument, one might complain, is too general, too analogical, and leaves too much of Kant out. This complaint is not groundless and it will be instructive to give it expression and then show why one can *only* expect an analogical argument here.

Let me first give this complaint a more specific shape: “You say there is a form of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*, but where is the Deduction? I can see nothing remotely like one in that book!” And this is true: there is in the *Tractatus* indeed nothing like a Transcendental Deduction as laboured through by Kant. And of course the Deduction is absolutely central to Kant’s transcendental idealism.

But this need not deter us. The reason is that there is a fundamental difference between Kant and the *Tractatus* which renders it a mistake to even look for a Kant-style Deduction in the *Tractatus*.

The difference is that Kant operates with a basic distinction that is entirely alien to the *Tractatus*: the distinction between “the two stems of human knowledge”: *understanding* and *sensibility* (*spontaneity* and *receptivity*, *concept* and *intuition*). And it is just this distinction that makes a Kant-style Deduction, the legitimation of the applicability a priori to objects of the pure concepts of the understanding (the “categories”), necessary.

A legitimation of applicability to empirical reality (to “objects as phenomena”) is necessary for any concept because concepts by themselves or our understanding by itself cannot secure any grip on empirical reality, and this in turn because objects can never be created by us (because our understanding is finite) but must be given to us, that is, given in intuition (“receptivity”). Without intuitions, as Kant famously put it, concepts are empty, i.e. have no application to empirical reality. So any concept, if it is to have a right of application to empirical reality, must be shown to be capable of engaging intuitions.

This is no challenge for empirical concepts, because these concepts have their origins in experience itself (or in reflection thereon). They are born out of experience, which always involves intuitions, and thus already have their applicability to empirical reality written on their birth certificate. They do not need a transcendental but at most an empirical deduction (which is really no deduction at all).



By contrast, the pure concepts, because they are prior to all *possible* experience, have to obtain “an entirely different birth certificate” (A86 / B119) if they are to apply a priori to empirical reality. This certificate must be earned entirely *a priori*, without drawing on any experience. That is, their deduction must be a transcendental deduction.

A transcendental deduction, to be complete, must bring the pure concepts of the understanding into engagement with sensibility, for it is there and there alone that objects as phenomena are given and it is these that the categories are to relate to a priori. Now, a good deal of what is given in sensibility is empirical (i.e., mixed with sensation) and thus impure. So to preserve their purity and thus a priori applicability, the categories must be brought into engagement with sensibility in a pure manner. But how?

This is where the crucial role of *the pure elements in sensibility*, i.e. the pure forms of sensibility, becomes clear. Because it is exactly these elements, which are at once a priori (being *pure forms* of sensibility) and sensible (being pure forms *of sensibility*), that provide the crucial ‘middle ground’ where the categories can concretize themselves in pure sensible intuition and thereby gain application a priori to all objects as phenomena, whose a priori subjection to the pure forms of sensibility (namely space and time) had been established in the Transcendental Aesthetic. This concretization is the particular way in which the categories, in order to make their contribution to synthetic a priori knowledge, are “forced to take refuge in intuition” (A47 / B65). It is what Kant calls schematism.<sup>18</sup>

This summary of Kant shows very clearly the fundamental difference *in framework* between Kant and the *Tractatus*: the *Tractatus* lacks anything resembling a two-stem framework of sensibility and understanding. But, as we just saw, this framework is the necessary background for the very idea of a deduction and, in particular, the role of pure forms of sensibility in that framework is crucial for its execution. But sensibility or anything like it is not even a topic in Wittgenstein.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This is only a thumbnail portrait of Kant, meant to serve as a contrast for reading the *Tractatus*. I have left much out, in particular Kant’s difficult but important claim that space and time are not only pure *forms* of intuition but also pure *intuitions themselves*. Fortunately we need not go into this issue here.

<sup>19</sup> Wittgenstein’s lack of engagement with Kant in this area is not confined to the *Tractatus* but is pervasive in all his earlier writings.

This is a basic disanalogy between Kant and Wittgenstein. No interpretation of the *Tractatus* as a Kantian work can be considered complete without taking proper account of it.<sup>20</sup>

One may, while acknowledging this basic disanalogy, still try to assimilate what is ‘impure’ or empirical in Kantian sensibility to the *Tractatus* by so to speak covertly merging it into the latter’s “material concepts” (by noting that they both figure *contingently* in thought about empirical reality). But even if we grant this assimilation, there is still nothing in the *Tractatus* to which the *pure* elements of sensibility could be assimilated. So the crucial middle ground for the Deduction would still be missing. Or to put it from a different angle, nothing in the *Tractatus* even remotely resembles the Transcendental Aesthetic, which is a necessary preparation for that crucial middle ground.<sup>21</sup>

To conclude, the *Tractatus* is simply no place to even look for a Kant-style Deduction. One can only look for an analogue of it.

All this, I think, sharpens our appreciation of the squeeze between Kantian and anti-Kantian lines in the *Tractatus*. To say it is wrong to even look for a Kant-style Deduction in the *Tractatus* is yet another way of emphasizing the anti-Kantian line (namely, from another angle than that of the *Tractarian* conception of the proposition).

This way of bringing out the force of the anti-Kantian element in the *Tractatus* also gives us a deeper appreciation of the simplicity and yet depth of its conception of the proposition (which I called deceptively simple). This conception, by combining a Kantian element in a thin sense (i.e., the formal identity between thought and reality) and an anti-Kantian element in a thick sense (i.e., the rejection of the possibility of the substantial a priori), provides a home for a thin transcendental idealism from which the substantial in the substantial a priori has been squeezed out. Thus we

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<sup>20</sup> What is deficient about traditional Kantian interpretations of the *Tractatus* (as in e.g. the longer list of commentators in my first note) is that they either fail to notice this basic disanalogy or under-appreciate its significance.

<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein does of course speak of space and time in the *Tractatus* and also uses a pervasive spatial analogy for logic (which is epitomized in the idea of logical *space*). But it is plain, without having to consider in detail the crucial role of space and time in Kant, that space and time in the *Tractatus* are *not* analogues of space and time in Kant. To repeat, in Kant space and time are pure forms of *sensibility*, but in the *Tractatus* sensibility (receptivity to how the world is through sensory affection) is not even a topic.

can say that the *Tractatus* embodies the *spirit* of transcendental idealism much more directly and simply than Kant himself.<sup>22</sup>

In Kant this spirit is embodied in his two-front battle against dogmatic rationalism and skeptical empiricism: in his concern to curb pretensions to supersensible knowledge without however surrendering the possibility of human knowledge *überhaupt*. Kant thinks that, to secure the latter, we must secure substantial a priori truths about the world. And this is where the *Tractatus* differs. For it embodies the spirit of transcendental idealism *insubstantially*, rejecting the necessity to secure a substantial a priori order of the world. Seen in this light, its two-front battle is more radical than Kant's own, since it, on the one hand, does not even allow skepticism to be formulable (see 6.51) and, on the other hand, insists that pure logic (which is the analogue of pure reason in Kant) cannot deliver substantial truths of *any* kind.<sup>23</sup>

We may sum up with words drawn from the *Tractatus*: Pure logic is *already* transcendental (*cf.* 6.13: “Logic is transcendental”). The force of the added “*already*” is that the thin logic of the *Tractatus*, which is a transformation of what Kant calls general logic in contrast to his own, thick transcendental logic, is already transcendental: it is *always already* the logic *of the world*. For the *Tractatus*, there is no need for, and in any case no possibility of, a Kant-style distinction between general and transcendental logic.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> I do not suggest that the elaborate, formidable Kantian two-stem edifice is merely an unnecessary complication. Kant's mighty toils are honest, dictated to a large extent by aims alien to the *Tractatus*. I do not mean to commit theft over them for Wittgenstein.

<sup>23</sup> I must stress the “seen in this light” qualification, since it is also a historically distorting light. Wittgenstein's attack on the conception of pure logic as a body of substantial truths (epitomized in the idea that the propositions of logic *say nothing*) was primarily directed at Russell and Frege, who thought of logic as a body of maximally general truths. The difficulties he saw in Frege and Russell very much concerned “the logocentric predicament” inherent in any attempt to formulate the principles of logic (see, e.g., Ricketts 1985, 1996, 2002). This predicament is a far cry from the dogmatism of the rationalists.

<sup>24</sup> Note the point here is that logic as conceived in the *Tractatus* is a *transformation* of Kant's general logic, not a (straight) *vindication* of it, as briefly suggested by Marie McGinn (2006, p. 266, n. 2).

### 3.0 TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM IN THE *TRACTATUS*, II

The first stage of my interpretation (Chapter 2) has found a transcendental idealist element in the *Tractatus*, i.e., the inseparable formal connection between language and reality, between thought and world. But that is not the same as finding in the *Tractatus* an inseparable connection between *mind* and reality, between the *subject* and the world.

Yet it is characteristic if not definitive of transcendental idealism to speak of the subject, not of course empirically but philosophically, a priori. Kant's own Deduction hinges on what he calls the transcendental unity of apperception, or the unity of the *I* in the "I think" that must be able to accompany all thought. More generally, we can appreciate what any kind of transcendental idealism comes to by appreciating its conception of the subject. After all, a transcendental idealism is a kind of idealism, and it is definitive of idealism to give an essential role to the subject in its account of reality.

What this means is that interpreters who want to find any form of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus* must examine what it says about the subject and in particular about the connection, if any, between the subject and the world. Wittgenstein's most important treatment of the subject is in the 5.6's (which I will call the solipsism passage for reasons that will soon become obvious). I have studiously avoided drawing this passage into consideration because it is nearly intractable if taken by itself. What I have done so far is only a preparation for approaching it.

### 3.1 SECOND ANSWER: *MIND AND WORLD*, FIRST SECTION

Let me begin the approach at the last numbered remark of the solipsism passage (5.641).

Wittgenstein says in 5.641 that there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way, about the *philosophical* self. The philosophical self, he warns, is

not the human soul with which psychology deals. It is rather the metaphysical subject (which has been introduced earlier in 5.633).

But what brings the self into philosophy?

The answer given in 5.641 is: “the fact that ‘the world is my world’”.<sup>1</sup> This quotation of the formulation “the world is my world” takes us back to 5.62, where it first appears:

[...]

5.62

This remark provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism.

For what the solipsist means is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest.

The world is my world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of language (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of my world.

Wittgenstein is saying, *inter alia*, that there is something right about solipsism, even though it cannot be *said* (stated in a proposition). What is right about solipsism is precisely: The world is *my* world. Let us call it the *insight* of solipsism. As philosophical insight it wants to be an illuminating piece of nonsense, not something grounded on a metaphysical fact.<sup>2</sup>

But what *is* this insight? How is it supposed to illuminate?

Much of the solipsism passage is obviously meant to help bring out this insight, but the passage is so extremely laconic and enigmatic that one quickly develops a sense of despair. Still, an attempt is worth making.

I will start by quickly extracting from Kant a point that will be absolutely crucial for my interpretation. It is also a point absolutely crucial for Kant himself, namely the transcendental unity of apperception, or the unity of the I in the “I think”.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the word ‘fact’ in the English translations of 5.641[2] (both O-R and P-McG) is not in the German text but inserted by the translators. The insertion is required only by the habit of English. One must be warned that Wittgenstein is not asserting a *fact*: neither a proper *Tractarian* fact, which is always contingent, nor a ‘philosophical fact’ (since there is no such thing as a ‘philosophical proposition’: 4.122). This warning applies to many other passages in the *Tractatus*, in particular to 5.62[3] (see below).

<sup>2</sup> Once more this is a warning about the word ‘fact’ added in English translations of 5.62[3]: “The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact [not in the German] that [...]”.

The central task of the Transcendental Deduction and so of the first *Critique* is to show how *subjective conditions of thought* can provide conditions of the possibility of all knowledge of objects (A89 / B122), or in other words, can set the limits of knowledge. The kind of thought at issue must of course be thought that is *capable* of yielding knowledge, must be thought that *can be known* to be true or false of reality. So the limits of this kind of thought are the same as the limits of knowledge (because of the implicit modality in the prefix “the limits of ...”).<sup>3</sup>

Now, by *subjective* conditions of thought, Kant means the a priori conditions inherent in the thinking *subject* to which any thought has to conform if it is to be capable of yielding knowledge at all. These conditions (i.e. the categories and the pure forms of sensibility) are the requirements of unity signified by the “I think” and summed up in the transcendental unity of apperception.

The unity of the I in the “I think” is therefore what sets the limits of thought or the limits of knowledge. This is the fundamental point of the first *Critique*. To connect it to the *Tractatus*, let me recast it thus: A thought, if it is a thought *at all*, must be thinkable by *me*. Or in other words:

(<sup>K</sup>-TUA) The limits of thought are the limits of *my* thought.

Echoing 5.641, we can call <sup>K</sup>-TUA the way in which the self is brought into Kant’s philosophy. This is because there is a deep affinity between this way of bringing the self into philosophy and the way in which the self enters into philosophy through the insight of *Tractarian* solipsism.

To bring out this affinity, I will first obtain a *Tractarian* analogue of <sup>K</sup>-TUA, to be used later. Then I will construct a three-stop route that starts from a simple yet profound tautology and ends in *Tractarian* solipsism.<sup>4</sup> This route is designed to exhibit perspicuously the transcendental idealist elements in *Tractarian* solipsism. For the sake of clarity, I will at first only give a sketch of it. Minor steps will be justified on the way, but the major steps will be defended afterwards. Two of these require special defense and will be underlined.

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<sup>3</sup> That is, what is at issue is not thought *in general*. For Kant, thought in general has no limit: unless one counts non-contradiction as such a limit in a vanishing sense: “I can *think* whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself” (Kant’s footnote on Bxxvi). Rather, what is at issue is reality-directed thought, thought with knowledgeable content. (See also Chapter 2, n. 13.)

<sup>4</sup> As will become clear later, the tautology is an ordinary tautology and need not be a *Tractarian* tautology. *Tractarian* tautology is defined in terms of elementary propositions (see 4.46) and so inherits the very special and technical character of that notion.

### 3.2 SECOND ANSWER: *MIND AND WORLD*, SECOND SECTION

In <sup>K</sup>TUA above, the thoughts are Kantian thoughts. But the insight of the transcendental unity of apperception to be found in the solipsism passage concerns of course *Tractarian* thoughts. These are not the same as Kantian thoughts. Two important differences are relevant here.

First, there are two sorts of Kantian thoughts that are not about empirical reality or nature as Kant also calls it, namely ethical thoughts and mathematical thoughts.<sup>5</sup> These have no *Tractarian* analogues. For the *Tractatus*, the ethical cannot be put into words (6.421), that is, cannot be said or thought. As to mathematics, there is simply no such thing as mathematical thought. A proposition of mathematics (i.e. an equation) expresses no thought (6.21); it is only a pseudo-proposition (6.2[2]).<sup>6</sup>

Second, among those Kantian thoughts that are about empirical reality, some are special because they are synthetic a priori (e.g., the propositions of Newtonian physics). This kind of thick Kantian thoughts about empirical reality is of course incompatible with the anti-Kantian element in the *Tractatus*.

So to obtain a version of the insight of the transcendental unity of apperception for interpreting the *Tractatus* (or in other words, to avoid equivocation), we must exclude from consideration Kantian thoughts that are either not about empirical reality or about it but thick. But these exclusions are readily justified. The first exclusion is justified simply because the *Tractatus* treats the ethical and the mathematical very differently from Kant. The second exclusion is justified by my initial answer: The anti-Kantian element in the *Tractatus* permits no substantial a priori, so thick

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<sup>5</sup> To say that Kantian mathematical thoughts are not directed at empirical reality does not mean that they are dispensable for those Kantian thoughts that are. On the contrary, they figure vitally in the latter (as comes out in e.g. Axioms of Intuition). As to ethical thought, I consider it here only because it is on Kant's mind when he contrasts real with idle thought (last sentence of his footnote on Bxxvi).

<sup>6</sup> This is naturally not to put mathematics in a box with gibberish. As a logical method (6.2[1]) mathematics is akin to logic in that "the logic of the world, which is shown in tautologies by the propositions of logic, is shown in equations by mathematics" (6.22). Wittgenstein calls mathematical equations pseudo-propositions only because the identity sign in them captures the formal concept of *identity*, and formal concepts are pseudo-concepts (see 4.1272).

Kantian thoughts about reality must be thinned out. (To repeat, we can only look for an analogue of Kantian transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*, not a reproduction.)

After making these exclusions, we obtain a version of the insight of the transcendental unity of apperception that can be directly used when interpreting the solipsism passage (note the dropping of the superscript ‘<sup>K</sup>’):

(TUA) The limits of thought are the limits of *my* thought.

Now let me turn to constructing the three-stop route to *Tractarian* solipsism. The simple yet profound tautology that will serve as the starting-point is this:

(1) All my thoughts are *my* thoughts.

Now “*all my thoughts*” is the same as “what *can* be thought by me”, which can in its turn be captured by “the *limits* of my thought”. This latter in turn amounts to “the limits of my language”, since thought and language are essentially the same for the *Tractatus*.

But the limits of my language are just the limits of language. (This is the first key-move.)

This allows us to drop the first-person pronoun in “the limits of my language” and so also in “all my thoughts”. So, switching to the abstract singular (for stylistic reasons), we may write:

(2) All thought is *my* thought.

As shown by our initial answer, *thought* and *world* are intrinsic reciprocal correlatives. (Call this *correlativity* for short.)

Also, *my thought* and *my world* are intrinsic reciprocal correlatives. (Call this *I*-*correlativity*, which is a version of correlativity. This is part of the second key-move.)

Now, if we call *thought* the *subjective* side of the intrinsic reciprocal correlativity and *world* its *objective* side, then (2), a formulation in the subjective mode, has a correlative formulation in the objective mode. And this is precisely the insight of solipsism:



(3) The world is *my* world.

This road to solipsism hinges on three crucial points: two key-moves and a non-move. I will first discuss the two key-moves. The first key-move is the identification of “the limits of my language” and “the limits of language” in going from (1) to (2), the second is a double invocation of correlativity in going from (2) to (3).

My claim regarding these two key-moves (and this is the heart of the second stage of my interpretation) is as follows:

The insight of solipsism is the combination of two insights. These are (a) the insight into the intrinsic reciprocal correlativity of thought and reality and (b) an extra insight which is a version of Kant’s insight of the transcendental unity of apperception. While the first insight pervades the whole *Tractatus* (as we saw), the second, extra insight is found only in the solipsism passage.

Let me begin to establish this claim by establishing that the extra insight is just the first key-move, i.e., the identification of the limits of language and the limits of *my* language. It is straightforward: thought and language are essentially the same for the *Tractatus*, so the first key-move in the route amounts to “The limits of thought are the limits of *my* thought”. But this is TUA verbatim.

Now where does the *Tractatus* make this identification? Or, how does it introduce the extra insight TUA, its version of the transcendental unity of apperception?

The answer is that it is introduced in the crucial parenthetical remark in 5.62[3]:

[...] the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean [...]

First and to prevent misunderstanding, it should be noted that the word ‘alone’ qualifies not the following ‘I’ but the preceding ‘which’, which refers back to ‘that language’.<sup>7</sup> With this point

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<sup>7</sup> This, as Sullivan notes (1996, p. 217, n. 42), should have always been clear. Russell had it right from the beginning in his *Introduction* (p. xviii). As Lewy (1967) reported, Wittgenstein *corrected* Ogden’s original translation of the parenthetical remark, “(the language which only I understand)” to “(the only language which I understand)” in Ramsey’s copy of the first edition of the *Tractatus*. A language that only I understand would be a private one, but that is a topic alien to the *Tractatus*. Lewy’s note on 5.62 has since been absorbed into the commentary. But even before its publication Hintikka (1958) had already seen that Wittgenstein uses

cleared up, Wittgenstein's way of introducing the extra insight is this: The limits of *language* are the limits of the only language that I can understand.

I inserted 'can' before 'understand' since that is clearly Wittgenstein's meaning.<sup>8</sup> I also used 'are' to make explicit the identification that is implicit in the appositive use of the parentheses by him.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, because language and thought are essentially the same for the *Tractatus*, I will take 'can *understand* a language' to have the same force as 'can *think* the thoughts expressible in it'.<sup>10</sup>

The parenthetical point in 5.62[3] now amounts to this: "The limits of *thought* are the limits of the only thoughts that I can think". But "the only thoughts that I can think" are none other than "*my* thoughts". So "the limits of thought are the limits of *my* thought". And this is TUA verbatim. Or to echo Kant's famous formulation: If a thought is a thought *at all*, the "I think" must be able to accompany it.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the parenthetical remark introduces the insight of the transcendental unity of apperception. But, crucial as it is, this is only *part* of 5.62[3]. To arrive at solipsism we need the *whole* of 5.62[3]:

The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of *my* world.

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the word 'solipsism' in an unusual sense, detached from such issues as privacy, sense-data, and other minds.

<sup>8</sup> He of course does not mean "the only language that I [e.g., L.W.] *do or happen to* understand [for whatever contingent reason]".

<sup>9</sup> The inexplicitness is due to Wittgenstein's style of extreme compression. The parentheses should be read as 'that is' or 'namely': "[...] the limits of *language*, that is, of the only language that I understand [...]"

<sup>10</sup> This is obvious from the context and requires notice only because there is an importantly different use of the word 'understand' elsewhere in the *Tractatus*, i.e. in 6.54: "anyone who understands *me* eventually recognizes them [the propositions in my book] as nonsensical" (added emphasis).

<sup>11</sup> The '*at all*' translates the stress on 'language' in 5.62[3]. (In the German text the stress is on the definite article in "*die Grenzen der Sprache*". This important stress is, disturbingly, missing in the critical edition of the *Tractatus*, as Sullivan noted: see his 1996, p. 217, n. 42.)

This, with the parenthetical point taken, becomes “The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *my* language mean the limits of *my* world.” So what is still needed to arrive at solipsism is “the limits of *my* language mean the limits of *my* world”.

But this is precisely 5.6 (verbatim if disregarding difference in emphases). We now see very clearly why 5.62[1] says that 5.6 is the “key” to seeing the truth (i.e. insight) of solipsism.<sup>12</sup>

And this “key” is just the second half of the second key-move in my route, that is, the correlativity of *my thought* and *my world* (or <sup>I</sup>correlativity). (The first half, the correlativity of *thought* and *world*, is of course already pervasive in the *Tractatus*, as shown by my initial answer.)

This completes the argument that the two key-moves in the reconstructed three-stop route to *Tractarian* solipsism are grounded in the text of the *Tractatus* itself.

To perspicuously display the transcendental idealist elements on this route, let me sum it up in a simplified formula:

$$(1) + \text{correlativity} + \text{TUA} + \text{}^{\text{I}}\text{correlativity} = (3)$$

(1) is a tautology; correlativity is, as shown by my initial answer, pervasive in the *Tractatus*; TUA is hidden in the parenthetical remark in 5.62[3]; and <sup>I</sup>correlativity is exactly 5.6, Wittgenstein’s “key” to seeing the insight of solipsism.

So far I have treated this “key” distinctly as if it were a separate insight. In fact it is not, but is itself a subtle fusion of correlativity with TUA: Just as *thought* and *world* are intrinsic recipro-

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<sup>12</sup> Wittgenstein’s key to solipsism has often been misidentified. The oldest mistake is by Russell, who in his *Introduction* takes the key to be 5.61 or perhaps 5.61[4] (p. xviii). Hacker (<sup>2</sup>1986, p. 91) misidentifies 5.61[4] to be the key. Pears (1987, p. 163) rightly identifies 5.6 to be the key but on shaky ground. He relies solely on Wittgenstein’s numbering system, which would automatically make 5.62 a comment on 5.6. But this system is not entirely reliable: there are quite a few remarks in the *Tractatus* whose beginning anaphoric expression obviously refers to the immediately preceding remark(s), rather than to the remark one level up on the system (e.g., 3.324, 5.4, 5.634, and 5.64). Sullivan (1996, p. 215, n. 26) provides a better textual ground: in the *Prototractatus* the key is unmistakably 5.6 (or its inessentially different ancestor there). But the best ground for identifying 5.6 as the key is internal. For what is most striking about solipsism is of course the occurrence of the word “*my*” in it. But in 5.61 there is no “*my*” at all (or any other form of the first-person singular pronoun). And the only remark to which the “This remark” at the start of 5.62[1] might refer and which has “*my*” in it is 5.6.

cal correlatives, so are *my thought* and *my world*. – *This* introduction of the philosophical self has a deep Kantian ring. (More will be said about the *subtlety* of this fusion in Chapter 4.)

Thus the simplified route to solipsism in the above formula really amounts to:

$$(1) + \text{correlativity} + \text{TUA} + (\text{correlativity} + \text{TUA}) = (3)$$

That is, though the route seems to invoke three distinct insights, it actually only (repeatedly) invokes two:

$$(1) + \text{correlativity} + \text{TUA} = (3)$$

This displays most clearly the two transcendental idealist elements in the *Tractatus*, namely: (a) *the intrinsic reciprocal correlativity of thought and reality* and (b) *the transcendental unity of apperception* (in its thin, *Tractarian* version). While the former insight is pervasive in the whole *Tractatus*, the latter, distinctively transcendental idealist insight occurs only in the solipsism passage.<sup>13</sup>

This final formula also helps us see clearly that the insight of solipsism, i.e. (3), is in an important sense *empty*. The tautology (1) is of course empty. Correlativity is empty because, as was stressed, the identity of language and reality is entirely formal: the general form of-propositions-and-of-reality in no way specifies how reality is. Lastly, TUA is empty because it was expressly ensured to be a thin version of the insight of the transcendental unity of apperception, whereas in Kant himself this insight (<sup>K</sup>-TUA) has a thick content.<sup>14</sup> So solipsism is the combination of three empty insights. (And this is just what we should expect: philosophy is no *doctrine*.)

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<sup>13</sup> So the solipsism passage must figure centrally in any reading of the *Tractatus* as Kantian. But many such readings are deficient just in this respect. One prominent example is Pears (1987), whose Kantian reading of the *Tractatus* is among the most developed but who has strikingly no discussion of Kant at all in his long chapter on solipsism (chapter 7, in which the only mention of Kant is an inessential passing mention on p. 188).

<sup>14</sup> It is true Kant calls the unity of apperception “an analytical proposition”: B 135. But he then adds that “yet it declares as necessary a synthesis of the manifold given in an intuition, without which that thorough-going identity of self-consciousness could not be thought”. Because this necessary synthesis is at the heart of the synthetic a priori, the insight of the unity of apperception is for

This emptiness of solipsism gives the *full* sense in which the special transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus* is insubstantial: neither the identity of form between language and reality nor the introduction of the philosophical self is a substantial insight. The self steps into philosophy light-footedly.<sup>15</sup>

Wittgenstein says in 5.64 that solipsism, when strictly thought through, coincides with pure realism. It ought now to be clear that this coincidence is an exact analogue of the togetherness of transcendental idealism and empirical realism in Kant. Kant's empirical realism is thick because it includes a species of synthetic a priori knowledge, namely the dynamical synthetic a priori. By contrast, the *Tractatus* rejects the very possibility of the synthetic a priori. But at the same time it keeps the world (the totality of *facts*) firmly in view, thus retaining a thin form of realism. Its thin transcendental idealism and its thin realism are, in a manner deeply analogous to Kant, two sides of the same coin. They are the very same insight expressed in two intrinsically correlative modes, one objective and one subjective. All this gives us a right to treat the "pure" in "pure realism" as yet another word for "empty" or "insubstantial".<sup>16</sup>

This completes the argument that there is a special, insubstantial form of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*.

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Kant really a synthetic (substantial) insight. He thinks that entitling ourselves to the analytic (thin) insight requires winning a synthetic or thick one: "the *analytical* unity of apperception is only possible under the presupposition of some *synthetic* one" (B 133). This is the master idea driving the Transcendental Deduction.

<sup>15</sup> My phrase "steps into" exploits the literal meaning of the verb *eintreten* in "*Das Ich tritt in die Philosophie dadurch ein*" at the beginning of 5.641[2]. It is meant to heighten a sense of emergence of the philosophical I. This I comes, as it were out of nothing or from a higher place, *into* philosophy; or it comes, as it were breaking an eternal silence, to *words*. The words are then of course nonsensical, but it is in the nature of the higher to elude language (6.42[2]).

<sup>16</sup> Note that "pure realism" does not mean "sheer realism" or "realism pure and simple", as the English translations (both O-R and P-McG) might suggest. The word "pure" in 5.64 is an adjective, not an adverb (the German is *reinen*). Wittgenstein means a *kind* of realism; and we have just seen what kind it is.

### 3.3 SECOND ANSWER: *MIND AND WORLD*, THIRD SECTION

But one important point remains. The attentive reader will have noticed that in going from (1) to (2) I made a crucial non-move – I did *not* drop the “my” on the right hand side of the identity, but only the “my” on the left hand side. The retained “my” is of course just the “my” in solipsism, the end station of my route. So how could I be so self-servingly selective?

Textually the answer is that there is a *stress* on the “my” in “The world is *my* world”, i.e., on the “my” that was kept. But this immediately raises the question: what is the point of this stress?

If there is an important sense in which the insight of solipsism is empty, there is surely also an important sense in which it is not. For of course it is not as empty as “The world is the world”, which would be the last station of my route if I dropped both “my” and “my”. So what makes the insight of solipsism so much more interesting than that utterly dull repetition? Or to put the question in other words, *why* does Wittgenstein introduce the “my”?<sup>17</sup>

But this question goes far beyond my main aim in this dissertation (which is to demonstrate *that* there is a kind of transcendental idealism in the *Tractatus*), because it calls for the evaluation of transcendental idealism itself, both in and out of the *Tractatus*. To ask “Why the ‘my’?” is to a large extent to ask “Why transcendental idealism?” I will attempt no answer to this question as it concerns the philosophical tradition initiated by Kant. I will only suggest a partial answer to it as it concerns the *Tractatus* (in Chapter 4).

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<sup>17</sup> In my reconstructed route the question is “Why *retain* the ‘my’?” Concerning Wittgenstein’s own text, the question is “Why *introduce* the ‘my’?” But of course the matter is the same here. It is a matter of retention in my route because the “my” is already introduced at the very first step, namely in the seeding tautology (1).

## 4.0 TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM IN THE *TRACTATUS*, III

This chapter strengthens my interpretation of the *Tractatus*. It does so in two ways. First I briefly discuss two anti-Kantian interpreters of the *Tractatus*, Peter Sullivan and Michael Felber, so as to claim them as allies. I then suggest a partial answer to the large remaining question, namely why Wittgenstein introduces the “*my*” in the solipsism passage. This suggestion will also serve to further ground the most important part of my interpretation (Chapter 3) on the text of the *Tractatus*.

### 4.1 TWO CRITICS OF KANTIAN READINGS OF THE *TRACTATUS*: SULLIVAN AND FELBER

The tradition of reading the *Tractatus* as basically Kantian has of course its critics. A particularly powerful critic is Sullivan. His view is that the *Tractatus* deeply engages transcendental idealism — not however in order to endorse it, but precisely to reject it (as incoherent).<sup>1</sup>

But Sullivan’s reading is no threat to mine. On the contrary, it is a powerful ally. The reason is that he understands ‘transcendental idealism’ to essentially involve a philosophical ambition to establish a *substantial* a priori order of the world (which ambition Kant does of course have). But that is just what I exclude from transcendental idealism as I find it in the *Tractatus*. Sullivan’s interpretation does not (and does not intend to) show that we could not give the label ‘transcendental idealism’ another, *insubstantial* sense to and then apply it to the *Tractatus*. I have argued for a right to do just that. So I can claim that Sullivan’s argument in fact supports mine — by counter-

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<sup>1</sup> See Sullivan (1996) and Sullivan (2004).

point, that is, by bringing out the great force of the anti-Kantian element in the *Tractatus*.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, we both stress the internal formal unity of thought and reality. The difference is that he has no wish to establish a right to see this unity as a point of affinity with Kant, whereas I do.

Another interesting critic of transcendental interpretations of the *Tractatus* is Felber.<sup>3</sup> Felber criticizes, often effectively, a large variety of such interpretations. But, without going into the details of his criticisms, I can also, on a general level, claim support from him by counterpoint.

Now unlike Sullivan, whose anti-Kantian reading is nearly exclusively focused on the issue of the substantial a priori, Felber treats a wider range of issues, many of which bear more closely on Kant than Sullivan chooses to. Two kinds of issues are worth mentioning briefly. First, Felber is explicit about the crucial role of the machinery of the Transcendental Aesthetic in Kant. Under that rubric he discusses in detail, and often with insight, the deep-going differences between Kant and Wittgenstein concerning intuition, space and time, mathematics, and identity. Second, Felber is alive to the *active, objectivity-constituting* role Kant gives to his transcendental subject and has an alert grasp that it is precisely the Aesthetic that sets the stage for a priori action by this subject. He rightly finds no such subject in the *Tractatus*, since the *Tractarian* metaphysical subject is not endowed with “the creative, constituting powers of Transcendental Logic” (Felber, 1998, p. 120).

But these two points are just what my interpretation also insists on, though from very different angles. For I have insisted that we must properly acknowledge the lack of anything like Kantian sensibility in the *Tractatus*, which is of course closely related to the absence of anything like a Transcendental Aesthetic in it. I have also laid emphasis on the emptiness or insubstantiality of the *Tractarian* version of the insight of the transcendental unity of apperception. This allows me to insist that the *Tractarian* subject is not an active metaphysical subject that constitutes objectivity by bringing a thick “transcendental content into its representations by means of” its synthetic activity a priori (A79 / B105). The *Tractarian* metaphysical subject, to repeat, steps into philosophy light-footedly.

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<sup>2</sup> The way Sullivan brings out the anti-Kantian element in the *Tractatus* is very different from mine. He concentrates on and is especially illuminating about the connection, noted by Wittgenstein at the beginning of 5.634, between this anti-Kantian element (in the form of a restated rejection of the substantial a priori in 5.634) and what is wrong with the misuse of the visual-field metaphor by Wittgenstein’s imaginary dialectical opponent in 5.633-5.6331.

<sup>3</sup> See Felber (1998).



Let me sum up how I can count Felber as an ally by giving an edited quotation of a passage from him (1998, pp. 119-120):

For Kant only a Transcendental Logic *qua* “logic of content” can, in combination with the a priori forms of intuition, secure reference to objective reality. It expresses, I think, the heart of 6.13 [“logic is transcendental”] to say that formal a priori logic is transcendental in that it, as such, bears on objective reality. Thus, paradoxically as it may sound, the statement that logic is transcendental means that we need no Transcendental Logic and no Transcendental Philosophy, because logic already is in possession of necessary applicability to the world.

What I have attempted in my interpretation is to earn a right to see ‘*Tractarian* transcendentalism’ as at once a continuation and a repudiation of Kantian Transcendentalism, just in the way Felber puts it. To note this combination of continuity and discontinuity is yet another way of noting the ‘squeeze’ between the Kantian and the anti-Kantian lines in the *Tractatus* that I have tried to bring into relief. My effort is in fact reinforced by Sullivan and Felber, whose emphasis on the anti-Kantian aspect helps sharpen the relief.

Seen in this light, the *Tractatus* undertakes to transform Kant’s transcendental idealism. The task is one of disburdening the subject of the heavy weight of philosophical doctrine—almost the weight of the world—while retaining the light, austere insight into the inseparable connectedness of mind and world. It is just the insubstantiality and austerity of this insight that makes it so hard to get *hold of*, and so hard to *rest with*.

## 4.2 A PARTIAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION: “WHY THE ‘MY’?”

I promised to give a partial answer to the question why Wittgenstein introduces the philosophical self. This answer will have to remain partial because it seems almost certain that the introduction of the self is meant to be connected to the later remarks concerning the ethical (which is the same as the aesthetic: 6.421) and perhaps also the religious. (These are the explicitly mystical remarks in the 6.4’s and 6.5’s.) But seeing this connection, whatever it may be, is perhaps the hardest task

in understanding the author of the *Tractatus*. I shall make no attempt at it, leaving my suggestion a partial one.

#### 4.2.1 The Metaphysical Subject as a *Heightening*

The suggestion can be put this way. The introduction of the philosophical self serves to *heighten* the insight into the intrinsic connectedness of language and world that is already pervasively present, like a permanent background, before the solipsism passage — the insight comes *home* when we realize that language is *my* language and, correlatively, the world is *my* world.

This heightening is *subtle*. The subtlety is that, when in a moment of heightening the insight into the intrinsic connectedness of language and world comes home or comes to *me*, *nothing substantially new* is being introduced, despite a very natural, quite irresistible temptation to think so. This subtlety, the subtlety of introducing the philosophical self without introducing a substantial presence, is just the subtlety of the fusion of TUA and correlativity into <sup>I</sup>correlativity that I noted earlier (Chapter 3). That is, noting this subtlety is just noting the emptiness of the insight of TUA, or the light-footedness of the self when it steps into philosophy. In other words, it is to stress that the insight of <sup>I</sup>correlativity is the very same insight of correlativity — with a heightened sense of self.

That is the suggestion.<sup>4</sup> But the temptation to make more of this heightening is so extraordinarily strong that we will likely not be able to *rest* with the subtlety until it is brought home again negatively, i.e., by considering likely ways one may fail to appreciate it. I consider two such failures in the following. The first will be quickly dismissed. But consideration of the second failure will, by highlighting a salient feature of the solipsism passage so far not considered, enable us to see Wittgenstein as acutely aware of the temptation to think of the metaphysical subject as a substantial presence.

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<sup>4</sup> That the introduction of the metaphysical subject is a kind of heightening is also stylistically registered by the suddenness of 5.6, which introduces the subject for the first time. At 5.6 the metaphysical subject is suddenly on the scene, as it were out of nothingness. (I mean a suddenness that is *extra* to the cadences coded into the *Tractatus* by its numbering system — here a steep rise from 5.5571, a 5<sup>th</sup>-level remark, to 5.6, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-level one.)

First, one fails to appreciate the subtlety of 5.6 (<sup>I</sup>correlativity) if one thinks that it introduces the self by *analogy*, as would be expressed by the ‘similarly’ in the following move from correlativity to <sup>I</sup>correlativity: *Thought* and *world* are intrinsic correlatives; similarly, *my thought* and *my world* are intrinsic correlatives. This is failure because analogy implies disanalogy, i.e. modification of that from which analogical extension is made. But, as I stressed, the insight of TUA is entirely empty and so its fusion with correlativity cannot modify the latter. Furthermore, an analogy would simply be too bland, too thoughtless, to befit the momentousness of the introduction of the metaphysical subject.<sup>5</sup>

The second way in which one may fail to appreciate the subtlety of the fusion is to think of it as an *instantiation*, i.e. to think of <sup>I</sup>correlativity as a special case of correlativity. This is a failure because it has the wrong implication that the self being introduced is in some way *special*, as it is conceived as one among other possible candidates of instantiation. But this means that the self is bringing, via its peculiarity, some special *restriction*: *my thought* and *my world* will in some way be peculiar to *me* and so inaccessible to a different self. It does not matter what that “some way” exactly is. All that matters is that the very idea of a *particularized* self, as we may call it, guarantees that *my thought* and *my world* will be in some way peculiar to *me*, however this “*me*” is specifically conceived.<sup>6</sup>

But this particularizing of the self falsifies the insight of solipsism. This can actually already be seen from the emptiness of TUA – the self is not introduced by invoking a *substantial* insight.

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<sup>5</sup> To appreciate the momentousness, note that solipsism (“The world is *my world*”) together with 5.63 (“I am *my world*”) yield “I am the world”. (One can appreciate this without thinking it mad, as we shall see later.)

<sup>6</sup> I have formulated the ideas of particularization and restriction extremely generally here so as to cover not only particularization in the empirical sense (empirical selves, e.g. Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell, are according to the *Tractatus* bundles of facts) but also particularization in the metaphysical sense (e.g., different kinds of Kantian subjects with different particular forms of sensibility). This second kind of particularization, at least in the form of a Kant-style epistemological concern, can seem irrelevant to the *Tractatus*, which drastically relegates epistemology. But the heart of Kant’s Copernican revolution, to put it crudely, is precisely that epistemology *is* metaphysics: forms of sensibility translate into forms of substantial necessity. And it is just because the *Tractatus* lacks anything like a Transcendental Aesthetic that it can claim the only necessity is logical necessity (6.37). Admittedly this second kind of particularization was probably remote from Wittgenstein’s consideration, but it is not irrelevant for reading Wittgenstein in relation to Kant.

That would mean restriction.<sup>7</sup> But textually the point has so far relatively limited contact with the solipsism passage. The main points of contact so far, 5.6 and 5.62, are of course crucial, but there is a good deal more to the solipsism passage.

#### 4.2.2 Textual Considerations

So the question is: “Does Wittgenstein oppose particularizing the self in the rest of the passage?” And the answer is: “Yes, and massively”. – A very large portion of the solipsism passage can be seen as devoted to warning against particularizing the self. To show this, let me begin with some preliminary general remarks.

What corresponds to particularizing the self in the solipsism passage (which does not use the term) has various manifestations: treating the self as locatable *in* the world, or *describable* (i.e. in propositions with sense), or a subject matter of science, in particular of psychology. Any of these will particularize the self, for they all amount to treating the self as some particular fact or collection of facts. Since for the *Tractatus* facts are by nature *contingent* (no proposition *has to be true*), this amounts to turning the self into a contingency, which destroys the very idea of a philosophical or metaphysical self.

With these preparatory remarks, we are ready to identify Wittgenstein’s numerous warnings against particularizing the self. I need not and will not go very far into the details of the warnings, but only as far as is sufficient for bringing out their common cautionary character.

First, Wittgenstein emphatically warns that the insight of solipsism is something that “cannot be *said*” (5.62[2]). This is emphatic not just because the word “*said*” is stressed, but more importantly because the words “cannot be *said*” occur at all. The occurrence is redundant: solipsism is plainly meant as a piece of *philosophy*, which automatically makes it unsayable. So Wittgenstein is making a point of noting the unsayability of solipsism in 5.62. But that is just a way of emphasizing the non-particularity of the self. For if the “I” were something particular *in* the

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<sup>7</sup> The connection between substantiality and restriction here is treated in detail and depth by Sullivan (1996).

world, then “I” or “my world” (these come to the same because “I am my world”: 5.63) would only be a *part* of the world. But then “The world is *my* world” would not be unsayable but false.<sup>8</sup>

Second, the same cautionary emphasis is also plain in 5.641. For in the sentence “Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way”, the two words “non-psychological” and “philosophy” are also redundant (for philosophy is non-scientific and so non-psychological). The redundancy is evidently meant as emphasis. And there is further warning via redundancy when Wittgenstein goes on to *elaborate* the point (in 5.641[3]): The philosophical self is “not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals”. – *Of course* not.

Third, Wittgenstein twice emphatically issues the same warning at the most abstract level, in 5.632 and 5.641[3]. In both passages he emphasizes that the subject does not belong to the world (5.632) or is not a part of it (5.641[3]), but is rather a limit of the world (5.632) or the limit of the world (5.641[3]). But to say the self does not belong to the world or is not any part of it is just to say it cannot be found *in* the world. Moreover, Wittgenstein’s lack of unease about the difference between speaking of the self as *a* limit of the world and as *the* limit of the world, given how very fastidious he is with his words, shows again that the self is not conceived as something particular.

Fourth, a good portion of the solipsism passage, namely from 5.631 through 5.6331, is especially devoted to showing that the philosophical self *cannot* be found in the world. I confine myself here to making two points, one short and one long.

The first point is that the question in 5.633[1] “Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?” is clearly rhetorical.<sup>9</sup> The following argument (5.633[2]-[3], 5.6331), however it is to be understood exactly, is clearly intended to defeat the idea that one can find the subject *in* the world.

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<sup>8</sup> It is no objection to note that the “I”, conceived as a particular existence, might (highly improbably but possibly) be not a proper part of the world but the whole of it. For “The world is *my* world” would then be true. That is, it would be an accidental truth, not an unsayable philosophical insight.

<sup>9</sup> This important emphasis on the ‘in’ in 5.633[1] is, disturbingly, missing in the critical edition of the *Tractatus*.

The second point concerns a remark that seems to be an insurmountable obstacle to finding a metaphysical subject in the *Tractatus*. This is 5.631[1], where Wittgenstein declares point-blank that “[t]here is no such thing as the thinking, representing, subject”. The bluntness of this remark has driven some readers (e.g., Hacker) to conclude that the thinking subject spoken of in 5.631[1] is *not* the metaphysical subject explicitly introduced a little later.<sup>10</sup>

But such a reading, as Pears has pointed out, is textually untenable. It would entirely disrupt the flow of the text. The reader, at the rhetorical question, “Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?”, could rightly protest: “But who said anything about the metaphysical subject?” (Pears 1987, p. 180).

Such a reading is also philosophically untenable. The philosophical self or metaphysical subject we have been speaking of is of course the subject figuring in the crucial parenthetical remark in 5.62[3], “that language which alone I understand”. But this subject is, as we have seen (Chapter 3), the *thinking* subject. Otherwise the crucial moves pivoted on *thoughts* cannot be made and solipsism cannot be arrived at by turning Wittgenstein’s “key” to it. So the subject figuring in the insight of solipsism, “the world is *my* world”, is just the thinking subject. Wittgenstein can hardly be rejecting it.

All of this means that we should not allow ourselves to be shell-shocked by the bluntness of 5.631[1]. We should instead ask whether Wittgenstein is not denying the thinking subject only in *one* sense. And that is exactly what the immediately following remark 5.631[2] makes clear. For in this remark, which is clearly an *elaboration* on 5.631[1], he says that there is *a* sense (“an important sense”) in which there is no subject – the subject can never be mentioned in the book *The World as I Found It*. But this is just to say that the subject cannot be found *in* the world, for to be locatable in the world is to be describable in that book (this is just another formulation of correlativity). So to point out this important sense in which there is no subject is once again just to warn

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<sup>10</sup> Hacker says that the subject referred to in 5.632 is ‘of course’ not the thinking subject but the metaphysical subject. He justifies this by saying flatly that this is ‘clear’ from the following remark 5.633, ‘and confirmed’ by the source of 5.633 in the *Notebooks* (Hacker, <sup>2</sup>1986, p. 86). But the only thing that is clear is that in 5.633 the metaphysical subject is *explicitly* spoken of for the first time. But this does not in itself mean that a different subject is being introduced. (Hacker also gives the impression that the source of 5.633 in the *Notebooks* is a further support of his reading. But the source, *Notebooks*, 4.8.1916, is essentially the same as 5.633 and so provides no *confirmation*.)

against particularizing it. On the other hand, 5.631[2] also says that writing the book *The World as I Found It* (or rather a certain chapter of it) is “a method of isolating the subject”.<sup>11</sup>

To sum up, Wittgenstein massively sets himself against particularizing the philosophical self in the solipsism passage. The remarks involved (namely 5.62[2], 5.631–5.6331, 5.641[1] and [3]) make up about *half* of the whole passage.

### 4.2.3 Special Characteristics of the Metaphysical Subject

The massive scale of Wittgenstein’s warning against particularizing the self in the solipsism passage is surely remarkable, especially since the passage is very compressed by the standards of the *Tractatus*. So the question arises: “Why all this emphasis on the non-particularity of the self?”

The answer, in light of the suggestion I made above, should be clear: it is to fight the temptation to treat the self as a *substantial presence*. Or in other words, it is to insist on the emptiness of the I, on the lightness of its footsteps when it steps into philosophy.

What comes into focus here is tough balance achieved by Wittgenstein: The heightening of a sense of the self is balanced by emphatic warnings against temptations to hypostasize that sense. (This balance is, in part, once again a manifestation of the squeeze between the Kantian and anti-Kantian elements in the *Tractatus*.)

Let me stress this theme of balance by further anchoring it in the solipsism passage. The balance may be recast this way: Even though the philosophical self cannot be mentioned *in* the book *The World as I Found It*, it *is* mentioned somewhere, namely in its title.<sup>12</sup> We can shrink this title into a single word **I**, because *the world as I found it* is just *my world*, and *my world* is the same as *I* (5.63: “I am my world”). And to note this is just to recast the second sentence of 5.64: The self of solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point, with which reality, described in that book, is coordinated.

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<sup>11</sup> Felber interprets 5.631[1] as declaring that it is ‘in an absolute sense that there is no subject that thinks’ (1998, p. 102). But it is hard to maintain the ‘in an absolute sense’ in the face of 5.631[2] as we just considered it.

<sup>12</sup> I owe this point to Kremer (2004, p. 70).

Echoing Wittgenstein's talk of the self as the *limit* of the world, we may say that the self corresponds to the *binding* of the book. The binding is of course not *in* the book, but the book would fall apart without it. The content of the book and the binding of the book go together, just as pure transcendental idealism (i.e. solipsism) and pure realism coincide (5.64, first sentence).

This togetherness or coincidence gives the sense in which *I am the world* (this is the result of combining solipsism and 5.63), namely: the heightening of the sense of self through shrinking to a point is *at the same time* the heightening of the sense of reality. The special identity or balance Wittgenstein achieves here can be recaptured by echoing a striking passage in the *Notebooks*: the soul (i.e. self) is the *world-soul*.<sup>13</sup> And to say that the soul or self is the *world-soul* (as it were the light pervading the whole world) is yet another way of emphasizing its non-particularity.<sup>14</sup>

Of course what is being heightened is a *metaphysical* sense of self and of reality. This, however, is likely to be misunderstood. To prevent misunderstanding in this area, as well as to firmly establish the subtle balance of solipsism and pure realism, it must be stressed that the point to which the self shrinks is not a point of *view* – insofar as occupying a point of view implies being able to *think* about the totality of what is available to that point of view.

For the totality available to the point-like metaphysical subject is nothing but the world itself, the world as a limited whole.<sup>15</sup> But to think of the world *as a whole* requires a perspective

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<sup>13</sup> The passage (*Notebooks*, 23.5.1915) reads: "There is really only one world soul [*Weltseele*], which I for preference call *my* soul and as which alone I conceive what I call the souls of others."

<sup>14</sup> Diamond finds in the *Tractatus* a private language argument that is both significantly similar to and significantly different from the private language argument in the *Investigations*. She writes (2000, p. 283): "The *Tractatus* provides us with arguments against the Russellian idea of someone else's private object, the beetle in Bismarck's box. [...], but the *Tractatus* left unexamined a questionable conception of what it is for our words to be about things in our own minds." As is shown by this quote (and by her whole paper), Diamond works with a *contrast* between, on the one hand, "me" or "us" (whether singular or plural does not matter in this context and Diamond moves freely between the two) and, on the other hand, "someone else", say, Bismarck. But recognizing this (Russellian) contrast amounts precisely to particularizing the first person: the "I" or "we" is understood in such a way that at least one thinking being, say Bismarck, is excluded as a bearer of the "I" or "we". If my interpretation of the solipsism passage is right, it is a fundamental mistake to take *Wittgenstein* to recognize this contrast. Diamond does just this, for she takes the solipsism passage to underpin Wittgenstein's (primarily Russell-targeting) private language argument (see especially her references to the 5.6's on p. 282 and p. 286).

<sup>15</sup> It is true that the world is explicitly said to be "a limited whole" only once and only very late in the *Tractatus*: in 6.45, which is



*external* to it. This, given the intrinsic correlativity of world and language, is the same as a perspective external to language. But to suppose that such a perspective is possible is incoherent, as becomes manifest when we realize that this supposition leads to either the patently incoherent supposition of illogical thought or to a vicious regress. The incoherence is, to put it in a characteristic phrase from John McDowell, the incoherence of a *sideways-on* perspective on the world or language, an incoherence that metaphysicians are particularly prone to.<sup>16</sup>

The above *reductio ad absurdum* line of thought is highly illuminatingly connected by Sullivan to Wittgenstein's cryptic argument against the misuse (by his imaginary dialectical opponent) of the visual field metaphor in 5.633-5.6331. The particular moral I want to draw from Sullivan's contribution here is that the philosophical self, even though it is a point, is not a point of view (in the intellectual sense of 'view', i.e., in a sense tied to *thought*).<sup>17</sup>

Felber is also alive to this point. He puts it thus: "the *Tractatus* can be said to be 'holistic' in that it holds no special philosophical *point of view* (e.g., an ontological point of view as opposed to an idealistic one, or *vice versa*)".<sup>18</sup> To say that the *Tractatus* holds no transcendental-idealistic point of view is yet another way to say that its philosophical point-self occupies no philosophical point of view. It is also another way to draw out the implication, regarding the philosophical self, from the fundamental idea of the *Tractatus*, namely that the propositions of logic *say nothing*.<sup>19</sup>

Having enlisted Sullivan and Felber to help drive home this special warning against hypothesizing the philosophical self into even a *point of view* (which might appear very insubstantial

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later than the solipsism passage. But the conception of the world as a limited whole is implicitly pervasive in the book (see *TLP* 1 and 1.1 for the idea of "whole" or "totality" and 5.5561 for the idea of limitedness). So it is appropriate to invoke this conception in discussing the solipsism passage.

<sup>16</sup> See his *Mind and World*, Lecture II, section 5 and *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> This is not how Sullivan himself puts it. He tends to see the shrinking imagery in 5.64 as one of disappearing or vanishing. This is not incorrect. But I want to keep Wittgenstein's imagery of an extensionless point that *remains* after the shrinking. This accords with the text of 5.64 better and might be crucial for relating the solipsism passage to the later mystical remarks (see text below).

<sup>18</sup> See Felber (1998, p. 119). Felber intends "idealistic" in a generic transcendental sense and by "ontological" he appears to mean "realist". So what his parenthetical remark amounts to, by my lights, is again just the subtle balance of solipsism and pure realism. What he tries to capture by the word "holistic" is the same as what I try to capture by the word "balance". I am indebted here to Sullivan, who uses the word "symmetry" to capture the reciprocal dependence of logic and world (see his 1996).

<sup>19</sup> See Felber (1998), on and around p. 119, for further discussion.

but in fact is not), we can now reaffirm with a clear conscience that what Wittgenstein's introduction of the self heightens is indeed a *metaphysical* sense of self and of reality. It is a heightening without adding, a point without a point of view.

Let me emphasize that the above answer to the question "why the 'my'?" must remain partial, not least because I have said nothing about how Wittgenstein's dual heightening, the heightening of the sense of self and the simultaneous heightening of the sense of reality, might help us see the connection, whatever it might be, between logic and ethics, the only two things that are said to be transcendental in the *Tractatus* (6.13 and 6.421). But I hope to have given an interpretation of the solipsism passage that is in harmony with efforts to achieve that connection. So let me end by offering a possible hint on this score.

I said, with Sullivan and Felber, that the philosophical point-self is not a point of view. But I also said that it is not a point of view on the totality of what is *available* to the philosophical self. So *how* is that totality nonetheless available to it? The answer is: *non-intellectually* (since I have explicitly tied 'view' to the intellectual, to what is proper to *thought*). The special mode in which the world as a whole becomes available to the philosophical self is *contemplative*: "The contemplation of the world *sub specie aeterni* is its contemplation as a limited whole" (6.45).<sup>20</sup>

Now the hint is that the fundamental character of this contemplation is *aesthetic*. This is also hinted at by Wittgenstein's talk of the *feeling* of the world as a limited whole as what is mystical (6.45). To achieve this feeling, one must induce the intellect to stop its motions.<sup>21</sup> And to acquire the ability to achieve this feeling, or to become able to throw away the ladder after climbing it, is to acquire the ability to stop *doing* philosophy when one wants to. *That* is the real discovery. And if we allow the special light from the mystical remarks to cast back on the solipsism passage, we might also add that the real discovery there (the "truth" of solipsism) is really a *mood* — a mood [*Stimmung*] of attunement [*Gestimmtsein*] with the world.

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<sup>20</sup> I prefer the older O-R translation of 6.45 to the P-McG translation. The key word here, *Anschauung*, is rendered as "contemplation" by O-R and as "to view" by P-McG.

<sup>21</sup> Russell, when commenting on Wittgenstein's insistence that the mystical cannot be said but only shown, confesses to "a certain sense of intellectual discomfort" (*Introduction*, p. xxi). It is interesting that Russell, who is himself not unresponsive to the mystical, appears to have failed to reflect that his discomfort is exactly *intellectual*.

The ancestor of 5.641[1] (*Notebooks* 11.8.1916) says that there really is a non-psychological sense in which philosophy can and must speak of the self. The 'must' is dropped in the *Tractatus*. Perhaps we have just seen why. Philosophy *can* speak of the self but does not *have to*. For just as the philosophical self can arise out of nothingness in a moment of heightening, it can also recede into nothingness in a moment of quietude. As activity philosophy is performative, but silence can also be a special mode of performativity.

## 5.0 THE INNER AND THE OUTER IN THE LATER WITTGENSTEIN

This second part of the dissertation (Chapters 5-10) is a study of one strand in what is commonly called the Private Language Argument in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>1</sup> My focus is on *the relation between the inner and the outer*. The word 'inner' is of course not meant in any literally spatial sense. Rather, to speak of the inner is just another way to speak of *consciousness*.

The relation between the inner and the outer can be broadly divided into two cases, in a way that roughly matches the fundamental Kantian distinction between understanding and sensibility, or as I will frequently say, between the *intellectual* and the *sensuous*. The relation, in the intellectual case, is that between thought and its expression in action. In the sensuous case, it is the relation between sensation and its expression in behavior.

Thought and action expressive of thought are distinctive of rational animals, while sensation and behavior expressive of sensation are distinctive of animals in general. So the two broad cases correspond to the rational and animal nature in us, respectively.

This basic division is also present in the large-scale structure of the *Investigations*. Roughly speaking, Wittgenstein's reflections on rule-following concern the intellectual while his so-called Private Language Argument concern the sensuous.

Of course the distinction is much more supple and flexible in the *Investigations* than in Kant. Wittgenstein is well aware of the extreme *variety* of cases. Accordingly, I will use the distinction between the intellectual and the sensuous in a rough and ready manner. Under *thoughts* I include opinions, states or processes of understanding, intentions, questions, commands, and certain sorts

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<sup>1</sup> I will not try to fix exactly which sections in the *Investigations* constitute the Private Language Argument or what the Argument is, partly because the label 'Private Language Argument' is in certain ways misleading. But I will sometimes use this label to designate, in a conveniently indeterminate manner, a stretch of text in the *Investigations*. (Commentators usually fix this stretch to be §§ 243-315.)

of memory, e.g., memory of the gist of a speech or of the steps of a proof. Under *sensations* I include sensations of pain and pleasure, of shock and fear, of certain kinds of desire, the sensations involved in sense-perception, and certain sorts of memory, e.g., memory of smells and of faces.

My focus will be on the sensuous case of the relation between the inner and the outer. This is not to say that the intellectual does not come into consideration. It does. In fact, it must. The reason is roughly Kantian: the intellectual and the sensuous in us must be understood together.

But I will not focus on this Kantian theme of the distinction yet unity between understanding and sensibility. Rather, my focus is on the distinction yet unity between sensation and its expression in behavior. Still, the Kantian theme will be constantly in the background. Sometimes it will even come to the foreground.

## 5.1 ANOTHER STRAND IN THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE ARGUMENT

John McDowell, in his essay “One Strand in the Private Language Argument”, gives a distinctive reading of the Private Language Argument.<sup>2</sup>

What is distinctive of this reading is that it places Wittgenstein’s text under a particular lens. This is the lens of

a general investigation of dualism of conceptual scheme and pre-conceptual given: that is, of the philosophical temptation to suppose that the conceptual structures that figure in experience ... are the result of our imposing conceptual form on something received in pre-conceptual shape (1998a, p. 279).

Applying this lens is meant to bring into focus a central strand in Wittgenstein, a strand that now appears in the form of an attack on this dualism as it figures in philosophical accounts of our inner life. The specific idea attacked, seen through this lens, is that “a stream of consciousness is made up of non-conceptual items that justify conceptualizations of them” (1998a, p. 280).

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<sup>2</sup> See McDowell, 1998a, Essay 13, pp. 279-296.

McDowell summarizes what he sees under this lens thus (1998a, p. 280): “Opposition to the dualism makes good sense of some of what he [Wittgenstein] says. I think it leaves some of what he says unexplained, and some looking positively mistaken.”

McDowell’s discussion of this anti-dualistic strand in Wittgenstein is excellent: he has, with characteristic depth and precision, brought out something highly important in Wittgenstein. But I want to question his criticism of certain specific passages in Wittgenstein, namely those that look “positively mistaken” under the lens. The passages in question, § 304 and § 293, though small in number, are important enough to merit a more sympathetic reconsideration. On the reading that I will be recommending, these passages are perfectly in harmony with the main themes in this area of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, including the strand that McDowell focuses on.

This reading is meant to help bring into focus a different strand in the Private Language Argument. This is Wittgenstein’s attack on another dualism, namely the dualistic conception of the inner and the outer as two radically separate, independently intelligible realms. (This other strand and the strand McDowell focuses on are different, since the distinction between the inner and the outer and the distinction between the conceptual and the non-conceptual cut across each other, as becomes obvious when we consider animals without conceptual capacity.)

There is another large purpose that I hope my reading will serve, namely to bring out an implicit but important thought in this area of Wittgenstein’s philosophy that appears not to have received enough emphasis by McDowell or by others. The *general* form of this thought has already been emphasized by McDowell in a different paper. It is the diagnostic thought that an important cause of traditional philosophical difficulties about the relation between the inner and the outer is the tendency to fall into an *objectifying conception of the human*. But McDowell’s specific target in that paper is the tendency to objectify human behaviour, or the outer aspect of our life.<sup>3</sup> What I want to bring out, in the same spirit but more emphatically, is that one deep-rooted disease Wittgenstein wants to fight is the tendency to objectify our *inner* life. If objectifying human behavior alienates others from oneself, objectifying our inner life alienates us from ourselves. The disease is perhaps at its most dehumanizing when it bites *inward*.

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<sup>3</sup> This is his “Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge” (Essay 17 in his 1998b, especially pp. 393-4).

The dehumanizing effect of objectifying human behavior has also been noted by McDowell in a discussion of Marx's notion of the alienation of labour: the degradation of human productive activity, which should ideally be the very expression of human freedom, to being the slave of our merely animal needs.<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein does not figure in that discussion. My aim is to interpret him as fighting the objectification of our inner life in a way that echoes Marx, that is, as fighting what may be called inner alienation or self-alienation.

The general moral in this area of Wittgenstein's philosophy is that we must restore the concept of a human being to its proper place in philosophy — as a seamless living whole.

## 5.2 PRELIMINARY SPECIFICATION OF THE IDEA OF PRIVACY

The idea of a private language is officially introduced in § 243.<sup>5</sup> It is formulated there as follows:

[...] The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language.

Too much focus on this first specification of the idea of a private language can mislead. E.g., one can be misled into treating the word “so [*also*]” as introducing a *conclusion*.<sup>6</sup> But the second sentence is not a conclusion drawn from the first, but just a spelling out of the word “only”. This becomes obvious in a second specification of the idea of a private language in § 269:

Sounds which no one else understands but which I ‘*appear to understand*’ might be called a “private language”.

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<sup>4</sup> See his *Mind and World*, the last two pages of Lecture VI, Section 4 (pp. 117-19 in the 1996 edition).

<sup>5</sup> I say ‘officially’ to make room for the view that the Private Language Argument is already contained succinctly as a corollary in § 202.

<sup>6</sup> This is what Hacker claims (<sup>2</sup>1986, p. 254).

Here the clause “which no one else understands” is plainly not presented as a conclusion but as part of the specification. More generally, if one had to compress the basic thrust of the Private Language Argument into one single sentence, it would not read, as the misreading would have it, “If only I can understand it, *then* others cannot understand me when I speak it (so it is not truly a language, a system of *communication*)”, but more like this: “If others cannot understand it, then *I* cannot understand it either — I only ‘*appear to understand*’ it.” To put it by using Wittgenstein’s own words in a different but closely connected context: “if as a matter of logic you exclude other people’s having something, it loses even its sense to say that you have it” (§ 398a).<sup>7</sup> This formulation makes a basic point explicit: The ‘can’ in § 243, which is absorbed into the ‘understand’ in § 269, is meant as a logical ‘can’.<sup>8</sup> This fixes the special sense of ‘private’ meant by Wittgenstein: a private language is one that “only I can understand” – as a matter of logic. (The words ‘private’ and ‘privacy’ will be used in this sense throughout.)

A narrow focus on the formulation in § 243 can also lead to misunderstanding of the nature and scope of the Private Language Argument. It is the misunderstanding that Wittgenstein’s sole or main concern is *sensations* (which are presented as the point of attraction for the idea of a private language in § 243). But Wittgenstein’s reflections in this area are of very general import, as should be clear from the context of the second specification of a private language: § 269 is about understanding a word — *any* word.

We can get a rough sense of the range of the Private Language Argument by listing some of its topics other than sensations: intention (§ 247), images (§§ 251 and 280), memory of images (§ 265), understanding a word (§ 269), thinking (§§ 316-318), and the ceremony of one’s right hand giving money to the left hand (§ 268).<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, provided that we keep in mind the general import of Wittgenstein’s reflections, sensations are a good area to focus on, in part because their *sensuous* character seems to be a particularly strong source of the temptation to fall into a radical idea of privacy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I have restored Wittgenstein’s “even [*auch*]”, which is missing in Anscombe’s translation.

<sup>8</sup> The way the word ‘understand’ in § 269 contains a ‘can’ has a parallel in *TLP* 5.62: “the only language that I [can] understand”.

<sup>9</sup> This last example, which is used as an analogy, is what might be called a public private ceremony.

<sup>10</sup> Thus many contemporary philosophers of mind speak of “the hard problem of consciousness” in connection with the sensuous qualities of experience, treating them as radically non-physical or non-natural.



Sensations are also Wittgenstein's topic in the two sections over which I will take issue with McDowell: § 304 and § 293. These sections are particularly important, because in them Wittgenstein gives two general diagnoses on the idea of a private object, which is at the heart of the idea of a private language. This is the idea of an object that only I, but not others, can know of. Thus I could not, even if I tried, tell others what kind of thing my private object is (because being told is a way of acquiring knowledge).

## 6.0 MCDOWELL ON § 304 AND § 293

This chapter discusses McDowell's treatment of § 304 and § 293. Its aim is to gain a firm grip on the text of § 304a and § 293b. This will serve as a preparation for my treatment (in later chapters) of Wittgenstein's two general diagnoses, in § 304b and in § 293c, of the idea of a private object.

### 6.1 PRELIMINARY TEXTUAL CONSIDERATION OF § 304

The passages McDowell singles out for criticism are drawn from § 304 and § 293. He juxtaposes the target passages as follows (1998a, p. 283):

“And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a nothing.”—Not at all. It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here. [§ 304]

The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something* [...]. That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’ the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. [§ 293]

Before discussing how McDowell reads these passages, some textual remarks are called for. This is because the text of § 304 is very slippery and requires special care. § 304 in full reads:

But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior with pain and pain-behavior without any pain?”—Admit it? What greater difference could there be?—“And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a nothing.”—Not at all. It is not a something, but not a nothing either!

The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here.

The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please.

It is clear that by ‘paradox’ Wittgenstein means the intensely paradoxical-sounding sentence “It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either”. I will call it the paradox of § 304.

I have slightly changed Anscombe’s original translation to avoid a risk of being misled by it. The fact that the risk is very slight but *has* misled people shows how much care § 304 requires.

The risk-inducing sentence in Anscombe’s original translation is the last one in § 304a: “We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here.” It is in the present perfect, while the original is in the simple past [“*Wir verwarfen nur*”]. I have therefore deleted the “have” in the modified quotation above.<sup>1</sup>

The risk is this. The present-perfect rendering gives the wrong impression that the grammar rejected by Wittgenstein is *to be found in § 304*. This impression can be very easily reinforced by the word “here” in the sentence: “here” can seem to mean “here in § 304”. Under this impression, one will look for the relevant grammar in § 304 or more exactly in that part of it that precedes the words “We have only rejected”. This generates much pressure on that text, because it contains no obvious candidate for rejection. One way to release that pressure is to take the relevant grammar to be somehow *subtly* present in that text, e.g., in the phrase “the sensation itself”.<sup>2</sup> Another is to allow the pressure to find release in the *second* paragraph of § 304, in which one now locates the

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<sup>1</sup> I have also (1) corrected Anscombe’s “pain-behavior accompanied by pain” into “pain-behavior with pain” [“*Schmerzbenehmen mit Schmerzen*”] (2) added an emphasis on the second instance of “something” and (3) restored Wittgenstein’s emphasis on “one” in “always functions in *one* way” [“*funktioniere immer auf eine Weise*”]. There will be occasion for comment on (1) and (2).

<sup>2</sup> For example, David Finkelstein (2003, pp. 139-40) suggests that what Wittgenstein is really doing when he states the paradox is implicitly rejecting the interlocutor’s use of the phrase “the sensation itself” as a piece of disguised nonsense, rather than straightforwardly answering that the sensation itself is *not* a nothing. I think this is false subtlety. In Finkelstein it has several sources, but Anscombe’s ‘have’ seems to be one of them.

relevant grammar, thereby in effect treating the paradoxical statement in § 304a as a promissory note and § 304b as its cashing out.<sup>3</sup>

The risk goes away once we realize that the last sentence of § 304a is in the simple past, just like the immediately preceding one. The two sentences are of a piece: “The conclusion was only that [...]. We only rejected [...].” Both the conclusion and the rejection took place *before* § 304, and “here” does not mean “here in § 304” but “in this region of philosophy”.

*Where*, then, was the conclusion reached and the rejection made? The answer is: § 293. This reference in § 304 to § 293 will become amply clear when we discuss their contents in detail. For now let it suffice to mention two clear textual signs. § 293 in full reads:

If I say of myself that it is only from my own case that I know what the word “pain” means—must I not say the same of other people too? And how can I generalize the *one* case so irresponsibly?

Now someone tells me that *he* knows what pain is only from his own case!—Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a “beetle”. No one can look into anyone else’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word “beetle” had a use in these people’s language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty.—No, one can ‘divide through’ by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.

That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’ the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.

The most important and striking textual sign is that § 293 and § 304 both employ the special phrase “a *something* [ein Etwas]”. This phrase is special because, though the lower-case “etwas” is extremely common in German and in Wittgenstein, the upper-case “Etwas” used as a substan-

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<sup>3</sup> Marie McGinn in effect makes this move when she says (1997, pp. 173-4): “Wittgenstein’s response [his paradox] is not to deny the existence of pain, but to reject ‘the grammar which tries to force itself on us here’ (PI 304). For ‘the paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please’ (PI 304). It is through an appreciation of the differences in the way these different regions of our language function that we free ourselves from the urge to [...]”. That McGinn is effectively locating the relevant grammar in § 304b is shown by her use of the word “For”.

tive is rare in both. In the whole *Investigations* it is so used in just seven places (§§ 67, 139n, 261, 293, 296, 304, 358).<sup>4</sup> (By contrast, “etwas” has over 300 occurrences.)

If anyone thinks this difference is trivial, he should know that Wittgenstein is an author who is extraordinarily fastidious with his language *and* who once issued, in the *Tractatus*, the following warning (3.323):

In everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification—and so belongs to different symbols—or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way.

Thus [...] we speak of *something*, but also of *something's* happening.

[This last sentence in German is: “wir reden von *Etwas*, aber auch davon, daß *etwas* geschieht.”]

And already in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein uses “*Etwas*” only on special occasion.<sup>5</sup>

A second textual sign is that the phrase “a *nothing* [ein Nichts]”, which within the *Investigations* occurs only in § 304, strongly echoes the possibility of an *empty* box noted in § 293. (There is nothing in the other passages containing the specially used “*Etwas*” for this phrase to echo.)

Let these two textual signs suffice, for now, for showing that the two past-tense sentences in § 304a refer back to § 293.<sup>6</sup>

The text of § 304 is slippery in another way. This is independent from translation issues and stems from the fact that the paradoxical statement “It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either”

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<sup>4</sup> I have followed Anscombe in translating the specially used “*Etwas*” with a stressed “*something*”. She herself is not consistent in this, which could sometimes obscure contextual connections (e.g., the connection of § 296 to §§ 304 and 293, discussed later).

Hacker and Schulte, in their revised translation of the *Investigations*, have used capitalizations to render “ein *Etwas*” (“a *Something*”) and “ein Nichts” (“a *Nothing*”) in the relevant places. But such capitalizations suggest a sort of pomp and strangeness that seem alien to the German text. Capitalization within sentences is completely unremarkable in German, but not so in English.

<sup>5</sup> There is only one occasion in the *Tractatus* where “*Etwas*” is *used*, i.e., in 2.022. (3.323 does not use “*Etwas*” but only discusses its use in contrast to the use of “*etwas*”.) 2.022 says that all possible worlds must have *something* [*Etwas*] in common, namely *the form of the world or the substance of the world*.

<sup>6</sup> The strength of these two textual connections, I think, explains why most commentators, despite Anscombe’s extra word “have” in § 304, get the reference from § 304 to § 293 right (at least in the sense of frequently discussing the two sections together, if not explicitly securing the reference). David Finkelstein is a striking exception. His quite detailed discussion of § 304 (2003, pp. 136–41) contains no reference to § 293 at all.

is clearly said in Wittgenstein's own voice. But then it looks like a straightforward contradiction. One wants to protest: "What is not a nothing is surely a *something!*"

Or is that really so? Are there not cases in which it is correct, even illuminating, to say "It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either"? For instance, there are traditions in which it is indeed right to say "God is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either". And perhaps on some conception of Chaos (as e.g. *that which is not*) it is right to say that Chaos is not a something but not a nothing either, because it in *no* way is and yet *is* not. And, to come to Wittgenstein himself, could we not say the same of *logic* as he means to show it in his own *Tractatus*? Are we sure we never encounter the unsayable in the *Investigations*?

But to assimilate *sensations*, the topic in § 304a, to such candidates for making the paradox-schema somehow come out right is to draw a false parallelism, for the simple reason that there is nothing out of the ordinary about sensations (e.g. pains), least of all in the special way these candidates are.<sup>7</sup>

This throws us back on the protest: "What is not a nothing is surely a *something!*" The paradox seems intolerable, and yet clearly in Wittgenstein's own voice.

## 6.2 MCDOWELL'S CRITICISM OF § 304 AND § 293

It is at this point that McDowell makes his criticism of §§ 304 and 293: Wittgenstein goes too far when he declares in § 304a that a sensation (e.g. a pain) is "not a something" and, closely related to this, when he in § 293 faults the 'object and designation' model and implicitly denies that sensations are objects of reference (i.e., things we can talk about, refer to). Of course a sensation is a perfectly good something. Sensations can be referred to or talked about (we do so every day) and they are properly designated or classified as episodes in the life of sentient beings.

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<sup>7</sup> An example of such false parallelism is found in Hans Sluga. He says (1996, p. 328) the philosophical I in the *Tractatus* is not a something (in the world), but not a nothing either. There is surely a sense in which this is a good point. But Sluga takes this point to be "analogous" or "parallel" to the point of the paradox of § 304. But the parallelism, given how utterly ordinary sensations are and how extraordinary the *Tractarian* philosophical I is, can be at most a merely verbal one.

The reason why Wittgenstein occasionally slips into denying such plain facts is, in McDowell's very charitably honed criticism, his well-placed concern to fight the dangerous allure of the idea that the sensation, conceived as a bit of pre-conceptual given, guides or justifies our conceptualization of it (paradigmatically: our application of a descriptive word to it). We can, following McDowell following Wilfrid Sellars, call the idea a version of the Myth of the Given, namely the Myth of the Inner Given.<sup>8</sup>

So on McDowell's reading, Wittgenstein's mistake is that he occasionally slips into overkill in his battles with the Myth of the Inner Given. When he so slips, he in effect denies that there is an innocent sense in which sensations can be given to us and play a justificatory role in moves in our language-games or in moves in the space of reasons, to use another piece of Sellarsian terminology. This is just the sense in which we ordinarily have sensations. For example, we are sometimes in pain, and this state of affairs justifies our telling it to others (e.g., to a nurse) when we do tell it to others. The point is that sensations as we have them are already infused with conceptual content, however minimal. This is the good anti-dualistic point that Wittgenstein is really making.

### 6.3 MCDOWELL'S READING IN RELATION TO STRAWSON'S READING

To fully appreciate the character of McDowell's reading of Wittgenstein, it will be very useful to compare and contrast it with another kind of reading, represented by P. F. Strawson in his review of the *Investigations*.<sup>9</sup>

Strawson attributes to Wittgenstein two theses about sensation-language, one strong and one weak. The strong but false thesis is that "no words name sensations ... and in particular the word 'pain' does not (*cf.* § 293)."<sup>10</sup> The weak and true thesis can be summed up like this. Certain con-

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<sup>8</sup> See Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*.

<sup>9</sup> See Strawson, "Critical Notice", *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 63, No. 249, 1954, pp. 70-99.

<sup>10</sup> See Strawson's review, p. 84. I have left out Strawson's parenthetical "(or 'private experiences')" after "sensations", because he seems to have misunderstood the sense of the crucial word 'private' in Wittgenstein, taking it in the ordinary sense of 'inner'. The complications can be profitably avoided here.

ditions must obtain if there is to be a common language in which sensation-ascriptions are possible at all, and these conditions are certain general facts of nature: the fact we share certain natural expressions and symptoms of sensations and (if this is a separate fact at all) the fact we generally agree in our judgment about these expressions and symptoms.<sup>11</sup>

What makes Wittgenstein sometimes fall from the weak into the strong thesis, in Strawson's reading, is the following view about language: The descriptive meaning of a word is *exhaustively* indicated by the criteria for its application or for the correctness of its application (p. 84).

This view, if criteria are taken to be essentially outer or public, is behavioristic in spirit. Applied to the word 'pain', it is the view that *all* there is to the meaning of 'pain' comes to no more than what we can say on the strength of public or outward criteria, namely what we can judge by publicly observable means of judgment, regarding the use of 'pain'. Because this view is entirely general, none of our judgments can be about inner episodes or states or processes, for *all* descriptive contents, the bread and butter of our judgments, must come down to what is publicly observable. Thus there is really nothing inner we can speak of. What is called "inner" is really a fiction: there is really no such thing at all.

And Strawson does seem to regard criteria as essentially outer or public.<sup>12</sup> So on Strawson's view, where Wittgenstein spoils his good thought is just where the behaviourism in him becomes

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<sup>11</sup> I have given this summary a somewhat explicit transcendental flavor, which seems to be implicit in Strawson here (pp. 84-9).

<sup>12</sup> Strawson does not say so but seems to simply take it for granted. He never qualifies his instances of 'criterion' or 'criteria' with either 'inner' or 'outer'. This makes one suspect that he assumes there is no such distinction at all. This suspicion finds support in two specific bits of text. First, in "these circumstances must include *criteria*, must include the observable" on pp. 92-3 the comma seems to be used appositively. Second, on p. 87 Strawson writes: "here Wittgenstein is driving at the conditions that are necessary for a common language in which pain can be ascribed to persons, the consequent need for *criteria for the ascription* of pain, [...]. Hence his obsession with the *expression* of pain." Now since by "the *expression* of pain" Strawson means what is or is akin to the natural expressions of pain (such as crying) and since in this sense the expression of pain is not descriptive but behavioral, Strawson's word "Hence" seems to show that he is taking criteria to be essentially behavioral or outer. The only place in Strawson's review where the word 'criteria' is relevantly qualified is when he quotes § 580 ("An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria" (p. 97). But this happens toward the end of Strawson's review and does not prompt him to ask whether there might be inner criteria for Wittgenstein. Rather, he seems to treat the word 'outward' in 'outward criteria' simply as a pleonastic emphasis.

Whether I have understood Strawson right on this point matters not for my main aim in discussing him, which is to illustrate a *kind* of criticism of Wittgenstein, namely that he is, at least sometimes, a behaviorist.



dominant, where he is seized by “the old verificationist horror of a claim that cannot be checked” (p. 92).

Now there is a general resemblance between Strawson’s and McDowell’s reading. Both find in Wittgenstein something right and important: his elucidation of the conditions of the possibility of sensation-language in terms of certain general facts of nature (Strawson) and his attack on the Myth of the Inner Given (McDowell). And what they find to be overly strong in him is also very similar. For given the intimate connections between *name*, *designation*, and *reference*, the strong thesis that no words name sensations (Strawson) is precisely the denial that sensations are objects of reference (McDowell).<sup>13</sup> (And both focus on § 293 for criticism.)

These similarities can run very deep, but I will not look into them here.<sup>14</sup> For my purposes it is more instructive to look at the difference between Strawson and McDowell. I do not mean that while Strawson takes Wittgenstein’s main achievement in this area to be a “positive” elucidation of the conditions of possibility of our sensation-language (or more generally of our psychological language), McDowell takes it to be a “negative” attack on the Myth of the Inner Given. For these might be two sides of the same coin. Rather, the difference I mean lies in their view of the nature and scope of what they find overly strong in Wittgenstein.

The difference is this. While the overly strong thesis in Strawson’s Wittgenstein stems from his not having fully overcome behaviorism, in McDowell’s Wittgenstein it is an intelligible over-reaction to the threat posed by the far greater enemy, namely the Myth of the Inner Given.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The words ‘name’ and ‘designation’ (or the three German words *Benennung*, *Name*, and *Bezeichnung*), as used by Wittgenstein, are very closely connected. They mean essentially the same as ‘classification’. This fits Strawson’s use of “names” in the sense of “*descriptive* words” (p. 84, added emphasis). That designation or classification and reference are closely connected is of course a Fregean point, which is invoked by McDowell when he reaffirms the point that objects always present themselves to us “‘under a mode of presentation’” (1998a, p. 287).

<sup>14</sup> One might indicate the depth of the similarity by saying that both Strawson and McDowell find in Wittgenstein a certain sort of transcendental argument for that aspect of our language that relates to the inner. The central point of this argument could be stated by adapting § 95 to the case of the inner: “When we say, and *mean*, that such-and-such is in someone’s mind, we—and our meaning—do not stop short of the fact; but we mean: *this is in someone’s mind*.”

<sup>15</sup> It is true that Strawson does remark e.g. that what misleads Wittgenstein is “partly the fear of legitimising certain metaphysical doubtings and wonderings” (p. 99). But his *main* diagnosis is still that the trouble with Wittgenstein is the behaviorism in him. He makes no serious attempt to connect Wittgenstein’s alleged behaviorism to Wittgenstein’s aversion to metaphysical mythology.

This difference between Strawson and McDowell is also reflected in their assessment of the scope of the excess they find in Wittgenstein: it is far greater in Strawson than in McDowell.

Strawson finds behaviorism pervasive in Wittgenstein. He highlights this when he identifies the three “cardinal elements” in the *Investigations* (p. 96). For the third element, which Strawson epitomizes by quoting § 580 (“An ‘inner process’ stands in need of outward criteria”), is exactly the crucial premise that turns the good weaker thesis into the wrong stronger one in Wittgenstein. It is the spirit of behaviorism. And Strawson not only gives it prominent display but also wrestles with it considerably in the body of his review. For him behaviorism truly is a cardinal and pervasive element in Wittgenstein.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, the overkill McDowell finds in Wittgenstein is far more localized. It is entirely confined to those passages in §§ 304 and 293 that he quotes. This should not surprise, as overkill is bound to be occasional while a cardinal element is bound to be pervasive. The difference in the scope of the alleged excess reflects the difference in the nature or source of the alleged excess.

So McDowell’s reading is more charitable to Wittgenstein than Strawson’s.<sup>17</sup> This charity is well placed, for Wittgenstein is, contrary to Strawson’s reading, not hostile to the inner. I will not elaborate this point because it has been well established. Let it suffice to mention three writers.

First, on a more textual level, Malcolm (in response to Strawson, as it happens) has early on pointed to specific passages which clearly show Wittgenstein is not hostile to the inner.<sup>18</sup> Second, on a more methodological level, Kripke has pointed out that Wittgenstein frequently employs an

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<sup>16</sup> This also explains a certain lack of specificity in Strawson’s references to Wittgenstein when he is alleged to fall from the weak into the strong thesis. Of the only three pertinent references, “*cf.* § 293” and “§ 243 *et seq.*” (p. 84) and “§§ 244, 288, etc.” (p. 86), only the first one is really specific. For, as noted by Malcolm (1954, pp. 551-2), § 243 and § 244 in fact both contain material that contradicts Strawson’s attribution of the strong thesis to Wittgenstein. His mention of teaching “pain” by pricking in § 288 should also cast doubt on this attribution. All of this leaves only § 293, whose text Strawson however does not discuss in detail. One gets the impression that he takes behaviorism to control Wittgenstein’s thinking to such an extent that specific evidences for it are hard to come by. This impression fits well with Strawson’s apparently taking it that criteria are for Wittgenstein essentially outward or public (as noted above).

<sup>17</sup> This is just to mark a difference between two kinds of criticism of Wittgenstein, not to suggest a blameworthy failure in Strawson. His review is an impressive piece of work, especially considering that it was published in January 1954, less than a year after the publication of the *Investigations*.

<sup>18</sup> See Malcolm, 1954, pp. 551-2.

*introspective* method, in an ordinary and innocuous sense, which relies heavily on one's memory and knowledge of inner experiences.<sup>19</sup> We might add here that Wittgenstein's very conception of philosophy as the assembling of *reminders* would make no sense, or constitute an incredible case of self-deception, if he were hostile to the inner (which includes remembering). Third, on a more philosophical level, McDowell has elsewhere incisively shown that Wittgenstein is not hostile to the inner, since for Wittgenstein there is a philosophically innocuous picture of the inner which is really just common sense.<sup>20</sup>

Now a little reflection should show that the inner is in fact an extremely pervasive aspect of our life: we mull things over, imagine things, get excited, reminisce about childhood experiences, have others in our thoughts or try to drive them out, fear a particular dog and are glad to hear that it has been cooked .... All this is so much a part of our ordinary life that we should be suspicious when philosophical theories claim to "explain" what the inner "really" is or is like (in a way that suggests that we are radically in the dark about it), or to explain it away.

Wittgenstein of course attacks such theories, especially the Myth of the Inner Given and behaviorism. These have a common etiology, which one can put by saying that they both stem from an inability *not to lose the middle*, namely our ordinary inner life itself. Behaviourism falls to one side, denying that there is anything inner at all, calling it fiction. The Myth falls to the other side, postulating items that are inner in a *queer* sense (see § 195). In doing so, it falls victim to its own peculiar sort of fiction, which Wittgenstein calls a *grammatical* fiction (§ 307). In both cases, the middle itself gets lost.

This thumbnail portrait of these two positions will serve as a broad framework for my interpretation of §§ 304 and 293 and for my criticism of McDowell's criticism of §§ 304 and 293.

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<sup>19</sup> See Kripke, 1982, p. 14, n. 11 and again p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> See his "Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein" (Essay 14 in his 1998a, pp. 297-321).

## 6.4 CRITICISM OF MCDOWELL'S CRITICISM OF § 304 AND § 293

McDowell's criticism of Wittgenstein's overkill passages (the parts of §§ 304 and 293 quoted by him) is as follows (see his 1998a, pp. 283-4 for the first two paragraphs and p. 286 for the third):

The sensation (the pain, say) is a perfectly good something—an object, if you like, of concept-involving awareness. What is a nothing (and this is simply a nothing, not “not a something, but not a nothing either”) is the supposed pre-conceptual *this* that is supposed to ground our conceptualizations [...]. The episode of consciousness comes to us in already conceptual shape; it is not a question of our imposing conceptual shape on a given *this*. But that is no reason to suggest that the conceptual content of the episode of consciousness cannot be parsed in terms of a classification of a something (“the sensation itself”: the pain) as the kind of something it is.

Wittgenstein's willingness to say that the sensation is “not a something” is a response to a thought one might put [...] like this: in the kind of case in question we have at best a *limiting* case of the model of object and designation—a limiting case of the idea of an object that we can designate and classify. [...]

[...]

§ 293 implies that it is a mistake to “construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’”, and [...] if this is meant to convey that sensations are not objects of reference (as the context—“not even ... a something”—certainly indicates), then the diagnosis is not quite right.

The idea of “a limiting case of the model of object and designation” is used by McDowell to mark the difference between how an inner object instantiates a concept—more generally, figures in a thought—and how an outer object does so: “when an external object figures in one's thought, it is there for one's thinking anyway, independently of the specific predication that one's thought makes concerning it, and this is exactly not so with a sensation [more generally, an inner object]” (p. 286).

I find this idea good. This implies that I agree with McDowell that it is perfectly possible to apply the ‘object and designation’ model to our particular inner experiences (we do so every day). Consequently, I agree that there is something unsatisfactory about Wittgenstein's faulting of this

model in § 293. But I think what is unsatisfactory about it is quite different from what McDowell thinks it is.

To crystallize what is mistaken in McDowell's reading of §§ 304 and 293, I will concentrate on two small but crucial bits of text, modifying the second bit for rhetorical clarity:

(A) "It is not a something" [the first half of the paradox of § 304]

(B) "It is not even a something" [in § 293, modified]

The core of McDowell's misreading can then be divided into two complimentary halves:

For (A): while he rightly takes the "It" to refer to a sensation, he wrongly takes the "a something" in the ordinary sense.

For (B): while he rightly takes the "a something" in the ordinary sense, he wrongly takes the "It" to refer to a sensation.

The ordinary, unproblematic sense of "a something" is simply the sense in which, e.g., N.N. is "a man", Excalibur is "a sword", five is "a number", red is "a color", apple is "a fruit", pain is "a state of mind" .... In this sense, "a something" is simply a particular or object under a concept or designation or classification.

Why is it wrong to take the "a something" in (A) in this ordinary sense? The answer is context, or more exactly the context provided by the sentence immediately following the paradox in § 304.

The paradoxical sentence "It is not a something, but not a nothing either" *is* intolerable if "a something" is used in the ordinary sense. But then charity counsels that we should ask whether it is not being used in some specially qualified sense. And that is just what Wittgenstein supplies in the immediately ensuing sentence: a something about which nothing could be said. A something about which nothing could be said is a something that cannot be brought under any concept, cannot be designated or classified in any way. It is a completely characterless something, a bare *this*. So, what the crucial qualification "about which nothing could be said" does is push any ordinary something out of the space of concepts, turning it into a bit of the mythical Given.

So when the "a something" in (A) is taken in this specially qualified sense, (A) is a perfectly precise attack on the conception of a sensation as a bit of the mythically Inner Given, not overkill.

There is no need to find a real fault, as McDowell does, in the first half of the paradox (“It is not a *something*”) because it is completely natural to read the sentence immediately following the paradox as Wittgenstein’s explanation, in the guise of a reminder of something he showed earlier, of what he means by it. If there is a fault, it is at most stylistic: Wittgenstein’s penchant for striking aphorisms sometimes runs the risk of misleading his reader. We can eliminate the risk by rewriting the relevant bit of text in § 304 (the paradox and the sentence that immediately follows it) in the following fashion. The rewritten text would no doubt be stylistically repugnant to Wittgenstein, but for us it would better activate his context for the paradoxical sentence:

The sensation itself is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! By this, let me hasten to add, I only mean to shock-remind you of something that I showed earlier (in § 293, if you want the reference). What I mean now is really threefold. First, the sensation is not a something *about which nothing could be said*. Of course not, for we have just said something about it, namely that it is a *sensation*, not, say, a number. It is not a bare particular. Second, this first point already implies that the sensation is not a nothing. It is, to repeat, precisely *a sensation*. So the charge of behaviorism that I have just been considering is wrong. The third point was also already made in § 293. But perhaps it was not explicit enough there. So let me now make it fully explicit: to think of the sensation as a bare *this* at which only you can point no more helps it enter our language-game than to suppose that there is nothing at all. The conception of a sensation as a bare *this* loses it *as much as* regarding it as fiction! If you keep the sensation *itself* in view you will not have to choose between these two positions. Keep the middle!

(And why did I put it in such a paradoxical way? Well, you know I like aphorisms.)

McDowell *never* discusses the crucial qualification “about which nothing can be said” when he criticizes the “It is not a something” in § 304a as overkill. He in effect refuses the “By this, let me hasten to add” in the rewritten text, which explicitly activates that qualification. But it is perfectly natural to treat the sentence immediately following the paradox (“The conclusion was only that [...]”) as its context. After all, McDowell himself treats the *next*, more distant sentence (“We only rejected [...]”) as its context, as when he follows its reference to a previously rejected bit of grammar to the model of object and designation faulted in § 293c (witness his “[...] is a response to [...]” in the second paragraph quoted from him). If it is right (and it is) to treat the latter, more distant sentence as a context for the paradox, it is certainly right to also treat the former, immediately following sentence as its context. (These two sentences are, as I observed earlier, of a piece. They and they alone are in the simple past in § 304.)

What about (B)? Why is it a mistake to take the “It” in it to refer to a sensation? The answer is again the context.

First, it should be kept in mind that the “a something” in (B) is used in the ordinary, unproblematic sense. This is because in § 293, unlike in § 304, there is no qualification whatever on this phrase.

Now McDowell claims that the “not even a something” in (B) firmly indicates that Wittgenstein means to convey that sensations are not objects of reference.<sup>21</sup> But this is correct only if the “It” in (B) refers to a sensation. But this is *not* the case. We can see this more clearly if we leave (B) and return to the actual text of which it is a modification: “The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty” (§ 293).

For what Wittgenstein actually says has no place in our language-game at all, “not even as a *something*”, is “the thing in the box”. This can amount to denying sensations are objects of reference only if the thing in the box is, in his beetle-in-the-box parable, the concretization of a *sensation*. But this is precisely not the case, since the thing is explicitly specified as contained in a box into which only the owner of the box but not the owners of other boxes can look. Such a thing in such a box is not a concretization of a sensation, but a concretization of a private object – of what a sensation is sometimes *wrongly* conceived to be. This is amply clear from the text. For example, Wittgenstein reminds us in § 246 that others very often know it when I am in pain: a sensation is not private in the sense of ‘only I can know of it’. So the thing in the box, which *is* private in that sense, is not the concretization of a sensation. Further, it is just the conception of a sensation as a private object that prompted the beetle-in-the-box parable in the first place in § 293: “Now someone tells me that *he* knows what pain is only from his own case” (§ 293b).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Strictly, McDowell says it is the context “not even ... a something” that indicates that. His ellipsis replaces Wittgenstein’s “as”, which I have simply deleted in (B). But these differences do not matter: the “as” is already contained in the structure of “a something”, that is, in the structure of a particular or object *under* a concept or designation or classification.

<sup>22</sup> Note that the voice at the beginning of § 293b is voicing a *conception* (i.e. advancing a philosophical doctrine), not e.g. making an *exclamation* (which is also possible: § 295b). The danger is the inclination not so much to make such an utterly uninformative exclamation (that can be harmless) as to think us forced into an *assumption* (a piece of doctrine) or to take the exclamation as expressive of a precious, direct glimpse into some hard-to-see feature of reality (interpreting §§ 298-299).

So when we realize that the “It” in (B) refers to the thing in the box and that the thing in the box is a concretization of a private object rather than of a sensation, what (B) says becomes clear: “A private object is not a something, namely a something about which something can be said”.

So (A) and (B) are both perfectly correct. (A) says that a sensation is not a something about which nothing could be said, that a sensation is not a private object. (B) says that a private object, whose concretization is the thing in the box, is not a good something about which something can be said (e.g. a sensation). They say essentially the same thing, only from two different directions.

Contrast this with McDowell’s reading. On his reading, (A) and (B) both say the same thing and from the same direction ((A) is a straight repetition of (B)), but what they say is overkill.

We are now in a position to gain a firm grip on yet another slippery passage in § 293 (which is not quoted by McDowell). It is slippery in a way parallel to the “It is not a something” in § 304:

—But suppose the word “beetle” had a use in these people’s language?—If so it would not be used as the name [*Bezeichnung*] of a thing. The thing in the box has no place [...]

What is slippery here is the phrase “a thing”. It looks too strong. For if the word ‘beetle’ had a use in the language of the box-carrying tribe, then it would have a meaning; and if it were used as substantives are used by us, it *would* designate or be the name of a perfectly good sort of thing (e.g., if the word were used as it is in English, it would designate beetles). Nothing in the parable rules this possibility out. So it would be too strong to say that if the word had a use “it would not be used as the name of a thing” *if* the phrase “a thing” is used in its ordinary sense. But then, just as with the paradox of § 304, charity counsels that we ask whether the phrase is not being used in a specially qualified sense, and the immediately ensuing “the thing in the box” supplies that special sense, just as “The conclusion was only that [...]

does for the “a something” in the paradox. In both passages there is a slightly deferred explication of the relevant phrase, which seems to be something in Wittgenstein’s style.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> An especially clear example of this style is the word ‘here’ in § 374, first sentence: “The great difficulty here is not to represent the matter as if there were something one *couldn’t* do.” But where (and couldn’t do what)? One searches in vain in the earlier sections. What is meant by “here” becomes clear only in the *next* sentence: “As if there really were an object, from which I derive its description, but I were unable to shew it to anyone.” It is this latter sentence, which contains a characterization of a private object,



Let me end my examination of McDowell's reading of § 304 and § 293 by stressing that his reading, despite the mistakes, still captures a great deal of Wittgenstein's insights. These insights can be recovered by dropping the "not" in (A) and (B), which registers the overkill in his reading, but exchanging the two senses of "a something" in § 293 (an ordinary sense) and in § 304 (a specially qualified sense):

(A\*) "It is a something" = "the sensation is a perfectly good something, about which a good deal can be said".

(B\*) "It is a something" = "a private object, of which the thing in the box is a concretization, is a something about which nothing can be said, which is really as good as a nothing".

(A\*) is none other than McDowell's correct insistence that sensations are perfectly good objects of reference while (B\*) is the anti-dualistic point that a private object is really a piece of the mythical Given, which is "simply a nothing" as McDowell puts it (1998a, p. 283).

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that shows what "here" means, namely "where the temptation to suppose private objects is especially strong". (It also supplies the answer to the question "Couldn't do what?", namely to show the object to others.)

## 7.0 DISSOLUTION OF THE PARADOX OF § 304

Having gained a firmer grip on the text of § 304a, we now face the question: How does the diagnosis Wittgenstein offers in § 304b, namely that we must reject the idea that the only function of language is to convey thoughts, help us understand § 304a?

This chapter gives an answer. But this answer is incomplete, since to fully understand § 304 we have to understand what Wittgenstein's real target is when he faults the model of 'object and designation' for sensations in § 293c. That will be the topic of the next chapter.

### 7.1 CONTEXT FOR § 304

Before we tackle the question of how § 304b helps us understand § 304a, it will be helpful to explicitly place § 304 in a wider context.

The paradox of § 304 is provoked by the threat of behaviorism — it looks as if Wittgenstein had denied any difference between pain-behaviour with pain and pain-behaviour without pain, or equivalently, denied the sensation itself. Of course we must not deny that. But in trying to protect the sensation itself, we are liable to fall into conceiving it as private in a special way, namely in a way that would keep it safe from the encroachment of "outward criteria". But this inward retreat, by gradually shedding shareable content, only makes the sensation paler and paler, until the point is reached where, in trying to point to the naked sensation, one is reduced to wanting to just emit an inarticulate noise (§ 261). When we then realize how hopeless and strange this attempt at protecting the sensation is, we are liable to overreact by denying the sensation altogether. This sends

us back into behaviorism, thereby setting in swing an interminable oscillation between behaviorism and the Myth of the Inner Given.<sup>1</sup>

This context brings out the character of the paradox of § 304: the paradoxical statement is a forcible rejection of the two horns of a false dilemma, namely of the Myth of the Inner Given (“It is not a *something* [about which nothing could be said]”) and of behaviorism (“It is not a *nothing* either”).<sup>2</sup> To make the paradox disappear (i.e. to dispel the air of paradox) is to *dissolve* this false dilemma (rather than solve some genuine problem).

I have framed this context in terms of two polar opposites: the Myth of the Inner Given and behaviorism. This is in a way crude, because this stark framework leaves no room for the middle, i.e. for the ordinary sensation itself, which makes it difficult to account for Wittgenstein’s critical consideration of certain attempts to keep the sensation itself. These are attempts at certain hybrid conceptions of a sensation: not hybrids of a mythically Inner aspect and a behavioristically Outer aspect of a sensation, but hybrids of an Inner aspect and an ordinary aspect. In other words, these hybrid conceptions attempt to harmonize the Myth of the Inner Given not with behaviourism but with commonsense. They concede that ordinary language of sensations does reach the sensations, but insist that it is too crude for capturing their *really* essential qualities, for which only a private language of sensations will be adequate. Wittgenstein puts this temptation well in his lectures:

There is then the temptation to think “I ought to have two words for my toothache—the one which I use to myself, the other to someone else.” For someone else gets only the skeleton of my toothache, not the real timbre of it.<sup>3</sup>

This two-word conception and subtler variations on it are also attacked in the *Investigations*. For example, § 273 displays three increasingly subtler hybrid conceptions as objects of suspicion. One of them appears again in § 280, at the end of which it comes under explicit attack.

Wittgenstein’s attacks on these hybrid conceptions are interesting and instructive. But I will not consider them. The reason is twofold. First, as McDowell has pointed out, Wittgenstein’s real

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase “interminable oscillation” is borrowed from McDowell’s *Mind and World*, Lecture I.

<sup>2</sup> It may be just the desire to reject the false dilemma as forcibly as possible that led Wittgenstein to adopt a paradoxical style here.

<sup>3</sup> *The Language of Sense Data and Private Experience*, notes taken by Rush Rhees, collected in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 320.

target is the idea of a private object and this idea, the common denominator of all the hybrid conceptions, figures with stark clarity in the simplified context I gave above. Second, no hybrid conception figures in the sections we are focusing on, namely § 304 and § 293.<sup>4</sup>

This simplified context will be invoked later, but first we need to get a good grip on the text of § 304b.

## 7.2 OTHER COMMENTATORS ON § 304B

§ 304b is laconic even by Wittgenstein's standards. It is not at all obvious how the false dilemma in § 304a will go away only if we reject the idea that language functions only to convey thoughts. This, it seems, is why most commentators on § 304a simply do not deal with § 304b at all. When on occasion it is dealt with, the treatment is typically unsatisfactory. It will be instructive to look at some of these treatments.

Marie McGinn takes § 304b to urge us to gain “an appreciation of the differences in the way these different regions of our language function” (1997, p. 174). By “these different regions”, she means, following Wittgenstein's short list in § 304b, a region of our language about houses, a region about pains, a region about good and evil, and any other region you please.

But Wittgenstein is not urging us to pay attention to the differences between various *regions* of our language but to those between various *functions* of language. Language typically functions in many ways in any single region of it. Consider even a very narrow region: our language about the color of houses. We *describe* the color, *ask* about it, or *command* it (e.g. command that a certain house be painted blue). Conversely, one single function of language typically operates in diverse regions of language (e.g. we describe all sorts of things).

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<sup>4</sup> This is very clear in the case of § 304. In the case of § 293, one might conceivably find a hybrid conception below the surface of the text, in particular below the surface of the sentence “But suppose the word ‘beetle’ had a use in these people's language?” But Wittgenstein immediately goes on to say that if so the word would not designate the thing in the box: he hardly allows any hybrid conception to voice itself.

There is another, more tempting and more common mistake. It is to take § 304b to be urging us to pay attention to the difference between two very large regions of our language: between our talk about the inner (e.g. pains) and out talk about the outer (e.g. houses).<sup>5</sup>

Textually, this appears to make sense. Wittgenstein has just been discussing sensation (inner) and its behavioral manifestation (outer) in § 304a. Because it is not clear what he is saying there, one quite naturally turns to § 304b for possible help. And now Wittgenstein's somewhat unusual (by his standards) expansiveness in specifying the list ("houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please") appears to hold the key. This then leads one to seize upon the first two items on the list: Wittgenstein is warning against using the model of outer objects (which he makes *houses* to stand in for) for understanding inner objects (which he makes *pains* to stand in for).

The plausibility of this reading is greatly increased by the fact that Wittgenstein does sometimes warn against assimilating inner objects to outer objects and that this warning obviously has *some* bearing on the topic here (though it is not obvious what that bearing exactly is).

But this is an even more careless reading of the text. For when Wittgenstein gives his list of things that we can think about—"houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please"—he is plainly not contrasting houses and pains, for that would make no sense of his mention of good and evil, let alone the inclusion of "anything else you please". *A fortiori*, he is not contrasting the two as standing in for the inner and the outer, respectively, as many commentators have in effect claimed.<sup>6</sup> The truth is that Wittgenstein is not contrasting any of the listed things at all, because it is an *open* list: you can include anything you please.

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<sup>5</sup> It may be said against this reading that it is still concentrating on different *regions* rather than on different *functions* of language. But the two regions are so large, so rich, and so interpenetrating that it matters little whether we call them regions or functions. In any case, we should grant the point, insisted on by this reading, that there is a genuine distinction between the inner and the outer.

<sup>6</sup> Such commentators include Robert Fogelin, Cora Diamond, and David Finkelstein.

Fogelin (1996, p. 43) says: "The clear implication of this passage [§ 304b] is that philosophical problems about the mental have arisen through treating mental ascriptions on the model of talk concerning chairs, houses, and the like". He has replaced Wittgenstein's list with his own "chairs, houses, and the like", planting a non-existent sign-post pointing in the direction of outer objects.

Diamond (2000, p. 276) thinks the message of § 304b is that "we need to make a break with the idea that language always functions in the same way: whether to convey thoughts about Bismarck's head or his headache". Context shows that she is contrasting outer objects with inner objects, which she takes Bismarck's head and his headache to stand in for, respectively.

Finkelstein (2003, p. 138) thinks that § 304b is urging us "to stop philosophizing as if our talk about pains functioned in more or

### 7.3 DISSOLUTION OF THE PARADOX OF § 304

What he *is* doing in § 304b is contrasting one function of language, i.e., to convey thoughts, with its other functions *of which we are meant to remind ourselves here*.

But what other function or functions of language are we to recall? The decisive point here is to realize that the function of language to convey *thoughts* is none other than its *intellectual* function, so Wittgenstein is here urging us to recall *non-intellectual* functions of our language.<sup>7</sup>

Just this point has tended to be missed by commentators on §304b: the differences that they take Wittgenstein to be pointing to are still *within* the intellectual function of language.<sup>8</sup> This fact itself is significant: it points to the difficulty of having non-intellectual functions of our language come into view at all when we do philosophy. The character and sources of this difficulty will be examined later.

For now, the urgent question is: what non-intellectual function(s) of language should we recall in order to dissolve the false dilemma in § 304a?

With the crucial pointer *non-intellectual*, the answer is not difficult to find. We need only to think of non-intellectual functions of language in relation to *sensations*, the topic of § 304a. One function stands out: the *expressive* function of language (in contrast with its *descriptive* function).

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less the same way as our talk about houses”. Context shows that he takes pains to stand in for inner objects and houses to stand in for outer objects.

<sup>7</sup> One may object that “the intellectual function of language” is broader than “the function of language to convey thoughts” on the ground that one can think *alone*, which is a case of making intellectual use of language, without *conveying* one’s thoughts (that is, to others). The reply is that the German word translated “convey” here, *übertragen*, does not connote the communicating of one’s thoughts to others, as “convey” does. It would be perfectly correct to replace the translation “to convey thoughts” with “to render thoughts” (in the sense of “to put one’s thoughts into words”), which one can do alone (silently or aloud). Wittgenstein’s phrasing is general enough for the classification “intellectual” to fit.

<sup>8</sup> This is the case with all the commentators just mentioned: Fogelin, Diamond, and Finkelstein.

That the differences stressed by these commentators are still *within* the intellectual function of language becomes obvious if we treat, as is natural from a Wittgensteinian perspective, *using language to convey thoughts about things* (any things you please) as essentially the same as *talking about things*.

Fogelin stresses the difference between *talk* about the outer objects and *talk* about inner objects (“mental ascriptions”).

Diamond stresses the difference between *conveying thoughts* about outer objects and *conveying thoughts* about inner objects.

Finkelstein stresses the difference between *talk* about outer objects and *talk* about inner objects.

Recalling this function is enough to dissolve the false dilemma. But before I can explain how this reminder works, I need to explain what I mean by the expressive function of language.<sup>9</sup>

First and foremost, I mean expression *in contrast with* description. There is of course a well-established sense of ‘express’ that is nearly identical to ‘describe’. This sense is used in e.g. “He expressed his views on that matter very articulately”, where one can use ‘described’ instead. This kind of expression might be called expression of one’s *intellectual* states. By contrast, the kind of expression I mean might be called expression of one’s *affective* states. Some examples will bring it out (the “in” meaning “in expression of”):

Saying “Ouch!” in pain

Saying “Yuck!” in disgust

Saying “Wow!” in astonishment

Saying “Help!” in desperation

Saying “Damn it!” in frustration

Saying “How blue the sky is!” in enchantment, or in surprise

Saying “That’s *very* nice of you!” in gratitude, or in sarcasm

As arranged above, the utterances are (roughly) increasingly articulate or involve increasing degrees of intellectual participation, but they are all firmly expressive in character. Many of them are exclamations. And exactly what kind of utterance each is depends on the context.

The list is far from exhaustive. Language is also used expressively, with varying degrees of intellectual participation, in greeting, songs, poetry, prayer, and banter. There are still other areas of language where the expressive enters, very frequently in natural company with the intellectual, as when one gives a rousing speech, makes an embarrassing confession, broaches a painful topic, swears a solemn oath, counts down the jubilant arrival of a new year ....

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, the expressive function of language does not exhaust its non-intellectual function. Other non-intellectual functions of language include: using someone’s name to *call* him, doing a lot of sheer talking in order to perfect one’s pronunciation or to help treat a breathing condition.

So there is a broad spectrum of cases in which the expressive and the intellectual participate in varying degrees. It is important to remember both the contrast between the polar cases and the similarities that connect case to case across the spectrum. Wittgenstein warns against losing sight of the contrast in § 317:

Misleading parallel: the expression of pain is a cry—the expression of thought, a proposition.

As if the purpose of the proposition were to convey to one person how it is with another: only, so to speak, in his thinking part and not in his stomach.

But we should not let the warning blind us to the similarities. In fact Wittgenstein's own use of the word "expression" (or rather of the words *Ausdruck* and *Äußerung*) shows a continuum of applications. Most frequently the expression is intellectual, but it can also be affective (especially when he speaks of facial expressions). Sometimes it is a mixture and cannot be easily slotted into either of two boxes.<sup>10</sup> (Details of this continuum will be discussed when the occasion arises.)

That all the cases on this spectrum are called "expression" is not a mere caprice of language but marks a genuine general similarity. This general similarity is retrievable from the etymology: "ex-press" signals exactly the general distinction of the inner and the outer, which has two broad cases: the intellectual and the sensuous (including the affective). Parallel things can be said about the German verbs *ausdrücken* and *äußern* (whose nouns are *Ausdruck* and *Äußerung*).

Let us now focus on the connection of the expressive function of language to simpler sensations (e.g. pain) to see how being reminded of it helps us overcome the dualism that is generating the false dilemma in § 304a. The key is that this reminder enables us to see, squarely and vividly, the *unity* or *togetherness* of the inner and the outer, e.g., of the pain and the cry of pain ("Ouch!").

Recall that the dualism of the Inner and the Outer, in the case of sensation, takes the specific form of a dualism between what one wants to call "the indescribable sensuous quality of the sensation" and its describable aspect. The describable aspect of a sensation, within the dualistic con-

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<sup>10</sup> A good example here is the following passage: "Are the words 'I am afraid' a description of a state of mind? [paragraph break] I say 'I am afraid'; some else asks me: 'What was that? A cry of fear; or do you want to tell me how you feel; or is it a reflection on your present state?'—Could I always give him a clear answer? Could I never give him one?" (*PI*, p. 187) Wittgenstein goes on (*PI*, p. 188) to give a variety of cases.



ception, is not its ordinarily describable aspect but a deformation thereof. The deformation is that the ordinarily describable aspect of a sensation is reduced to its outwardly observable behavioral manifestations. So the effect of this dualism is, to repeat, to lose the middle, the sensation itself.

This dualistic conception of sensations is given a sharp precipitation in the beetle-in-the-box parable in § 293, which squeezes that “indescribable sensuous quality” into the box and then, in a move meant to stun one back into sanity, points out that the thing in the box is as good as a nothing: the box may even be empty. What is really wrong with the idea of the thing in the box (with the idea of a private object) is not so much the thing (the private object) as *the box itself*, because it is the idea of the box that is forcing us to put the sensation itself, the throbbing pulse of real life, either inside it or outside it, that is, either as a something about which nothing can be said (inside the box) or as a something about which we can only say things on the strength of outward criteria (outside the box). It is thus a choice between the Myth of the Inner Given and behaviorism. This false choice receives a frontal attack in the paradox of § 304: the sensation itself is *neither* inside *nor* outside the box. Throw away the box! – *That* is what the paradox, as an aphoristic recapitulation of § 293b, is really urging us to do. And if we find it hard to throw away that queer little box, it will be very helpful to recall circumstances in real life where its queerness is palpable.

It is just here that the reminder of the expressive function of language, especially of its more primitive manifestations, kicks in. What we need to *vividly* recall here is the natural *togetherness* or *unity* of e.g. a cry of pain (“Ouch!”) wrung from someone punched in the face and the pain he feels. Once we vividly and firmly have such natural unities in view, the queer little box will simply drop out as an artificial construction, and the dualism evaporates.

What that little box is trying to do is insert itself between the pain (inner) and the cry of pain (outer) and then box in “the pain *in itself*”, postulating a private object. This insertion is an act of violence to nature: the box destroys the original unity of sensations and their natural expressions. It does not cut nature at its joints. The violence is great, for it is a radical *halving* of living nature, right down the middle, into the Inner and the Outer. It is a brutal act of butchery that kills *the living middle*. That is why we must make a *radical* break with it (§ 304b). To see and reject the brutality is to begin to regain a sense of humanity.

## 7.4 CONNECTION WITH THE CONCEPT OF A LIVING HUMAN BEING

The final remark above opens into a fundamental theme in the *Investigations*, namely the centrality of *the concept of a human being* for philosophy. One place where it comes to the fore is § 281:

“But doesn’t what you say come to this: that there is no pain, for example, without *pain-behavior*?”—It comes to this: only of *a living human being* and what resembles (behaves like) *a living human being* can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious.<sup>11</sup>

The connection between § 304 and § 281 is this. The above dissolution of the false dilemma can be read as an explication of the very compressed dash in § 281: what we need to dissolve the dualism of Sensation and Sensation-Behavior and more generally the dualism of Inner and Outer is to “restore the concept of a human being to its proper place, not as something to be laboriously reconstituted, out of a whole carload of bits of behavior, but as a seamless whole of whose unity we ought not to have allowed ourselves to lose sight in the first place”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The emphases on “a living human being” are mine.

<sup>12</sup> This is a modified quotation from McDowell’s “Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge” (1998b, p. 384), which can also be read as an explication of the dash in § 281. I have replaced his “[reconstituted, out of] the fragments to which the sceptic reduces it, by a subtle epistemological and metaphysical construction” with “[reconstituted, out of] a whole carload of bits of behavior”, a very memorable phrase from Stanley Cavell (1979, p. 93). I think McDowell would not find this amiss. I am indebted to McDowell in this vicinity and, like him, to John Cook’s paper “Human Beings”.

## 8.0 WITTGENSTEIN'S TWO DIAGNOSES IN § 304B AND § 293C

The dissolution of the paradox of § 304 offered in the previous chapter, however, is only a partial interpretation of § 304. This is because in § 304 Wittgenstein refers not only to the beetle-in-the-box parable (§ 293b) but also to the ‘object and designation’ model (§ 293c). To fully understand how § 304b bears on § 304a we need to understand this latter reference. In other words, Wittgenstein’s two diagnoses of the dualism of the Inner and the Outer, in § 304b and in § 293c, must be understood together.

This chapter focuses on the connection between these diagnoses. It completes, in the textual sense, my interpretation of § 304 and § 293. But the deeper philosophical issues involved cannot be understood without considering other texts. These will occupy the next two chapters.

### 8.1 CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO DIAGNOSES

Let me first bring the two diagnoses in § 304b and § 293c into relation in a preliminary way.

The idea that the only function of language is to convey thoughts may be called the intellectualist conception of language. The point of § 304b is then that the false dilemma of the Myth of the Inner Given and behaviorism will dissolve *only if* we reject this conception. Otherwise put: *If* we adhere to the intellectualist conception of language, we will be driven into the false dilemma.

§ 293c says that “if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’ then the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.” Now our earlier examination of the beetle-in-the-box parable in § 293b has shown that the object dropping out as irrelevant is precisely a *private* object. So what § 293c says is: *If* we use the model of ‘object and designation’ on sensations, we will be driven into the idea of a private object.

The similarity between the two diagnoses will become obvious with a point from McDowell, namely that, of the two horns of the false dilemma, the Myth of the Inner Given is the far greater enemy for Wittgenstein. Because the heart of this Myth is the idea of a private object, this idea is the real cancer in (the dialectic that generates) the false dilemma. So the two labels “the idea of a private object” and “false dilemma” are substantially the same in this context. Given this, we can rephrase the diagnosis in § 293c and then place it side by side with the diagnosis in § 304b:

*If we use the model of ‘object and designation’ on sensation, we will be driven into the false dilemma.*

*If we adhere to the intellectualist conception of language, we will be driven into the false dilemma.*

This parallel, I think, gives the decisive clue as to what Wittgenstein’s real target is when he faults the ‘object and designation’ model in § 293c: it is that aspect of the model that has most to do with the intellectualist conception of language.

This parallel might seem too vague or merely formal. One wants to ask: what has the model of ‘object and designation’ to do with the intellectualist conception of language? The answer is: a great deal.

For the ‘object and designation’ model is absolutely fundamental to our language and its use is an intellectual use of language *par excellence*. This becomes obvious when one recalls that the structure of ‘object and designation’, which might sound slightly technical, is just the structure of ‘object and concept’, as we saw from McDowell. This structure is the very backbone of language. It is so fundamental to language and thought that even trying to state it in a proposition generates deep embarrassment or nonsense (as Frege and Wittgenstein knew).

And the intellectual use of our language is of course its predominant use.

Now to recognize the intellectual use of language, or even to recognize the predominance of this use, is of course not to fall into the intellectualist conception of language. But Wittgenstein’s point, I will argue, is that the predominance of the intellectual use of language constantly exerts a strong pull on us toward that conception.

### 8.1.1 The Sense of the Word ‘Object’ or *Gegenstand*

One might be hindered from fully realizing how fundamental the ‘object and designation’ model is to our language by the word ‘object’ (in ‘object and designation’ or in ‘object and concept’). In contemporary English ‘object’ usually refers to *physical* objects (e.g., apples, stones, knives, and hammers), which I have been calling *outer* objects. Commentators sometimes call them *ordinary* objects, with some justice. In this sense of ‘object’, it is a stretch to call an apparition an object, a degradation to call a person an object, and an absurdity to call a number, a purpose, or an idea an object.

The predominance of this sense of ‘object’ in contemporary English has misled readers into thinking that when Wittgenstein faults the model of ‘object and designation’ (in § 293 and again in § 304) he is warning against conceiving sensations on the model of physical objects. Since this conception is hardly appealing, it is easy to draw the conclusion that Wittgenstein *entirely* rejects the model of ‘object and designation’ for sensations.<sup>1</sup>

The same warning, as we saw, has been read into § 304b on the basis of a careless treatment of Wittgenstein’s list of thinkable things. So the strong gravitation of ‘object’ toward its sense of ‘physical object’ and the slipperiness of § 304b can easily conspire against us. (The former is the main cause of trouble, since § 304b is rarely treated.) The net result is a trivialization of Wittgenstein’s target, since modeling sensations on physical objects is hardly tempting.

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<sup>1</sup> Such commentators include Peter Hacker, Meredith Williams, and John Canfield.

(These commentators are cited below in the order of decreasing explicitness in drawing the conclusion just stated.)

Hacker’s view is amply documented in his *Analytical Commentary*, Vol. 3 (1990), both in his exegeses of § 293 and § 304 and in his interpretative essays, e.g., “Avowals and Descriptions”, section 4, end of second paragraph; “Behaviour and Behaviourism”, end of section 3; “Thinking: the Soul of Language”, beginning of section 4. (Hacker uses ‘object and name’ instead of ‘object and designation’. I have not given page numbers since they are different in different editions.)

Williams (1999, p. 33) says that “[a]ccording to Wittgenstein, [...] the ‘object and designation’ model [...] cannot apply to sensations. Sensations are not objects (which disappear when stripped of their accoutrements), but states of living organisms”. She is of course right that sensations are states of living organisms. But that is no reason to think that the ‘object and designation’ model cannot apply to sensations.

Canfield (2001, p. 380) says: “[...] hence his remark: ‘We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here’ (*PI*, § 304). That suspect grammar takes talk of pain on the model of talk of objects.” By ‘objects’, it seems clear, Canfield means physical objects (otherwise it is not clear how the modeling is supposed to be suspect).

The gravitation of ‘object’ toward its sense of ‘physical object’, which threatens to trivialize Wittgenstein’s target, also explains why commentators tend to avoid the phrase ‘private object’.<sup>2</sup>

But ‘object’ need not be construed in this sense, predominant as it is. Even in contemporary English, we still speak of an apparition as a ghostly object, a number as a mathematical object, a person as the object of admiration, a god as the object of worship, or an idea as the object of ridicule. Sometimes ‘object’ is also used in the sense of ‘purpose’ (e.g. in “And with what object has this war been prosecuted?”). These uses are perhaps not common, but they are perfectly genuine. (They seem to be more common in older English.)

However things stand with English, it seems that the German word *Gegenstand* is much less at the mercy of its sense as *physical object*. It is true that this sense is still dominant in German as well as in Wittgenstein (in his post-*Tractatus* writings). But there is also a well-established use of *Gegenstand* in an extremely thin sense, in which it means *topic* or *subject* or *subject matter*. This use is found not only in philosophy (e.g. Frege), but more importantly also in ordinary German.<sup>3</sup>

Some examples from the *Philosophical Investigations* itself, which is composed in ordinary German, will be directly relevant:

In the first paragraph of the *Preface*, Wittgenstein speaks of his investigations as concerning many “subjects [*Gegenstände*]”, as proceeding “from one subject [*Gegenstand*] to another”. One particular subject is just the privacy of pains, which he calls a *Gegenstand* in § 253c. He uses the same word when he speaks of “the subjects of psychology” and “the subjects of physics” (§ 571b) and of “aesthetic matters” (*PI*, p. 202). More generally he also speaks of the “subject matter” of a report (*PI*, p. 190).<sup>4</sup> Finally, there is the completely general aphorism “Grammar tells what kind of object anything is” in § 373 (where Wittgenstein also tacitly calls God an object).

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<sup>2</sup> Exceptions are, not surprisingly, likely to be close readers of Frege (e.g., Diamond and McDowell). The avoidance of the phrase ‘private object’ by commentators has a partial excuse in the text of the *Investigations*: the phrase does not occur in Part I and only once in Part II (*PI*, p. 207).

<sup>3</sup> This sense of *Gegenstand* comes out particularly clearly, I think, in its *negative* use. I once received a bureaucratic communication from the German authorities informing me of the obligation to register my apartment in Berlin. It included a sentence the gist of which was: “If you have already registered, please regard this letter as *gegenstandslos*.” The *gegenstandslos* (“without object”) here can be translated as “irrelevant”, or more idiomatically as “moot”.

<sup>4</sup> Anscombe’s rendering of *Gegenstand* as “subject” (rather than as “topic”) in these places brings out a phenomenon that she has herself drawn attention to, namely that the words “object” and “subject” have suffered a (partial) double reversal of meaning. See

To sum up, an object, in this extremely thin sense, is anything that we can talk about or refer to. McDowell's Fregean phrase "object of reference" is apt.

The fact that the notion of *object*, in this thin sense, is fundamental to the intellectual use of language entitles us to regard the 'object and designation' model as substantially the same as that use. This enables us to see a close connection between the two diagnoses in § 293c and in § 304b: Wittgenstein's real target in faulting the 'object and designation' model is substantially the same as the intellectualist conception of language.

This connection is also prefigured in the critique of the Augustinian conception of language (as it is commonly called by commentators) earlier in the *Investigations*. That conception is intellectualist in character, for it takes the essence of our language to be the model of 'object and designation' (under the name of 'object and name').<sup>5</sup>

In what follows I will, by default, treat the two diagnoses as a unit.

## 8.2 A CHALLENGE ON § 304B

To better understand the diagnoses in § 304b and § 293c, consider a challenge on the word 'only' in § 304b. It goes like this.

It is true that remembering the expressive function of language helps us to dissolve the false dilemma of the Myth of the Inner Given and behaviourism. But is it true that we can achieve this *only* by rejecting the intellectualist conception of language, *only* by remembering non-intellectual functions of language (such as its expressive function)? This seems to be too strong.

For it seems that we can avoid the false dilemma while adhering to that conception. After all, the key in our own dissolution is just *some* reminder that will enable us to see the unity of sensations and their natural expressions in behaviour. But to see this unity we do not have to recall any non-intellectual function of language, in fact any function of *language* at all, since the behavioral

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her "The Intentionality of Sensation" (*Collected Papers*, Vol. 2, p. 3).

<sup>5</sup> The intellectualism there has other important sources, in particular the idea that the mind is a divine implantation or gift. (This is further discussed in subsection 10.3.4.)

expression does not have to be *linguistic*. This becomes obvious as soon as we turn our attention to the unity exhibited by the following sensations and their natural expressions in behavior:

The feeling of pain expressed in *wincing, twisting of the body*

The feeling of cold expressed in *shivering, cuddling*

The feeling of fear expressed in *fleeing*

The feeling of joy expressed in *smiles, or in lightness of gait*

The feeling of dejection expressed in *downcast eyes*

The feeling of anger expressed in *glaring, fist-clenching, punching*

The expressive behaviour in these unities is not even vocal, let alone linguistic.<sup>6</sup> But for the purpose of vividly bringing into view the natural unity of the inner and the outer (which is key to dissolving the false dilemma), recalling these unities works just as well as recalling, e.g., the saying of “Ouch!” in pain. Some of these unities are even more primitive than the saying of “Ouch!” in pain (since “Ouch!” has a conventional aspect) and are frequently observed in animals without language (including pre-linguistic children).

So the challenge is this. In order to dissolve the dualism of behaviorism and the Myth of the Inner Given, what we have to reject is not the intellectualist conception of *language* but only that of *consciousness* (of sentience, in the present context), as becomes especially clear when we consider animals without language.

The textual answer to this challenge is that there are two tacit restrictions in § 304. First, the kind of sensation at issue is tacitly restricted to that of animals with language, of rational animals, of animals capable of the “I think”. (These three specifications are essentially the same for Wittgenstein and will be used interchangeably.) Second, the kind of sensation-behavior expressive of the sensation is tacitly restricted to vocal-linguistic behavior.

The philosophical significance of each restriction will be explained after it is established.

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<sup>6</sup> I say “let alone” because I mean “linguistic” in a restricted sense here (and in similar contexts), excluding sophisticated schemes for embodying language such as writing and the signal-language sailors used to use for communication out of earshot. The primitive and primary medium of language is the human *voice*. This restriction is in accord with Wittgenstein’s focus on the primitive.



### 8.3 ANSWERING THE CHALLENGE: THE FIRST RESTRICTION

The first tacit restriction will become obvious with two contextual points.

First, as was amply shown, § 293 is a close context of § 304. But the kind of sensation at issue in § 293 is the sensation of rational animals, in fact of a highly reflective rational animal. For what prompts the beetle-in-the-box parable in § 293b is a claim put forth by an ‘I’-user about his *own* sensation: “Now someone tells me that *he* knows what pain is only from his own case!” And this feature is of course prominent in the parable itself.

Second, § 304a starts with the quoted question “But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behavior with pain and pain-behavior without any pain?” This formulation reminds us of § 296:

“Yes, but there is a *something* there all the same accompanying my cry of pain. And it is on account of that that I utter it. And this *something* is what is important—and frightful.”—Only whom are we informing of this? And on what occasion?

The quoted voice in § 296 and the quoted voice at the start of § 304a are clearly on the same topic, namely the relation of pain to pain-behavior.<sup>7</sup> This makes § 296 a context of § 304. In fact, it is a *close* context, because § 296, like § 304a, also contains the specially used upper-case word “Etwas”, which we saw is very rare in the *Investigations*.<sup>8</sup>

But as close context of § 304, § 296, just like § 293b, also shows that the sort of sensation at issue is the sensation of an ‘I’-user.

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<sup>7</sup> Same topic but not the same point: the quoted voice in § 304a is a *commonsensical* one (including when it accuses Wittgenstein of behaviourism) while the quoted voice in § 296 is a *philosophical* one of which Wittgenstein is clearly suspicious. This contrast might be obscured by Anscombe’s original rendering of “*Schmerzbenehmen mit Schmerzen*” into “pain-behavior accompanied by pain” in § 304a, which I corrected to “pain-behavior with pain”. It is just the idea of mere accompaniment that makes the voice in § 296 suspect.

<sup>8</sup> The occurrence of the special “Etwas” in § 296 might be obscured by Anscombe’s original translation. For, contrary to her practice in translating the paradox of § 304 and § 293, she puts no indefinite article before the first “something” (for “ein Etwas”) and no stress on the “something” in “this something” (for “dieses Etwas”) in § 296. I have added both.

In both contexts, the sensation in question is the sensation of someone who can *reflect* on it. This someone is a rational animal, an animal that has language, an ‘I’-user. (These specifications will be used interchangeably.)

One might find little point in noting this tacit restriction (beyond a purely textual one). For it seems that, philosophically, the real danger in this region, namely the temptation towards privacy when we reflect on sensation, is active only when we reflect on the sensation of ‘I’-users anyway, especially when we reflect on it first-personally (as in both § 293b and § 296). That is, one might say that the whole problem of privacy reduces to the problem of the ‘I’, a reduction that Wittgenstein himself once said he is attempting.<sup>9</sup>

There is an important grain of truth in this. But to think that for Wittgenstein the temptation toward privacy is activated only when we reflect on the sensation of ‘I’-users, either that of other ‘I’-users (problem of other minds) or that of one’s own (solipsism), is to seriously underestimate the depth of the temptation as he sees it, for he sees it as attendant on *consciousness in general*.

### 8.3.1 A Digression

The issue is important enough to merit a digression. First I will bring out the depth of the temptation, as Wittgenstein sees it, by discussing §§ 281-286 in some detail. Then I will make a suggestion as to why he sees it as so deep.

Within the Private Language Argument, §§ 281-286 are marked by a more pronounced concentration on the concepts of *living being*, *soul*, and *body*. The living beings, which figure as subjects of sensation, include not only rational but also non-rational animals. The temptation toward privacy is active with respect to both kinds of subjects of sensation.

A good way into these sections is to focus on § 283a and § 284a in juxtaposition:

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<sup>9</sup> See *Notes for Lectures on “Private Experience” and “Sense-Data”*, in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 269. The full sentence there reads: “I am trying to reduce the whole problem [of privacy] to our not understanding the function of the word ‘I’ (and ‘this ↗’)”. It seems likely that the arrow is a sign for *pointing* (the misunderstanding at issue being the idea of a private pointing). The “and” does not mean that the reduction is a reduction to *two* problems, because on the same page Wittgenstein says: “There is no difference, for me, between *I* and *this ↗*”. (For further discussion, see section 10.4.)

What gives us so much as the idea that living beings, things, can feel? [§ 283a]

Look at a stone and imagine it having sensations.—One says to oneself: How could one so much as get the idea of ascribing a sensation to a thing? One might as well ascribe it to a number!—And now look at a wriggling fly and at once these difficulties vanish and pain seems able to get a foothold here, where before everything was, so to speak, too smooth for it. [§ 284a]

The question in § 283a is a provocative mixture. First, there is of course nothing wrong with the idea that *living beings* can feel: that is exactly the point about the wriggling fly in § 284a. But the idea that *things*, in the sense of *inanimate things* (as context shows), can feel is surely suspect: that is exactly the point about the stone in § 284a. Why then does Wittgenstein mix living things and dead things in such a jarring fashion?

The answer can be found in the rest of § 284 (i.e. § 284b):

And so, too, a corpse seems to us quite inaccessible to pain.—Our attitude to what is alive and to what is dead is not the same. All our reactions are different.—If anyone says: “That cannot simply come from the fact that a living thing moves about in such-and-such a way and a dead one not”, then I want to intimate to him that this is a case of the transition ‘from quantity to quality’.

That is, there are not only clear cases of the living and of the dead but also *transitional* cases between the two. By “what is alive” here Wittgenstein has in mind a living *animal*, not e.g. a living *plant*. For his focus here is on *sensation* (as his mention of corpse and pain shows), which he is not willing to ascribe to plants (§ 283b), and which he tacitly links to self-motion (§ 284b).<sup>10</sup>

The existence of transitional cases removes the apparent tension in the mixture of living and dead things in the question in § 283a. This does not mean that the answer becomes obvious, only that the question is really directed at a very broad spectrum of cases which more or less smoothly transition into each other.

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<sup>10</sup> This link comes close to the Aristotelian idea, noted by Anscombe (*Intention*, p. 68), that the sensitive and the volitional (which is manifested primarily in the self-motion of a living body) cannot be understood apart from each other.

Wittgenstein seems to have in mind (at least) two sorts of transitional cases hereabouts. One sort is suggested by his mention of corpse and susceptibility to pain. The transitional cases would be cases of an animal that resembles a corpse to varying degrees, e.g. an animal in sleep or under hypnosis or in coma. We should hesitate to say of an animal in such states that it is susceptible to sensation.

Another sort of transitional cases comes in more obliquely, i.e., from such language-games as (1) fairy-tales in which a pot talks and perceives and (2) children's playing with dolls (including their pitying of the dolls) (§ 282). These cases are transitional not in the sense that we should hesitate to say, of any particular object of that kind (what kind it is the grammar of the language-game in question will tell: § 373), that it is susceptible to sensation. Rather, we should hesitate to call it an *animal* at all. The very *concept* of an animal is, as it were, baffled by these kinds of objects. Or to put it from a different direction, we lack a clear picture that can help us tell whether it is "false or nonsensical to say that a pot talks" or perceives (§ 282b).

Now since the concept of *sensation* or *sentience* is an essential part of the concept of *animal*, the spectrum of transitional cases is also a spectrum of *forms of sentience*, as we might say. Since Wittgenstein uses the word "conscious" in a broad sense covering all animals, we may also call it a spectrum of *forms of consciousness*.<sup>11</sup> At the uppermost of this scale is the consciousness of rational animals.<sup>12</sup>

One can of course move up and down the scale (which smoothes out the question in § 283a). But what shows Wittgenstein's sense of the depth of the temptation towards privacy is at how far down the scale he is willing to let the temptation voice itself. The temptation takes the form of an

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<sup>11</sup> That Wittgenstein uses the word "conscious" broadly and not restricting it to the consciousness of rational animals is something that I gather from his general use of that word (and of related ones). A specific passage where he seems to draw attention to this is in § 281: "only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious". What is translated "it" is his word *es*, not *er*. The latter pronoun would have an anaphoric connection only with "a living human being" and thus make his topic gravitate toward rational animals. Rather, what is referred to by his "it [*es*]" is somewhere below rational animals on the scale.

<sup>12</sup> This is essentially a truncation of what used to be called The Great Chain of Being. Some will say that my truncation represents hubris. But I plead modesty in not being able to really understand the idea of a God. In any case, Wittgenstein does not work with the idea of a God in his philosophy. (He also told Malcolm that he cannot understand the idea of God except in an ethical sense.)

impulse to postulate, for the placement of sensation, a private inner space in subjects on very low levels of the scale.

One level down from the top is the case of a potentially rational animal. The impulse voices itself in the question (heard un-ironically) “Are we perhaps over-hasty in our assumption that the smile of an unweaned infant is not a pretence?” (§ 249) Another level down and we encounter an animal without potential for rationality. The impulse voices itself again in a question (the second one heard non-rhetorically): “Why can’t a dog simulate pain? Is he too honest?” (§ 250) Jumping down the scale steeply, § 283c is especially instructive. Again the impulse voices itself in a series of questions:

Couldn’t I imagine having frightful pains and turning to stone while they lasted? Well, how do I know, if I shut my eyes, whether I have not turned into a stone? And if that has happened, in what sense will the stone have the pains? In what sense will they be ascribable to the stone? And why need the pain have a bearer at all here?!

Thus Wittgenstein is willing to let the seas of reflection surge to the mad pitch of a chunk of pure pain floating around in a vacuum! (To most of us the last sentence would not have occurred at all, or if it did, would have been left out as superfluous.)

Wittgenstein then pulls the reader up by repeating (part of) a general point he made in § 281. This is § 283e:

Only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains.

That is, the way to make the waves subside is to center our attention on human beings. What Wittgenstein is saying here can be usefully brought under a general theme in him, which we may state by adapting § 206c in this way: “The common behavior and consciousness of human beings is the system of reference by means of which we *understand* other forms of life or other forms of consciousness.”<sup>13</sup> That is our fundamental system of reference. We *have* no actual alternative.

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<sup>13</sup> § 206c itself reads: “The common behavior of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language”. The adaptation makes it applicable to beings lower down on the scale, namely to beings without language.

Why does Wittgenstein hear the voice of the temptation so far down the scale? Is it just a reflection of his exceptional susceptibility to certain temptations (which he then battles in the pages of the *Investigations* for the rest of us)? Or is he discerning some genuine basis of that temptation which eludes us? It is hard to give a clear-cut answer. I offer a suggestion, which inclines toward the latter possibility.

First, Wittgenstein does indicate some genuine basis for the tendency to ascribe mental phenomena to inanimate things, namely in the telling of certain fairy-tales (where, e.g., pots talk and perceive) and in children's pitying of dolls. In the case of the pots, he is skeptical about the genuineness of the application of mental concepts. In the case of the dolls, he thinks the application is genuine but notes that it is a *secondary* application. Both responses seem right.

But the very choice of these two examples seems to point to something deeper. Wittgenstein (this is the suggestion) here appears to have in the back of his mind a very primitive phenomenon, namely the tendency to think, or rather to feel, that *everything* has soul. (Note that in this vicinity he speaks of *soul* (§ 283d and § 283f) and, in close relation to this, of *body* (§ 286).)

This phenomenon is very primitive and deep-seated. It is primitive not only in the sense that fairy-tales (and mythologies, their kin) are a kind of record of human mentality in its infancy and primitiveness but also in the sense that fairy-tales and mythologies are continually being repeated and invented. This perennial vitality of fairy-tales and mythologies, it seems, has a natural source in children, who, despite (or perhaps because of) their freshness to the world, often naturally and unconsciously exhibit extremely old things, e.g., just that primitive mentality toward "animism".

The presence of this mentality in the child is nicely captured by this bit of poetry (from *Lied vom Kindsein* by Peter Handke, my attempt at translation):<sup>14</sup>

*Als das Kind Kind war,  
wußte es nicht, daß es Kind war,  
alles war ihm beseelt,  
und alle Seelen waren eins.*

When the child was a child,  
it knew not that it was a child,  
everything was en-soul-ed,  
and all in one enfolded.

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<sup>14</sup> It is featured in the film *Der Himmel über Berlin* (English title "Wings of Desire") by Wim Wenders (1987), to which I owe the reference.

The hyphenation “en-soul-ed” is meant to make explicit the reference to the concept of *soul*, even though it would be much more idiomatic to render the German word, *beseelt*, as “animate”.

How does this primitive tendency in us toward “cosmic animism”, this tendency to feel that everything is animate and all united in one (one “world-soul”), relate to the issue of privacy (and the closely related issues of skepticism about the inner, behaviourism, solipsism)? My suggestion is roughly this. At the heart of all these issues is a deep, inchoate disquiet about *the separateness of things* (in the broadest possible sense), and this disquiet is so to speak the survival of the pains with which the primal feeling of cosmic unity was shattered.<sup>15</sup>

By “pains” here I mean the kind of pains that Rousseau speaks of at the end of the following passage in his speculative but insightful discussion of the origin of language (in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, around the middle of Part I):

It is reasonable to suppose that the first words which men used had for them a much wider meaning than the ones we use in languages which have already developed, and that, ignorant as they were of the division of discourse into its constituent parts, they at first gave every single word the sense of a whole proposition. When they began to distinguish subject and attribute, and noun and verb, which was itself no common effort of genius, substantives were at first only so many proper names; the present infinitive was the only tense of verbs; and the very idea of adjectives must have been developed with great difficulty; for every adjective is an abstract idea, and abstractions are painful and unnatural operations.

Note that the functions of language whose development Rousseau is discussing are all *intellectual* functions of language, in particular the making of finer and finer *distinctions* by means of language. Indeed, it is proverbial that the intellect divides. And the one operation of division that Rousseau singles out as “painful”, even “unnatural”, is abstraction. Now to abstract is to separate, collect, classify. So this operation has a close connection with the ‘object and designation’ model (to designate is to classify).

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<sup>15</sup> I am here inspired by Cavell, who speaks of separateness in his reading of Wittgenstein. The kind of separateness that concerns Cavell is *human* separateness (isolation, finitude, incompleteness). I have here broadened the notion to the limit.

This brings my suggestion above into contact with the real point that I am proposing to find in Wittgenstein's diagnoses in §§ 293c and 304b. The suggestion now is: a deep root of the problem of privacy is the very development of the intellect itself.

### **8.3.2 Justification of the First Restriction**

This lengthy digression above should put Wittgenstein's tacit restriction in § 304 to the sensation of rational animals in perspective and so indicate its significance. It is not true that the temptation toward privacy is activated only when we reflect on the sensation of rational animals.

What *is* true—this is the important grain of truth—is that the temptation is strongest in first-personal reflection, of which only a rational animal is capable. It is this that justifies the first tacit restriction.

## **8.4 ANSWERING THE CHALLENGE: THE SECOND RESTRICTION**

Showing the tacit restriction to the sentience of rational animals in § 304, however, is not enough to meet the challenge on the 'only' in § 304b, because the sensation-behavior of rational animals, of animals *with* language, may still have nothing to do with language (e.g., fleeing in fear).

In § 304 sensation-behavior is spoken of only in § 304a (in the form of pain-behavior) and it is spoken of generally; there is no specification as to whether it has anything to do with language. But § 304b, which is a diagnosis of the situation in § 304a, explicitly refers to language. So there is a threat of disconnection between the two paragraphs of § 304: why speak of language at all in the second paragraph? This threat must be neutralized if we are to fully meet the challenge on the word 'only' in § 304b.

The basic shape of a Wittgensteinian response, I think, has to be on the following lines. It is true that reminders of the natural unities of sensation and sensation-behavior that have nothing to do with language do help us restore commonsense or the healthy human understanding. But such reminders do not get at the *root* of the disease, namely at what generates the dualism of the Inner and the Outer. To really treat this disease, to *eradicate* it, we have to focus on language, because



the consciousness of rational animals is deeply shaped by language. If we do not root out the disease this way, those natural unities themselves are unlikely to come into view and, when they do, unlikely to stay in view.

This response, though Wittgensteinian, is not obviously Wittgenstein's own. I will try as far as possible to locate it in § 304 and § 293 themselves. But a full answer requires consideration of other texts. (These will occupy later chapters, to which the last section of this chapter is an introduction.)

Textually what neutralizes the threat of disconnection between § 304a and § 304b is the fact that the pain-behaviour spoken of in § 304a is tacitly restricted to what I will call *vocal-linguistic* pain-behaviour. The same restriction is also in place in the closely related § 293c.

The reason for using the hyphenated term “vocal-linguistic” will become clear in due course. For now, it suffices to indicate that the term is meant to cover a broad range of pain-behavior. On the one end, there is the primitive cry of pain, most often encountered in young children. This cry of pain is purely vocal and has nothing linguistic about it, since it is inarticulate. On the other end, there are the cool, highly articulate reports that adults can make about their pains. Between these poles are various transitional cases, e.g., the saying of “Ouch!” in pain, which is very close to the primitive cry of pain, and the complaint “Today I've got this terrible headache!”, which is articulate and can very well also be a report.

We can begin neutralizing the threat by noting that § 304a does contain an explicit reference to something very closely related to language, namely to a piece of *grammar*. This grammar, we have seen, is the ‘object and designation’ model faulted in § 293c (not the grammar spoken of in § 293c itself):

That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’, then the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.

What sort of “expression of sensation” has Wittgenstein in mind here? Or with a view to the threat: Is the expression here linguistic or non-linguistic? The answer is that it is tacitly restricted to expression that has a linguistic character (in a broad sense to be delineated below).

Philosophically, the reason is quite straightforward: without the tacit restriction it is difficult to see how one can even be tempted to apply the ‘object and designation’ model at all. It is plain

how the model is to apply: the sensation is to be the object and the expression of the sensation is to be the designation. But if the expression is non-linguistic, it is hardly tempting to model it on a *designation* (and still less to straightforwardly *call* it a designation).

It is true that we sometimes call, perfectly correctly, a flinch a *sign* of pain or a clenched fist a *sign* of anger. But such natural signs of sensations do not *designate*. The difference here can be traced to a basic asymmetry: while a designation (e.g. the designation “anger”) *collects*—through the office of language—the natural signs of the designated (e.g., glaring, shouting, fist-clenching as expressive of anger), the natural signs themselves do not collect anything in that fashion. They lack the gathering power of a designation, a power that is *intellectual* in character.

Textually, what shows that the expression of sensation in § 293c has a linguistic character is Wittgenstein’s talk of its *grammar*, since grammar naturally pertains to language. But to properly show this, we need to first show that Wittgenstein’s use of the word “grammar”, which *is* special, is not special in a way that disrupts the natural connection between “grammar” and “language”.

And this is indeed the case. When Wittgenstein speaks of “the grammar of ...” in the *Investigations*, what fills in the blank is, as a rule, a piece of *language*: a word, a phrase, a proposition. Disregarding § 293 for the moment, there are only two places where he slightly departs from this rule. One is § 562, where he speaks of the grammar of a *notation*. But this is plainly a very slight departure (especially given its context in § 561). The other place is § 572, where he speaks of the grammar of certain *states*: expecting, being of an opinion, hoping for something, knowing something, being able to do something. But these states are intellectual states and the capacity to have them is for Wittgenstein inseparable from the capacity to use language.<sup>16</sup> So this is not an essential exception to the rule, either.<sup>17</sup>

Now there is no reason to think that the use of the word ‘grammar’ in § 293c is an exception to this rule. This means that the expression of sensation spoken of there has a *linguistic* character (hence excluding such non-linguistic expressions as fleeing in fear and fist-clenching in anger).

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<sup>16</sup> The last state, being able to do something, can of course be a non-intellectual state (e.g., being able to walk). But given the context in § 571, it seems clear that Wittgenstein means some intellectual capacity.

<sup>17</sup> This paragraph is based on an exhaustive electronic search for ‘*grammati*’ in the German text of the *Investigations*. There are in total about 20 instances in which the grammar of something is spoken of.

So both philosophically and textually the “expression of sensation” in § 293c need to have a linguistic character.

It should be clear that what in § 304 contextually corresponds to the expression of sensation in § 293c is the pain-behavior spoken of in § 304a.<sup>18</sup> As we noted, pain-behavior is there spoken of generally, without specification as to whether it is linguistic or non-linguistic. But since § 304 is very closely connected to § 293, it is entirely natural to allow § 293c to contextually determine the pain-behavior spoken of in § 304a to linguistic pain-behavior.<sup>19</sup>

But of course this tacit contextual restriction to the *linguistic* expression of sensation should not be taken to amount to a restriction to the *intellectual* expression of sensation (which typically happens by making intellectual use of language). Otherwise, the voice in § 304a would not be the commonsensical voice that it is, but rather already be infected by the intellectualist conception of language, the disease diagnosed in § 304b. And this would rob the point of the dissolution of the false dilemma, since it would have no commonsensical voice to vindicate. Yet the dissolution, as Wittgenstein’s phrasing “The paradox disappears [...]” indicates, is aimed at vindication and it is characteristic of him that philosophy should vindicate commonsense (see §§ 126-129).<sup>20</sup>

So there is a need to counter-balance the pull of the tacit qualifier “linguistic” in § 304a toward the intellectual: we need to pull it toward the affective if we are to read § 304 as having the disease in view at all, namely *the distortion of linguistic expression in the general sense* by pulling it toward linguistic expression in the intellectual sense. It is because of this distortion that the reminder of the expressive function of language, which is linguistic yet non-intellectual, is especially to the point.

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<sup>18</sup> Wittgenstein uses “expression of sensation” and “behavior [expressive of sensation]” basically interchangeably. A fine example is in § 288c: “if we cut out human behaviour, which is the expression of sensation, [...]”. Anscombe’s translation renders explicit Wittgenstein’s appositive use of the first comma in the German text: “wenn nun der Ausdruck der Empfindung, das menschliche Benehmen, ausgescholossen ist, [...]”.

<sup>19</sup> The rest of § 293 exerts no contextual determination here, as it contains no reference to expression of sensation or to sensation-behavior.

<sup>20</sup> The vindication is of course only of the first point of the commonsensical voice in § 304a, namely there is a difference between pain-behavior with pain and pain-behavior without pain. The second point, the charge that Wittgenstein denies the sensation itself, is rejected. The vindication is actually made explicit at the beginning of § 311, where Wittgenstein repeats (by quoting) his earlier rhetorical question “What difference could be greater?” (He then goes on to deal with a misunderstanding of the difference.)

Similar consideration applies to § 293c. The tacit qualifier “linguistic” on its “expression of sensation” should not be allowed to collapse into its intellectual pole but rather construed to span the whole spectrum of cases which has both an intellectual pole and an affective pole. Otherwise § 293c will look wrong, since to give intellectual expression to one’s sensation is just to convey a thought about it, which involves a perfectly good application of a core component of our intellectual equipment, namely the ‘object and designation’ model. So, for the sake of charity, we should construe the tacit qualifier “linguistic” broadly.

I have used the hyphenated term ‘vocal-linguistic’ to achieve the counter-pull and to keep in view the whole continuum of cases. The distortion of this continuum is the real target of § 293c.

The conclusion that there is a tacit restriction to the vocal-linguistic in § 304a and in § 293c is strengthened by a feature in a common close context of theirs, § 296 (already quoted). In § 296 the pain-behavior that the interlocutor refers to is exactly a vocal-linguistic one: it is a *cry* of pain. The reference is nicely ambiguous: it can be a primitive cry of pain (typical in children but sometimes also in adults) or an articulate complaint (frequent in adults) or somewhere in between.

All these textual-philosophical considerations are rather torturous. But this is Wittgenstein’s fault. (It is not a substantive fault, but a stylistic fault of extreme compression.) The fault is really twofold.

In § 304, the fault is his suddenly starting to talk about *language* in § 304b. The connection of this talk with § 304a is very obscure: the restriction to vocal-linguistic pain-behavior in § 304a is tacit and its establishment through contextual connections is torturous.

In § 293, the fault is his suddenly starting to talk about the *expression* of sensation in § 293c. The connection of this talk with § 293b is very obscure: § 293b concentrates on the idea of a private object (the beetle in the box) and hardly talks about the expression of sensation at all (except in the very doubtful sense that the word ‘beetle’, which may or may not have a genuine use in the tribe’s language, is an expression of sensation). Yet Wittgenstein starts § 293c by saying “That is to say:”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> I have not considered § 293a here because its relation to the rest of § 293 is quite oblique. In any case, § 293a does not speak of the expression of sensation or sensation-behavior, either.

The two faults are in a way symmetrical: what is too sudden in § 304b, namely the reference to *language*, would not be so in § 293c, while what is too sudden in § 293c, namely the reference to *expression of sensation*, would not so in § 304b. So § 304b and § 293c would be easier to read if we exchanged parts of their contents like this (modifying also the last sentence of § 304a to fit the change):

§ 304a\*: [...] We only rejected a piece of intellectual equipment which tries to force itself on us here.

§ 304b\*: The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that our sensation is always expressed in *one* way, always on the ‘object and designation’ model.

§ 293c\*: That is to say: if we think that language functions only to convey thoughts, then we will not be able to understand the place of the sensation itself in the language-game.

The talk of the expression of sensation in § 304b\* echoes the talk of pain-behavior in § 304a, and there is no sudden explicit reference to language (designating an object can be an intellectual act not explicitly involving language). The talk of language and of a place in a language-game in § 293c\* echoes the talk of the same in § 293b, and there is no sudden reference to the expression of sensation. § 304b\* does roughly the same job as § 304b, but better in the sense that the “only” is no longer vulnerable to the challenge. § 293c\* does roughly the same job as § 293c, but better in the sense that the “That is to say:” is now much more natural.<sup>22</sup>

So this partial content-swapping would make the flow of text within § 304 and within § 293 much more natural. But this would come at a price. The price is that the two full sections, § 304\* (= § 304a\* + § 304b\*) and § 293\* (= § 293a + § 293b + § 293c\*), would now be threatened by a certain disconnection: § 304\* would involve the expression of sensation but would not explicitly involve language, while § 293\* would explicitly involve language but would not involve the expression of sensation. The two rewritten diagnoses, § 304b\* and § 293c\*, would not be *explicitly* substantially the same.

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<sup>22</sup> I say *roughly* because we have of course not treated the real, deeper problem, namely *how* the intellectual use of language tends to pull us toward the intellectualist conception of our sentience.

What is needed to preserve the substantial sameness, then, is exactly this: a close connection between language and the sentience (including sensation-behavior) of animals with language (to make explicit the first tacit restriction). Or to put it more textually, the second tacit restriction (to the vocal-linguistic) in § 304, whose existence depends on the close contextual tie between § 304 and § 293, needs a justification and the justification needed is exactly a close connection between language and the sentience of animals with language. Or in still other words, such a connection is what justifies the claim, in the broad Wittgensteinian response to the challenge stated earlier, that only by focusing on language can we eradicate the Inner-Outer dualism about the sentience of rational animals.

Is there such a connection in Wittgenstein? The answer is *yes*, as I will show in the next section. And I will show this connection as a specific manifestation of a general connection in Wittgenstein, namely the essential connection between *language* and *the human being* (the paradigm of a rational animal).

## 8.5 GENERAL CONNECTION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN BEING

Let me first move towards the general connection and then descend back to the specific one. This will provide useful orientation when we come down to detailed engagement with the text.

We may begin by noting that the tacit restriction of the expression of sensation to the vocal-linguistic in §§ 304a and 293c is part of a larger phenomenon, namely Wittgenstein's preoccupation with the vocal-linguistic in the Private Language Argument. (This is readily ascertainable by inspecting the text, say §§ 243-315.)

This preoccupation is perfectly natural because it reflects Wittgenstein's preoccupation with language (throughout his life). It is made still more natural and more salient by his concentration on one particular sort of sensation, namely on *pain*. For among the expressions of pain, the *cry* of pain is the most natural and salient. This double focus on pain and on the cry of pain is in turn an

instance of Wittgenstein's general focus on the primitive, for no sensation is more primitive than pain and no expression of pain is more primitive than the cry of pain.<sup>23</sup>

Wittgenstein's general focus on the primitive is not arbitrary or idiosyncratic but stems from a general philosophical conviction and approach, stated in an early passage: "It disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of the words" (§ 5a). What causes the fog, context makes clear, is the Augustinian conception of language, which is intellectualist in character (as we saw).

Wittgenstein's critique of the intellectualist conception of language is part of what might be called his *critique of language*. I mean this in a broad Kantian sense, for I think that Wittgenstein has a deep sense that—to echo Kant on human reason (A viii)—human language has the peculiar fate of being a double-edged sword: it enables us to *understand* but also tends to make us *misunderstand*. Hence the aphorism "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (§ 109). The 'by means of' can be usefully read as having a double meaning that echoes the double meaning of the 'of' in Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason". In both cases it is a matter of fundamental *self-critique*.

Now we should not allow the habitual concern with language in Wittgenstein (and in a great deal of philosophy generally after the Linguistic Turn) to dull our sense of the significance of his concern, because his concern is ultimately with the human being itself. His is *a critique of human life through language*. (The word 'through' here has a triple meaning: language, *in* which human life is lived, is at once the *object* and the *means* of the critique.) This is because Wittgenstein sees an *essential* connection between language and the human being. This connection is already in the *Tractatus* (4.002[2]):

Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it.

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<sup>23</sup> To put this double focus in perspective, consider two facts. First, non-primitive sensations frequently have no natural-primitive expression: what is the natural-primitive expression of the sensation one gets when drinking a cocktail of gin and vodka? Second, for many primitive sensations, the most natural expression is not vocal-linguistic. A range of sensations of touch (moderate pressures, moderate temperatures) typically manifest themselves in bodily movement or posture. Encountering cold air, one typically contracts one's body in a certain way and shuts one's mouth. Fear or shock frequently makes one speechless.

By ‘human organism’ Wittgenstein does not mean, as one might think at first glance, human organism as treated by natural science (biological or chemical or physical or any combination of these). That would make the study of language, namely logic, part of natural science (which goes against the very core of the *Tractatus*). Rather, what he means by ‘organism’ here is akin to what he later means by ‘forms of life’.<sup>24</sup> Since language is central in the *Tractatus*, we can say that, for it, language is an *essential* part of the human organism, of the human being. So the human being is also central to the *Tractatus*, only it lies very far in the background.

That Wittgenstein sees, throughout his life, a deep and natural connection between language and the human being comes out nicely in a very early passage (from 1914), collected as the very first entry in *Culture and Value* (p. 1):

We tend to take the speech of a Chinese for inarticulate gurgling. Someone who understands Chinese will recognize *language* in what he hears. Similarly I often cannot discern the *humanity* in a man.

As the translator, Peter Winch, has remarked, “the *humanity* in a man”, unlike the German it renders, “den *Menschen* im Menschen”, does not quite capture the concrete particularity captured by Wittgenstein.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the word “humanity” suggests a *virtue* (as might figure in an obituary), while what Wittgenstein means here is much more basic, i.e., the being of a human being at all. So we might, using more old-fashioned English, render the German phrase as “the *man* in the man.”

What is striking about this passage is how utterly naturally the connection between language and the human being comes out in it: both in the match of the two emphases and in the use of the word “So”. (Winch renders the “So” as “Similarly”, but one could well also render it as “Just so”. This would make the connection stronger: it is not a matter of analogy.) The connection is utterly

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<sup>24</sup> Note that the plural, which is at home in the *Investigations* and signals the complicatedness of human life, fits the *Tractatus* too. Wittgenstein notes the complicatedness already in 4.002[2], but he also goes on to elaborate and stress it in 4.002[3] and 4.002[5]. The human organism he speaks of here is really the enormously complicated network of forms of human life, the whole “whirl of organism”, to use a memorable phrase from Cavell (1969, p. 52).

<sup>25</sup> See Winch’s “Particularity and Morals”, collected in his *Trying to Make Sense*, p. 175.



natural, almost unconscious, because the passage is a completely unguarded, personal one in one of Wittgenstein's pre-*Tractatus* wartime notebooks.<sup>26</sup>

So the human being figures, through language, centrally in Wittgenstein's entire philosophy. The fundamental change is that while the human being lies very far in the background in his earlier work and remains unthematized, it comes to take center stage in his later work. And it comes into view *concretely*, in flesh and blood. This new concentration on the concrete human being is of a piece with his concentration on the primitive, natural, original conditions of the human being. Since these conditions are most clearly seen in the child, the child, especially the child's learning of a language, now assumes great philosophical significance. It is no accident that the *Investigations* opens by quoting Augustine on the child's learning of language. Wittgenstein criticizes the Augustinian, intellectualist conception of language for generating a fog that obscures our view of the true working of language in § 5a (partly quoted above), and he continues as follows (§ 5b):

A child uses such primitive forms of language when it learns to talk. Here the teaching of language is not explanation, but training.

A child learns a language region by region. The region of language we have been concerned about is sensation-language. So how does a child learn a sensation-language?

What makes this question significant is that it directs us to a region of our life where we can, by looking closely, gain a sharp appreciation of Wittgenstein's critique of the intellectualist conception of language. The reason is that the development of sensation-language in a human being is exactly where the animal nature of the human being, here represented by *sensation*, and its in-

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<sup>26</sup> This is lost in the entry in *Culture and Value*, which displays the passage like a crafted aphorism. A full quotation will bring out the unguarded and personal character: "The lieutenant and I have already talked about all sorts of things; a very nice man. He can get along and be friendly with the dirtiest pigs without soiling himself. When we hear a Chinese speak we tend to take his speech for inarticulate gurgling. Someone who knows Chinese will recognize *language* in it. Just so I often cannot see the *man* in a man etc.. Worked a bit but without success." I have stayed very close to the original (keeping e.g. the "etc."), which is highly informal and lacks the craft that the entry in *Culture and Value* seems to have. (The original is in MS 101, p. 7r, written on 21.8.1914, soon after Wittgenstein arrived on the Eastern Front.)

tellektual nature, represented by *language* (whose use is predominantly intellectual), meet. So we may expect this meeting site to be fraught with tensions and causes for ambivalence.

The main tension and cause for ambivalence is this. On the one hand, the intellectual use of language has an inherent tendency to inflict *cuts* on those phenomena of life where the inner and the outer form a natural-original unity and yet, on the other hand, it is just life itself that demands those very cuts, or better put, demands the drawing of distinctions which then tend to harden into cuts. This distinguishing-cutting is at the heart of the main problem we are left with, namely how the intellectual use of language tends to pull us toward intellectualism and the closely related dualism of Sensation and Sensation-Behavior. The sword of language cuts both ways: the gathering power of language, which expresses and sustains the ties of human community, itself depends on operations of separation: cutting, drying, collecting, classifying.

The learning of a sensation-language is a site where we can see, particularly clearly, both of these edges developing. I will focus on the development of the positive or enabling edge first and then on that of the negative or harmful edge. In terms of text, I will first focus on § 244, in which Wittgenstein gives an answer to the question as to how a child learns a sensation-language. I will then focus on § 245, where Wittgenstein (on the reading that I will recommend) urges us to look for, so as to look out for, those moments when language makes its cuts. That there is a permanent ambiguity in the nature of these cuts (positive? negative?) is part of Wittgenstein's point as I read him.

## 9.0 THE LEARNING OF A SENSATION-LANGUAGE

The central question of this chapter is: How do we learn a sensation-language?

The learning of a sensation-language, as we saw toward the end of the previous chapter, is a site where sensation (representing the animal) and language (representing the rational) meet. It is an area of growth of a human being from a mere animal (a child) into a rational animal (a normal adult). The primary aim of this chapter is to show so to speak the *fertility* of this meeting ground. In particular, it aims to bring out in detail how the instinctive-primitive in us functions as a natural basis of the child's development of a sensation-language.

### 9.1 WITTGENSTEIN'S SKETCH IN § 244

The question "How do we learn a sensation-language?" is essentially the same question as "How does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?" Wittgenstein sketches an answer to this question in the midst of § 244:

How do words *refer* to sensations?—There doesn't seem to be any problem here; for don't we talk about sensations every day, and give them names? But how is the connection between the name and the thing named set up? This question is the same as: how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?—of the word "pain" for example. Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.

"So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?"—On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it.

The cry of the child that Wittgenstein is speaking of here is on the more primitive end of the spectrum of vocal-linguistic expressions of sensations. The most primitive on this spectrum is the universal cry of the newborn: in the beginning was the cry. This cry persists into childhood, even into adulthood (of course in increasingly refined forms).<sup>1</sup>

There is a rich landscape of transitional cases between this inarticulate, undiscriminating cry of the newborn and the articulate, highly discriminating descriptions that an adult can give of his sensations. These transitional cases form a large part of what we called the expressive function of language.

Having this landscape in sight will help us gain a clear view of how we gradually develop a sensation-language. As we will see, instinctive-primitive expressions of sensation constitute what one may call a favor of nature to this development. This development is part of our development of language in general, which is inseparable from the development of the capacity for thought, or the development of an intellect.

## 9.2 IS THE SKETCH IN § 244 JUST “ONE POSSIBILITY”?

Now Wittgenstein presents his sketch of how we learn our first sensation-words in § 244 as “one possibility”. Is it *just* one possibility among others? Or does he take it more seriously than that?

The answer is that Wittgenstein takes the sketched possibility very seriously. In fact, he sees it as *the* way we learn *the* sensation-language we have. Or in other words, he sees our instinctive-primitive expressions of sensation as a favor of nature to our development of sensation-language not in the sense of a favorable but dispensable accident but rather in the sense of a general fact of nature functioning as an indispensable basis of that development. This general fact of nature, one may say, is a *deep* contingency, not a shallow one.

This is clear from § 142. The directly relevant bit of text is:

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<sup>1</sup> The talk of persistence here might lead one to think that the universal cry of the newborn is expressive of some particular sensation, e.g., a cry of *pain*. But in fact it is far too primal and undifferentiated to be expressive of anything particular. Calling it a cry of *distress* might perhaps be closer to the truth. I do not really know *of* what to call it a cry. It is a cry; that is all.

And if things were quite different from what they actually are—if there were for instance no characteristic expression of pain, of fear, of joy; if rule became exception and exception rule; or if both became phenomena of roughly equal frequency—this would make our normal language-games lose their point.

The broader theme in which this passage is embedded is very general. It is stated (as a punctuation of a line of thought in the preceding discussions) in the beginning part of § 142:

It is only in normal cases that the use of a word is clearly prescribed; we know, are in no doubt, what to say in this or that case. The more abnormal the case, the more doubtful it becomes as to what we are to say. And if things [...]

This general theme is plainly connected with the equally general theme of *extremely general facts of nature* briefly discussed in the note inserted by Wittgenstein around here (§ 142n):

What we have to mention in order to explain the significance, I mean the importance, of a concept, are often extremely general facts of nature; such facts are hardly ever mentioned because of their great generality.

This note makes it clear, I think, that by “characteristic expression of pain, of fear, of joy” in § 142 Wittgenstein means their *natural* expression.<sup>2</sup>

So Wittgenstein sees the natural expressions of sensations as a favor of nature that is of very general significance for understanding how our normal language-games work (i.e., “their point”). This way of seeing the matter reappears, inconspicuously, in the following bit of text in § 256:

[...] *How* do I use words to designate my sensations?—As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? [...]

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<sup>2</sup> Of course only natural, i.e. primitive, sensations have natural expressions. But Wittgenstein is here speaking of natural-primitive sensations that do have natural-primitive expressions: pain, fear, joy.

What shows that Wittgenstein sees the natural tie of sensations and their natural expressions as underpinning our ordinary way of learning sensation-words is his use of the word “Then”. The word is being used explicatively.<sup>3</sup> This can easily escape notice since it is used very unguardedly here. The unguardedness shows that the conception is deep-seated in Wittgenstein’s thinking.

Now, of course, for Wittgenstein our *normal* language-games (§ 142) collectively constitute *the* language we have and our *ordinary* way of learning language (§ 256) is *the* way we learn language, since it is from everyday language that I got my words and from nowhere else (*cf.* § 134a). So Wittgenstein’s sketch in § 244 is actually a sketch of *the* way in which we learn *the* sensation-language we in fact have. It is much more than just “one possibility”.<sup>4</sup>

### 9.3 WINCH’S DISCUSSION OF § 244

These considerations above are very general. But as we will see, it is crucial in this area to have a firm view of the *details* of how natural-primitive expressions of sensation serve the development of our sensation-language. To bring out the details (as well as the importance of keeping them in firm view), it will instructive to consider a discussion of § 244 by Peter Winch.

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<sup>3</sup> This is perhaps a little clearer in the German text: “[...] *So wie wir’s gewöhnlich tun? Sind also meine Empfindungen [...]*”. The word translated “Then” is “*also*”, which is clearly used here to introduce an explication of the preceding “ordinarily”. (I modified Anscombe’s translation of § 256 slightly, replacing her “stand for” with “designate” for “*bezeichne*”.)

<sup>4</sup> The reason why Wittgenstein only says “one possibility” in § 244 might be this. (For details, see my discussion of Peter Winch’s misreading of the main issue in § 244 a few pages later.) The first and third questions in § 244 (which are nearly the same) can be heard in a tone of wonderment – wonderment at how reference (to sensations or in general) is possible *at all*. To break or preempt that sense of wonderment, it is enough to simply point out the “one possibility”: there is no need to elaborate.

### 9.3.1 Winch's Context for and First Two Points about § 244

The context of Winch's discussion of § 244 is his response to one strand in Malcolm's reading of Wittgenstein, a strand that is especially prominent in Malcolm's paper "Wittgenstein: the relation of language to instinctive behaviour".<sup>5</sup> Winch sets up the context as follows:

Malcolm [...] rightly attached great importance to the role of what Wittgenstein called 'primitive reactions' in the formation of our concepts. In his treatment of this issue Malcolm placed a great deal of emphasis on the *genetic* aspect of this role, i.e. that our more or less complicated language-games *grow out of* these much simpler primitive reactions. This led him to emphasize the *extra-linguistic* character of those reactions themselves. They are, or can be, reactions which are characteristic of human beings *before they ever learn to talk*.

Now there is a sense in which this is perfectly acceptable and is indeed an accurate *partial* representation of Wittgenstein's thinking. A famous case occurs in his discussion of the relation between pain and pain behaviour.

Winch then quotes § 244 and makes three points about it. The first two are meant to sharpen the main issue in § 244:

First, the main point at issue in the discussion [§ 244] is *not*: how does our use of pain language develop?, but: what is it for words to *refer* to sensations? [...] Second, if the genesis of our pain language were really the issue, Wittgenstein's discussion of it would look amazingly off-hand. 'Here is a possibility ...' is all he says. There is absolutely no attempt to verify whether his suggestion is correct as a matter of developmental psychology, absolutely no discussion of what other possibilities there might be and their relative merits. [...]

This identification of the main issue in § 244 is quite wrong, though there is a good thought behind it. The good thought that Winch is plainly anxious to insist on is that we must not confuse the conceptual question of *what it is* to refer to sensations and the empirical question of *how, as a*

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<sup>5</sup> This response is found in Winch's "Discussion of Malcolm's Essay" in Malcolm's booklet-essay *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?*, pp. 121-4. It is a digression and is easily detachable from its own context: Winch's discussion of the analogies Malcolm draws between the philosophical and religious dimensions of Wittgenstein's thinking.

*matter of psychology*, we acquire the capacity to refer to sensations. Such warning is salutary and in harmony with Wittgenstein's own anti-psychologism. And Winch's point (by implication) that Wittgenstein is not offering a piece of theorizing in developmental psychology is surely right.

But Winch goes wrong when he takes it that the development of our pain-language, or more generally of our sensation-language, is essentially just a matter of developmental psychology.<sup>6</sup> It is of course true that human psychology plays a crucial role in the development of our sensation-language, but that is not to say that the development is *just* a psychological development. For it is *also* a conceptual development. Learning to talk (about sensations in this case) requires acquiring mastery of a battery of related concepts (e.g. *pain* and *pity*). And of course in § 244 Wittgenstein is concerned about the conceptual, not the psychological, aspect of the development of sensation-language.

Winch sees that Wittgenstein is concerned with conceptual matters, but he, anxious to avoid psychologism, mislocates them: he locates them *outside* the development of a sensation-language. Thus, he insists that Wittgenstein's concern is not "how does our use of pain language develop?" but "what is it for words to *refer* to sensations?" But this is right only if the question of development is independent from the question of reference. Yet this is just the opposite of how Wittgenstein treats his own question of development, "how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?—of the word 'pain' for example". This is because (1) he explicitly equates this question with the question "how is the connection between the name [of a sensation] and the thing named [the sensation itself] set up?" and (2) this latter question in turn is really just another way of asking the question of reference with which § 244 begins: "How do words *refer* to sensations?"

The point here requires some elaboration, which will also bring out Wittgenstein's basic approach to understanding reference to sensations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This is implicit in Winch's second point, where he takes a developmental account of our pain-language to essentially involve, if not to simply amount to, an account of developmental psychology. Since he finds nothing of the latter in § 244, he concludes that Wittgenstein is not concerned about the developmental issue. (I use the words "development" and "developmental" interchangeably with "genesis" and "genetic", as does Winch.)

<sup>7</sup> It will be clear for readers familiar with Wittgenstein that this approach applies to understanding reference in general.



It is possible to read the opening question of § 244 not as “how is reference to sensations set up?” but as “how is reference to sensations possible *at all*?”, asked in a mood of wonderment. In fact, Wittgenstein seems to intend this. For he places an emphasis on the word “refer”, which can generate the “how possible *at all*” wonderment, and his response, “There doesn’t seem to be any problem here; for don’t we talk about sensations every day, and give them names?”, seems to be a reminder meant to break just that wonderment.<sup>8</sup>

But the opening voice may not realize the force of this reminder, and the question following the reminder, “But how is the connection between the name and the thing named set up?”, could still be heard in a tone of wonderment. Wittgenstein then pulls this question down to earth with a characteristic identity: “This question is the same as: how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?—of the word ‘pain’ for example.”

Whether or not Wittgenstein means these two questions in § 244 (first and third) to be heard in a tone of wonderment, his response is clearly meant to direct our attention to the rough ground, that is, to our daily use of sensation-words to talk about sensations. There is no problem here: referring to sensations is a common, unproblematic fact. If there is a problem here, it is in the sense of a task, the task of properly understanding this fact of reference. And for this task, it is essential to look at *how* the connection between sensation-names and the sensations is *actually* set up. And this, on the characteristically Wittgensteinian approach, is the same as how a human being learns a sensation-language. So this development *is* the main issue in § 244.

Winch misses the spirit of this approach to understanding reference to sensations. He avoids the how-questions, which are Wittgenstein’s own, and attempts to squeeze them into a what-it-is question conceived as independent from the how-questions: “what is it for words to *refer* to sensations?” It is as if he were trying to tackle the question of reference *in abstraction from* how reference is achieved, how a language-game gets established. This would surely be against the spirit of the later Wittgenstein.

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<sup>8</sup> This reading also receives some support from Wittgenstein’s use of a dash before the response. Such dashes in the *Investigations* frequently signal a turn or reorientation of thought and such turns are frequently turns from the metaphysical to the everyday.

### 9.3.2 Winch's Third Point about § 244

It is unlikely that Winch, a very perceptive reader of Wittgenstein, is *simply* making this mistake. I have suggested one diagnosis, namely that he is overly anxious to warn against reducing a conceptual development to a mere psychological development. But this warning does not seem to be called for by the text of § 244, in which matters of psychological development seem hardly in the offing, or by anything in the paper by Malcolm to which Winch is responding. This suggests that Winch is moved by something more here. This is indeed the case and the something more begins to come out in the third point he makes about § 244:

Third, the child's reactions, which form the basis of the teaching, are identified through the criteria of our existing language-game. Words are said to be substituted for the original, natural expression of *sensation*. The reaction is a reaction to *being hurt*. What the child is taught is new *pain behaviour*, i.e., this replaces an earlier form of *pain behaviour*. Of course, the italicized expressions here have their sense in the language-game a possible genesis of which Wittgenstein is suggesting.<sup>9</sup>

The point here, namely that the identification of the child's primitive reactions to sensations itself depends on the relevant language-game, is elaborated by Winch in his concluding remarks on Malcolm's Wittgenstein's stress on primitive reactions. These remarks, like the remarks with which Winch sets up the context of his discussion, are more general than his third point on § 244, because they concern primitive reactions in general rather than primitive reactions to sensations in particular.<sup>10</sup> Winch writes:

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<sup>9</sup> Note that here Winch is saying that Wittgenstein (in his "one possibility" sketch in § 244) *is* suggesting a possible genesis of our pain-language. But earlier he implied that in § 244 Wittgenstein is *not* concerned about this genesis. It seems that here Winch has simply slipped into speaking of the *conceptual* (as opposed to the empirical-psychological) aspect of this genesis without noticing it. This slip is minor and Winch's third point would not be affected if we left out the phrase "a possible genesis of which Wittgenstein is suggesting".

<sup>10</sup> For example, Winch also discusses Wittgenstein on the role of primitive reactions in the formation of our concepts of cause and effect. This is interspersed in his discussion of § 244. Winch sees the two cases (sensation and causation), rightly I think, as parallel. I have omitted his parallel discussion because it does not add substantially to his discussion of § 244, which is my focus here.

I said earlier that in his treatment of Wittgenstein's talk about 'primitive reactions', Malcolm was led to emphasize the *extra-linguistic* character of those reactions themselves. The above discussion is intended to bring out that there is a certain ambiguity in the meaning of 'extra-linguistic' here. It is perfectly true that we are speaking of reactions that people may have before they learn to talk; however, the language-games, a 'primitive form' of which we see in those reactions, provide the framework within which we identify in the first place the reactions of which we speak. Only thus are we able to make the distinctions between them which we need and which would be indiscernible, would indeed make no sense, if the wider context of the language-game were not presupposed.

These remarks (Winch's third point and his concluding remarks) contain an insight, but they also reveal a failure to properly appreciate Wittgenstein's sketch in § 244 of how we learn a sensation-language.

The insight can be put thus. In the normal teaching of sensation-words to a child that we are familiar with, the primitive reactions of the child (e.g. crying when in pain) form a basis or foundation of this teaching. But these primitive reactions do not enter the relevant language-game (of the teaching adults) *from the outside*, as alien to the conceptual structures of that language-game. Rather, they are identified (and reacted to) by the adults already under the relevant concepts.<sup>11</sup> So, even though the primitive reactions are *extra-linguistic* in the obvious sense that they come to the child naturally before he learns to talk, they, at least in the normal teaching of sensation-language that we are familiar with, have their identity and significance already under the relevant concepts of the language-game and are thus in that sense not *extra-linguistic*, i.e., not *extra-conceptual*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I added "reacted to" to make the point fuller and more natural. This element is not in the letter of Winch's text but is in its spirit. Without appropriate reactions on the part of the adults, their identifications of the child's behavior would be idle, and the behavior itself would lose significance.

<sup>12</sup> It seems clear from Winch's wording that by 'linguistic' he means 'conceptual'. He writes e.g.: "the child's reactions are identified through the criteria of our existing language-game", "the language-games [...] provide the framework within which we identify [...] the reactions". Conceptual capacities are certainly essential to such identification. (Winch's talk of identification through criteria here seems infelicitous: Do we really, in normal situations, tell that a child is, e.g., crying on the strength of some criterion? Perhaps what he really means is "identified under the concepts of our existing language-game". In any case, conceptual capacities are essential.)

This formulation of Winch's insight is only for one species of primitive reactions, i.e., those to sensations. But he also seems to have in mind a generalized version of it that covers all primitive reactions.<sup>13</sup> But § 244 is only concerned with primitive reactions to sensations. Since it is my focus, I will only discuss the specific version of Winch's insight.

One more determination of Winch's insight is necessary. It seems clear that, when he warns against thinking of the primitive reactions to sensations as (in every sense) "extra" or external to the concepts of our sensation-language, he does not mean *all* concepts of our sensation-language but rather a subset of them, i.e., *concepts of the inner*. This is fairly clear from how he places his emphases in the third point: they are on *sensation, being hurt, and pain behaviour*.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, he seems hardly interested in warning against thinking of the primitive reactions as "extra" or external to concepts of the outer (behavioral concepts) in our sensation-language, e.g. the concept of *crying*.<sup>15</sup>

So understood, Winch's insight is a warning against a key assumption of behaviourism, the idea that behaviour (the primitive reactions in this case) is intelligible independently from the inner. If we accept this, we will likely regard the primitive behavioral reactions as foundational for our sensation-language in a radical sense: concepts of the inner in that language-game depend on concepts of primitive behavior but there is no dependence in the other direction. But, Winch now insists, there *is* a conceptual dependence in the other direction as well: the primitive reactions are expressions *of sensations*, reactions *to being hurt*, they are *pain-behaviors*. It is worthwhile to insist on this because the emphasis (by Wittgenstein and by Malcolm) on the importance of primitive reactions for the formation of sensation-concepts may be taken in a wrong way: there is here a danger of being tempted into thinking that the crucial primitive reactions are the real references

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<sup>13</sup> This is because some such generalization is a prominent feature of Malcolm's paper, to which Winch's opening and concluding remarks (which are formulated generally) are primarily responding.

<sup>14</sup> Admittedly, the focus on concepts of the inner would be clearer if Winch used "*pain-behaviour*" instead of "*pain behaviour*".

<sup>15</sup> This seems clear from the context (§ 244 and Malcolm's paper), in which it is hard to find a plausible provocation of this warning. Besides, the idea at issue here (which may be allied to the idea that the *real* description of human behavior should be given in terms drawn from the modern natural sciences) would probably have been regarded by Winch as too inhuman to merit serious attention in this context. He is also not interested, at least not in this context, to warn against the still more radical conception of the primitive reactions as external to any concept at all (as chunks of the mythically Given).

of our sensation-words. This is exactly the (behavioristic) temptation that Wittgenstein is battling in § 244b. So Winch's insistence is good commentary on § 244 as well as on Malcolm.

We can sum up Winch's insight thus: the concepts of the inner and the concepts of the outer in our sensation-language are internally related and cannot be understood in isolation.

### 9.3.3 Criticism of Winch's Third Point about § 244

Winch's insistence that the primitive reactions depend for their very identification on concepts of the relevant language-game, however, runs the risk of making it impossible to properly acknowledge Malcolm's point that they constitute a natural basis of the formation of those concepts. This insistence can easily lead us into the idea that the primitive reactions enter the relevant language-game *always* already under the relevant concepts. But this would leave no room for the primitive reactions to function as a basis *out of which* the concepts themselves develop in the first place (as the concepts would have to be in place *before* the language-game gets established).

Winch himself falls into this idea. For he says in his last concluding remark that *only* within the framework of the relevant language-game can we distinguish between the primitive reactions at all. The framework he means is a *conceptual* framework.<sup>16</sup> Now if the ability to distinguish between different primitive reactions and to react to them accordingly is conceived as already concept-involving, then Winch's point here, though true, is vacuous and leaves Malcolm's point untouched. But if that ability is conceived as capable of coming to us *before* the relevant conceptual framework gets established (as Malcolm's point requires: some instinctive, non-conceptual ability to make distinctions is needed for the development of the relevant conceptual ability to make distinctions), then Winch's point is simply false.

So, to properly acknowledge Malcolm's point, we must break the false hold that the conceptual framework of a language-game is supposed to have, from the very beginning, on activities of that language-game, including on *its own development*. And for this, we need to see, *in sufficient detail*, the crucial role of instinctive-primitive behavior in the development of sensation-language.

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<sup>16</sup> As I noted, it seems clear from Winch's wording that he is treating 'linguistic' and 'conceptual' as equivalent.

The emphasis on sufficient detail is necessary because Winch does of course acknowledge such a role. But his acknowledgement is too little and too abstract. There are two insufficiencies here.

The first comes out when we press the question: “How did the adults themselves acquire the relevant concepts?” The answer is: “From *their* elders”. This appeal to tradition, however, cannot be *simply* repeated, since we can hardly avoid supposing that there was a time, in the very distant past, when human beings had yet no concepts but had sensations and primitive reactions to them, that is, a time when they were animals but not yet rational animals.<sup>17</sup> The sensation-language that we now have must have, over an enormous stretch of time, grown out of our primitive sensations and primitive reactions to them. In this gradual development there surely were transitional stages in which conceptual capacities had not yet formed and one’s primitive reactions were recognized and reacted to by others simply by instinct.<sup>18</sup> This operation of the instinctive is surely crucial for the development of our sensation-language. But Winch makes no mention of it.

Winch would probably concede this, but insist that he was only concerned about the kind of development of sensation-language that we are familiar with, namely the normal teaching of sensation-language to a child by adults who already command the language. He might add that what we now say about the details of our remote natural history (of which our language is a product) is necessarily somewhat speculative.

This would be a fair response. But there is still a second, much more serious insufficiency in Winch.

This is his failure to have in view the following fact: the child’s development of a sensation-language has, besides its own primitive reactions, another natural basis in the primitive reactions *of the adults*. This instinctive behaviour is no less crucial for that development. To appreciate this, it will be helpful to describe some clear cases of the functioning of this basis.

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, one can avoid this by, e.g., conceiving human rationality as a matter of divine implant or brute innateness (e.g. in the form of some innate universal grammar). But I can only find mythologies in such conceptions.

<sup>18</sup> Notice that I use “recognized and reacted to” here but used “identified and reacted to” in stating Winch’s insight. Identification, as least in the sense intended by Winch, is essentially a conceptual affair, whereas recognition need not be. (It is perfectly natural to say that an infant smiles when it recognizes its mother or that a dog wags its tail when it recognizes its master. But “identifies” in such cases would have the comical suggestion that an intellectual act is involved.)

Wittgenstein's sketch of the development in § 244 is still useful here. For the very first thing that he describes the adults as doing, when the child has hurt himself and is crying, is *talk* to him. Because the child in this scenario is clearly pre-linguistic, this talking is of course not conversing, informing, chatting, questioning, or the like, but rather a form of *comforting*. The child's distress issues in a call of nature (crying) and is answered by an echo of nature from the adults (comforting through vocalization). The response is instinctive, immediate. It does not require, and usually does not actually involve, the exercise of any conceptual capacity.

This non-conceptual use of language appears to be a pervasive natural phenomenon. Parents, perhaps especially mothers, the world over comfort their children by *talking* to them, even when they perfectly know they are too young to understand any of the talk. More generally, adults (especially parents but also others) frequently talk a great deal to the pre-linguistic child, completely without regard to whether the child is in need of comfort or attention or help ..., or in any need at all. They *simply* talk to the child, spontaneously and instinctively, without any call of nature from him. This talking is no doubt a crucial way in which nature acclimatizes the child to language.

And this non-conceptual use of language persists *among* adults, though of course with more variation and sophistication. Thus we frequently find in each other's words not only thoughts but also comfort or hostility or inspiration .... Words *stir* us. And sometimes not words but the mere human voice itself deeply soothes us, as when we return from wilderness, or again it disquiets us with uncanny ease, as when we seek solitude.

It is easy to forget all this (the primitive seed of our sensation-language and its ramified persistence into adulthood). Wittgenstein is also helpful here. One example is § 310, where he urges the reader to "[i]magine not merely the words 'I am in pain' but also the answer 'It's not so bad' replaced by instinctive noises and gestures". This replacement is the reverse of the one that takes place in the learning of our first sensation-words (§ 244). When we imagine it, we are feeling our way back to the natural roots of those words, where their real functions become especially clear.

So far we have only considered the instinctive dimension of *talking*. But talking alone is not enough to even constitute real talking itself, because genuine use of language can take place only within the context of other activities, in particular bodily actions. Thus, to properly appreciate the function of primitive reactions in the development of our sensation-language, we also need to see, at least in rough outline, how bodily (and non-vocal) primitive reactions contribute to that development. Let just one example suffice here.

When the child has hurt himself and cries, the characteristic instinctive reaction of the adults also includes such bodily actions as holding the child, nursing him, and physically attending to or treating the wound if there is one.<sup>19</sup> Just as in the case of instinctive vocal behaviour, there is also a natural bond between the child and the adults here: a bodily sensation (pain) is responded to by actions that produce naturally fitting bodily sensations (e.g., the warmth and comfort provided by close bodily contact).

It is clear that these primitive reactions (and doubtless many others), both of the child *and* of the adults, are crucial for the child's development of a sensation-language. They form the natural, indispensable setting for the initial stages of its transmission to the child. For example, the teaching of exclamations, which takes its place after comforting-by-talking and before the teaching of sentences (§ 244), would hardly have any point or make any sense without this natural setting. It needs that soil to strike root. And exclamations are an important transitional station on the child's way to a sensation-language: they (e.g. "Ouch!") are already word-like yet strictly not words (for their significance is not articulate). And of course even the words or sentences that we learn later can function as such half-way houses between articulate speech and inarticulate noises: they can *also* be (and often are) used as exclamations, as replacements of moaning (e.g. "It hurts!").

All of this (adult primitive reactions and the teaching of exclamations) is absent in Winch's discussion of § 244.<sup>20</sup> The absence is most conspicuous in his concluding remarks: the 'we' there are adults who exercise their conceptual capacities, acquired by learning a sensation-language, to identify the child's primitive reactions (and then react to them accordingly), not adults who react, *instinctively and without conceptual mediation*, to the child's primitive reactions. It is indeed true (and important) that normally both the instinctive and the conceptual capacities are at work in the adults, but it is surely one-sided to take note only of the latter. To put the point bluntly: there is in Winch's adults too much cool of judgment and too little heat of compassion. And this is not only

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<sup>19</sup> "It is helpful here to remember that it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain" (*Zettel* 540). I have of course changed the reference of "here", but the same reminder can be helpful in more than one context.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the absence, two textual points are worth noting. First, Winch speaks of the child's primitive reactions as forming "*the basis of the teaching*" (his third point, my emphasis). (In stating his insight, I used "a basis or foundation".) Second, when he paraphrases Wittgenstein's sketch of the replacement process in § 244, Winch *begins* with "*Words are said to be substituted [...]*" (his third point, my emphasis), thus skipping both the spontaneous talking and the teaching of exclamations.



a matter of balance, since it is very hard to see how, without the instinctive reactions of the adults, the child can acquire sensation-concepts at all. Who would *care* to comfort and teach him? (Care for the young is an elemental instinct.)

The general lesson here is that we must not forget *the continuing presence* of the instinctive or the animal in adult human beings. We do not leave this part of our nature behind when we mature into rational animals. And we depend on it for transmitting language to the young, for gradually inducting them into the community of rational animals.

The instinctive in the adults and the instinctive in the child are keyed to each other by nature: there are, as we saw, *natural bonds* between the two (or *natural sympathies* as some old philosophers would say). These natural bonds form a pre-conceptual unity that is crucial for the conceptual unity that Winch insists on, i.e. the unity of concepts of the inner and concepts of the outer in one sensation-language, because without these bonds the sensation-language itself can hardly be transmitted from generation to generation and so would soon die. (The point also applies to other areas of language.)

It is easy to forget the continuing presence of the instinctive in adult human beings. If we do, we will lose sight of that pre-conceptual unity, thus leaving the instinctive behaviour of the child (almost the whole child himself) in cold isolation, without sympathy. This threatens to make the child's instinctive behaviour alien to *his own* developing language, whereas in fact it is a friendly favor of nature to that development. It is *this* sense of "extra-linguistic" that we must avoid. And for this, it helps to call the child's instinctive behavior not *extra-linguistic* but *pre-linguistic*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> That is, insofar as "extra" carries the connotation of "alien", as it does in Winch's discussion. He finds in Malcolm an emphasis on the "*extra-linguistic*" character of the primitive reactions and is moved to combat the conception, which could be suggested by this emphasis, of the primitive reactions as alien to the adults' language. But Malcolm in fact never uses "extra", but always "pre" ("prelinguistic" on p. 4 and "preverbal" on p. 5). Also, Malcolm's use of "prelinguistic", when discussing *Zettel* 541, is in accord with Wittgenstein's own.

### 9.3.4 Diagnosis of Winch's Misreading of § 244

My criticisms of Winch, I must stress, are directed only at his discussion of § 244, not at his discussion of Wittgenstein in general. In fact, this particular discussion is an aberration in him, since elsewhere he shows a keen appreciation of the significance of the instinctive, in adults as well as in children, for the rational aspects of our lives. This is clear from e.g. his papers "*Im Anfang war die Tat*" and "*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*".<sup>22</sup> Some passages are worth quoting.

First, Winch shows a general appreciation of the instinctive-primitive when he comments on Wittgenstein's quotation of Goethe's dictum "*Im Anfang war die Tat*" ("In the beginning was the deed") as follows:

Goethe was drawing attention to the *creative* role of 'the deed', and in Wittgenstein this is expressed in the importance ascribed to certain primitive human actions and reactions for *concept-formation*.<sup>23</sup>

Winch also has specific discussions of this theme. Let me quote two passages, where Winch is discussing Simone Weil to shed light on Wittgenstein. The first passage draws a quick parallel between the significance of bodily movements for such concepts as *weight* and *shape* (Weil) and the significance of primitive reactions to groans and writhings for such concepts as *pain* and *human being* (Wittgenstein):

[...] Simone Weil also speaks of the relation men have to physical objects, which makes it possible for them to distinguish their various properties, as a sort of 'dance': and she means, quite literally, a pattern of movements of people's *bodies*, involved, for example in distinguishing an object's weight, shape, texture, flexibility and so on. These patterns of movement don't *follow* a prior recognition of such properties, they belong to the formation and application of the concepts of the properties in question. [...] Something similar is involved in the way Wittgenstein treats our reaction to a man's groans and writhings in relation to the concept

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<sup>22</sup> Both are reprinted in his collection *Trying to Make Sense* ("*Im Anfang war die Tat*" at pp. 33-53, "*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*" at pp. 140-153).

<sup>23</sup> See "*Im Anfang war die Tat*", p. 52.

of pain and even to the concept of a human being: ‘How am I filled with pity *for this man*? How does it come out what the object of my pity is? (Pity, one may say, is a form of conviction that some else is in pain.)’<sup>24</sup>

The parallel is undeveloped. But it is clear that Winch’s emphasis on the *bodily* here (bodily movements, bodily sensations, bodily reactions) is an emphasis on the significance of the instinctive-primitive for the formation and use of concepts.

The concept of a human being, brought into view by Winch towards the end of this passage, is central to how he reads Wittgenstein in general. This concept is elaborated in his discussion of Wittgenstein’s notion “an attitude toward a soul” (“*eine Einstellung zur Seele*”, *PI*, p. 178). Once again, he sheds light on this notion with a passage from Weil. He first quotes Weil:

The human beings around us exert just by their presence a power which belongs uniquely to themselves to stop, to diminish, or modify, each movement which our bodies design. A person who crosses our path does not turn aside our steps in the same manner as a street sign, no one stands up, or moves about, or sits down again in quite the same fashion when he is alone in a room as when he has a visitor.<sup>25</sup>

He then comments:

The important phrase in that passage from Simone Weil is ‘just by their presence’. Our characteristic reactions towards other people are not based on any theory [or opinion] about them, whether it is a theory [or opinion] about their states of consciousness, their likely future behaviour, or their inner constitution. [...] [Such reactions are] primitive. That is not to deny that often our reactions *are* based on reflections about others’ states of mind, or probable future behaviour. The point is, first, that it is not always so; and second, that our *unreflective* reactions are part of the primitive material out of which our concept of a human person is formed and which makes such more sophisticated reflections possible.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See “*Im Anfang war die Tat*”, pp. 52-3. The last quote by Winch is of § 287. I omitted in the two ellipses Winch’s discussion of Wittgenstein’s treatment of the concepts of cause and effect, which treatment is more immediately connected to Weil’s remarks.

<sup>25</sup> See ““*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*””, p. 146. The subtle but significant modifications in human behavior captured by Weil in this wonderful passage belong to what Wittgenstein calls “fine shades of behaviour”. (*PI*, pp. 203, 204, 207) The word ‘fine’ registers that such behavior as described by Weil is not *mere* instinct but *tutored* instinct, instinct transformed by sophistication.

<sup>26</sup> See ““*Eine Einstellung zur Seele*””, p. 147. I omitted a few inessential sentences in the middle. I also inserted “or opinion” after “theory” (twice). Winch uses “theory” in a very undemanding sense, his point (clear from pp. 152-3) being that an attitude toward

All these remarks (including Weil's) are nicely anti-rationalistic and show a deep and sensitive appreciation on Winch's part of the instinctive-primitive in us. Seen against this background, his discussion of Wittgenstein's sketch of how a child learns a sensation-language in § 244 is uncharacteristic. I have offered specific diagnoses of this, but it might be useful to re-describe these in more general terms.

What is wrong in Winch's discussion of § 244 is the result of two factors. The good factor is his general, vigilant concern to "*retain the concept*" (to use a phrase from Cavell),<sup>27</sup> in particular concepts of the inner. The defective factor is a certain lack of attention to *detail* when it comes to how the instinctive serves the conceptual (both its formation and its sustenance). The two factors are in fact related. For even though the concern to retain the concept is laudable, it can easily pull our attention overly strongly in one direction, namely upward toward the rational, thus making it hard to enjoy a firm and full view of certain "lowly", instinctive phenomena that are in fact at the basis of the rational. Wittgenstein describes this risk well:

Reason—I feel like saying—presents itself to us as the gauge *par excellence* against which everything we do, all our language-games, measure and judge themselves. — We may say: we are so exclusively preoccupied by contemplating a yardstick that we can't allow our gaze to *rest* on certain phenomena and patterns. We are used, as it were, to 'dismissing' these as irrational, as corresponding to a low state of intelligence, etc. The yardstick rivets our attention and keeps distracting us from these phenomena, as it were making us look upward. — Like when a certain style—a style of building or of behavior—captivates us to such an extent that we can't focus our attention *directly* on another one, but can only glance at it obliquely.<sup>28</sup>

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a soul is fundamentally different in character from any *theoretical belief*. (I inserted "opinion" rather than "belief" to match Wittgenstein's own wording (*PI*, p. 178): "My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul." Some beliefs are more like attitudes toward souls than opinions about them, e.g., the Nazi belief that Jews are sub-humans.)

<sup>27</sup> See Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, *passim*, e.g., pp. 45, 58, 86-7.

<sup>28</sup> See "Cause and Effect: Intuitive Awareness", in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 389. I slightly modified the translation (by Winch, as it happens). In particular I used (1) "look upward [*nach oben hin*]" instead of "look beyond" and (2) "Like when a certain style [*Wie wenn uns ein gewisser Stil*]" instead of "Suppose a certain style".

Now the kind of lack of attention to detail in Winch's discussion of § 244 is not due to lack of care or diligence, but exactly due to the blinkering of view by his (here overly) strong concern to "retain reason". The instinctive-primitive is in Winch's view all right, but the vision is oblique, lacking firmness and detail.

If we lack a firm and sufficiently detailed vision of how the instinctive serves the conceptual (if, e.g., we overlook the transitional cases), then the task of retaining the concept itself becomes overly delicate – we are then forced to walk a tightrope between overemphasizing the conceptual (intellectualism) and overemphasizing its non-conceptual basis (mindless behaviorism, physicalism, and also psychologism). Attention to the detailed geography of the rough ground, especially of the middle grounds, can have a liberating effect here, by helping us realize that the tightrope is actually only a thin little line of chalk-mark artificially drawn on the ground, the *broad* ground of life itself. To realize this is to (re)discover that we can, just as in our everyday life, actually walk around 'carelessly' without any danger of falling over, either downward or upward.

What is difficult here is "to recognize the ground that lies before us as ground", as Wittgenstein once put it in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (VI.31). That even such a reader of Wittgenstein as Winch occasionally fails to pay sufficiently firm and detailed attention to the more instinctive part of the ground is especially instructive, for it shows at once the *need* and the *difficulty*, in philosophy, of "descending into the primordial chaos and feeling at home there".<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> This is my rather free rendering of Wittgenstein's remark "*Beim Philosophieren muß man ins alte Chaos hinabsteigen, und sich dort wohlfühlen*". It is used by Malcolm as the motto of his book *Nothing is Hidden*. (The remark is in MS 136, p. 51a, written on 3.1.1948. It occurs in the midst of apparently unrelated remarks with an enigmatic abruptness characteristic of Wittgenstein.)

## 10.0 THE INCISION OF LANGUAGE

The previous chapter looked at the child's development of a sensation-language in positive lights. But as I observed in connection with Wittgenstein's *critique* of language, this development is not without cause for ambivalence. This chapter looks at this development in more negative lights.

The focus will be on the phenomenon of *cutting* by means of language, or as I will call it the *incision* of language. A sketch of the full range of this phenomenon will be given in the form of a recommended reading of § 245.

I then give an answer to the main remaining question concerning § 304b and § 293c, namely how the predominance of the intellectual use of language tends to mislead us into intellectualism and the dualism of the Inner and the Outer. In giving this answer, I also try to heighten a sense of ambivalence about the development of language.

The close connection between the development of a language and that of a self becomes increasing explicit as the chapter progresses. Toward the end I try to directly but only briefly tackle the problem of the self, paying particular attention to the contemplative mood that is characteristic of much philosophy.

### 10.1 THE PHENOMENON OF THE INCISION OF LANGUAGE

The central point I want to make about the incision of language can be put bluntly: It is precisely the child's development of a sensation-language itself that sows the seeds of dualism of the Inner and the Outer.

### 10.1.1 Primitive Cutting

To see this, it is best to focus on the most primitive processes in learning a sensation-language. A rough, three-stage picture will serve my purposes.

At first, the child has only one kind of vocal expression of pain: crying. The natural connection between pain and crying is direct and simple, like this:

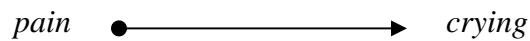


Figure 1

Next, the child learns exclamations, e.g., “Ouch!”. What happens during this stage is that he acquires a *new* channel for the expression of pain, like this:

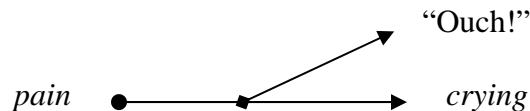
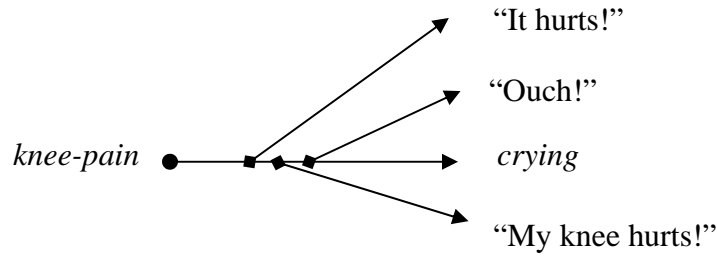


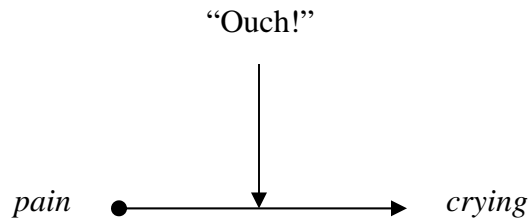
Figure 2

Later, the child learns to express his pain by using sentences. At first, no doubt, he only uses them in the minimal sense of repeating them after having heard them from the adults. But gradually he develops a rough-hewn understanding of the sentences. This of course goes hand in hand with a refinement of his interior: his pains themselves become more and more differentiated. The picture is now roughly this:



**Figure 3**

To see the incision of language most clearly, focus on the intermediate stage, when "Ouch!" is introduced in the child (Figure 2). The crucial point here is: This introduction is *at once* a first step in the development of sensation-language and an act of incision by language. To see this, all we need is a switch of aspect:



**Figure 4**

The switch of aspect is symbolized in the reversal of the direction of the "Ouch"-arrow. The reversal makes vivid the first, primitive act of incision by language: the "Ouch" is now cutting in between the pain and the crying. (The vertical placement of the "Ouch"-arrow makes the cutting-in more vivid. But of course it does not alter the topology, the essentials, of the situation.)



This incision is primitive because “Ouch” is strictly not a word but only a quasi-word. It has a conventional aspect, but remains quite close to the primitive cry of pain.<sup>1</sup> But this primitiveness is just what we need for gaining a clear view of how we learn and use language (*cf.* § 5).

The change of aspect involved here is from seeing the situation as the child’s *acquiring* a bit of language to seeing it as the adults’ *imparting* that bit of language to him. This is a real change of aspect (rather than a change of topic), because learning and teaching here go together, forming a single phenomenon. The metaphor of *grafting*, which commentators sometimes use to describe the replacement of natural-primitive cries by exclamations and later sentences in § 244, is fitting. For grafting (which involves cutting) is also a form of *growing*. It is where nature and art meet.

### 10.1.2 Primitive Cutting Generalized

The ways in which nature and art meet, even just in the area of sensation-language, are of course enormously complicated and very hard to survey. But the development-cum-incision of language remains the basic phenomenon at the meeting-points. So let the simple dual-aspect schema above stand as an emblem of the general phenomenon.

The basic picture of the development of sensation-language in a human being can be put by adapting Wittgenstein as follows:

The origin and the primitive form of our sensation-language is a cry; only from this can more complicated forms develop.

Language, we may say, is a refinement; in the beginning was the cry.<sup>2</sup>

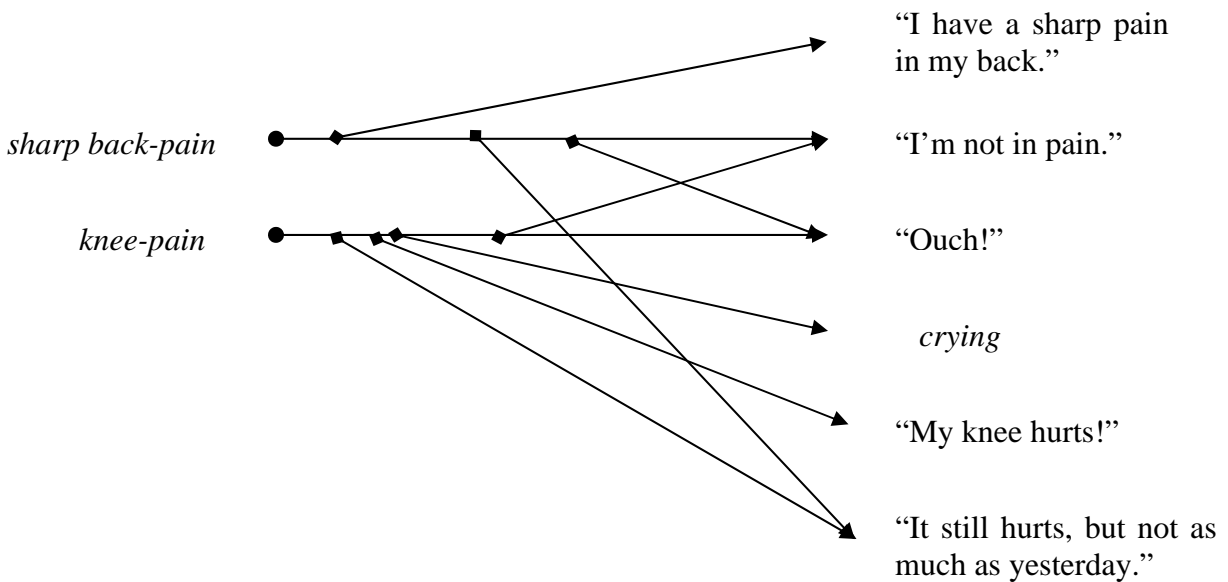
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<sup>1</sup> The saying of “Ouch!” in pain is similar to the primitive cry of pain in that they both have an *inarticulate* significance. They are also acoustically not far apart (which also shows up in the fact that exclamations of pain in many languages have a similar sound). The contrasts with a proper word, e.g. “pain”, are obvious.

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein’s original passage reads: “The origin and the primitive form of the language-game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. [paragraph break] Language – I want to say – is a refinement, ‘in the beginning was the deed’.” (*Culture and Value*, p. 31)

The work of refinement or sophistication is to *complicate* the relation between sensation and its expression. As the child grows up, he learns more and more ways of expressing his sensations. At the same time, his sensations themselves become more and more differentiated. The availability of channels of sensation-expression alternative to the primitive one makes possible (with help from other quarters) pretense and lying, a possibility that is nearly universally realized in mature human beings.

When maturity is reached, the relation between sensation and sensation-expression becomes, very crudely, like this:



**Figure 5**

This schema, read against the earlier, simpler ones, displays the simultaneous growth of two spaces: the space of sensation (inner) and the space of sensation-expression (outer).

As a result of this growth, natural or near-natural expressions of sensation (e.g. the primitive cry of pain or the saying "Ouch!" in pain, respectively) become as it were submerged by a sea of language. Or in other words, they become atrophied relative to the developing intellect (which is closely tied to the developing language).

The overall effect of the development-cum-incision is that the connection between sensation and its expression becomes less direct and more complicated. (This merely retrieves a pedestrian piece of knowledge: adults are more complicated than children.) The *distance* between the space of sensation and the space of sensation-expression grows larger and larger and the distinction between the two spaces becomes more and more firmly established.

It is thus that language *itself* lays a potential trap for us, the trap of the dualism of Sensation and Sensation-Expression. The emphasis on the reflexive is a repetition of the fundamental Wittgensteinian point that I have been trying to excavate: The development-cum-incision of language is a refinement essentially involving the making of distinctions, and the existence of firm distinctions is a basic precondition of dualism.

I said that language is a *potential* trap. One might think this is a pleonasm, but it is not. This is because there is nothing wrong with the general distinction between sensation (more generally, the inner) and its expression (more generally, the outer). We make use of it on a daily basis without any problem. What is wrong is to radicalize, or deform, the general distinction into a dualism, which conceives the inner and the outer spaces to be *intelligible independently from each other*.

What, then, are the causes of this radicalization or deformation?

This, I think, is the question Wittgenstein is really asking in § 245, to which I now turn. The following examination of § 245 is something of a digression from the main thrust of my interpretation of the phenomenon of the incision of language, but it does deliver some textual support for that interpretation. I do not think the support clinches the interpretation, but it is also not essential for it.

## 10.2 TEXTUAL CONSIDERATION OF § 245

§ 245 is one of the most difficult passages in the Investigations. The German text reads:

Wie kann ich denn mit der Sprache noch zwischen die Schmerzäußerung und den Schmerz treten wollen?

Translation of this passage partly depends on interpretation. The translation that I will use is this:

How can I then still want to use language to get between pain and pain-expression?

This is partly derived but also very different from Anscombe's original translation:

For how can I go so far as to try to use language to get between pain and its expression?

Before I discuss translation issues, let me quickly indicate the main difficulty in interpreting § 245. It is very obscure how § 245 is supposed to relate to its context, in particular to § 244, and this obscurity is mainly due to the fact that Wittgenstein gives no indication as to whose pain and pain-expression are meant in § 245.

Context suggests two possibilities. Wittgenstein might mean the pain and pain-expression of the child spoken of in § 244, or the pain and pain-expression of the 'I'-user himself in § 245. The former connects § 245 backward to § 244, the latter connects it forward to § 246, where the first-personal case is prominent. But the unspecific nature of the formulation of § 245 makes it hard to decide which of § 244 and § 246 is a closer context of § 245.

There is a third possibility: we might allow § 245 to float relatively free from its context (i.e. § 244 and § 246). In this case, § 245 can cover both possibilities above, and in fact more (e.g. the intermediate case of another 'I'-user's pain and pain-expression). The formulation of § 245 itself is sufficiently general to accommodate this.

Noting these possibilities will help us grapple with § 245.

### 10.2.1 Other Commentators on § 245

Anscombe's translation of § 245 (quoted above) is problematic because it contains an interpretation that looks wrong. The interpretation is her word 'For'.<sup>3</sup> This word requires an *explanation* to follow. This, in turn, requires that we read the following question as a rhetorical one, namely as a

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<sup>3</sup> I call this an interpretation because I presume that Anscombe's "For" was based on a philosophical judgment. It seems unlikely that she used "For" simply because of the occurrence of the word "*denn*" in the German. (This "*denn*" will be discussed later.)

question that implies that it is somehow absurd to try to use language to get between pain and its expression. Realizing this is then supposed to explain something in the preceding text. Now since the example of pain and its expression is first introduced, within the Private Language Argument, in § 244, what is to be explained is to be found in § 244, or more exactly in that part of § 244 that comes after the introduction of the example by “—of the word ‘pain’ for example”.

Anscombe, as translator, of course does not say why wanting to use language to get between pain and its expression is absurd, much less how realizing this absurdity is supposed to shed light on § 244. (She does not, as far as I know, discuss § 245 elsewhere, either.)

Anthony Kenny answers these questions in the following passage:

[Omitted: some discussion of ostensive definition and of bare ostensive definition] If the word ‘pain’ does not refer to a sensation by being attached to it by bare ostensive definition, how does it refer? In what way is it connected with the sensation? One possibility, Wittgenstein says, is that it is a learnt, articulate replacement of unlearnt, inarticulate expressions of sensation such as moans and winces (§ 244). The word ‘pain’ cannot as it were hook on to pain directly; it must be attached to pain through its connections with the natural expression of pain (*cf.* §§ 256-7, 271). To try to connect ‘pain’ with pain in isolation from unlearnt pain-behaviour would be to try to insert language between pain and its expression. This, Wittgenstein thinks, is absurd: presumably because the verbal manifestation of pain is itself an expression of pain (§ 245).<sup>4</sup>

Kenny’s summary of Wittgenstein’s “one possibility” sketch in § 244 is right and succinct.<sup>5</sup> But his discussion of § 245 is problematic. He suggests (with some unease) that it is absurd to try to insert language between pain and pain-expression because the inserted language, which he describes generally as the verbal manifestation of pain, is “itself an expression of pain”.

Now this is absurd only if “expression of pain” is taken to mean a genus of which the verbal manifestation of pain is a species. The absurdity is then the absurdity of treating a species as falling *between* its genus and some third thing, for this implies that the species falls *outside* its own

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<sup>4</sup> See Kenny’s *Wittgenstein* (1973), p. 183. I omitted his parenthetical references to texts outside the *Investigations*. I also slightly modified his style of reference to conform to mine.

<sup>5</sup> Kenny’s word “must” shows that he is taking Wittgenstein’s “one possibility” to be the only possibility (or perhaps the only real possibility). I will not discuss Kenny’s parenthetical reference to passages in support of his “must”. The main issue here has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

genus. But as we have seen, by “pain-expression” in § 245 Wittgenstein may not mean the whole genus but something specific, namely the natural, non-verbal pain-expression of the crying child in § 244. If so, then the insertion of language Kenny speaks of is exactly the incision of language I described earlier. There is nothing absurd about it.

Of course, Wittgenstein may mean “pain-expression” in § 245 in a generic sense. But in this case it is still hard to find the alleged absurdity, i.e., the confused treatment of a species as falling outside its own genus, to be under attack in § 244. The only thing explicitly under attack in § 244 is the behaviorist misunderstanding of Wittgenstein in § 244b. But the mistake here, the idea that the word “pain” *means* crying, is very unlike the alleged absurdity. If anything (in current terms), it is the mistake of thinking that one species of pain-expression *means* another.

It is true that, for Kenny, it is not the behaviorist idea that involves the alleged absurdity, but the attempt to “connect ‘pain’ with pain in isolation from unlearned pain-behaviour”. Judging from the context, the attempt he has in mind here is likely the idea of a direct connection through bare ostensive definition. Now it is possible that this idea is *implicitly* under attack in § 244.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps one could also add that a version of this idea, the idea of a private ostensive definition, is already implicitly on display as an object of suspicion in the slightly earlier § 243.

But this way of relating § 245 to its preceding context looks desperate. It remains difficult to see how the idea of a direct and bare connection between ‘pain’ and pain involves the alleged absurdity. Besides, the problematic idea, if it is present in (the first and third questions of) § 244 or in § 243, is present *before* the introduction of the example of pain.

To conclude, it is hard to find the absurdity identified by Kenny in anything that is under attack, either explicitly or implicitly, in § 244.

More generally, it is hard to find *any* straightforward absurdity under attack in § 244 at all. I add the qualification “straightforward” for the following reason. § 245, if read as pointing out an absurdity, has the tone of incredulity. This tone of incredulity, together with the brevity of § 245, strongly suggests that the issue of the absurdity of trying to use language to get between pain and its expression is closed as soon as it is opened. In other words, the absurdity, whatever it really is,

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<sup>6</sup> Because it has some resonance with the conception of reference (to sensations) as something wondrous and this conception may be behind the first and third questions of § 244, as I suggested (in subsection 9.3.1).

becomes obvious once it is merely stated. (This is strongly suggested by Anscombe's "how can I go so far as to try".)

But neither the behavioristic idea (which figures in § 244b) nor the idea of a direct and bare connection between 'pain' and pain (which perhaps figures in § 244) is a straightforward absurdity. If they were, there would be no point in Wittgenstein's sustained attacks on them (especially on the latter) in the Private Language Argument. These ideas must be initially intelligible, tempting. (And these two ideas are the maximum of what is under attack in § 244.)

The difficulties of finding a straightforward absurdity in § 244 should make us suspicious of the 'For' in Anscombe's translation, because it is this word that is generating the pressure to find such an absurdity. Now this 'For' is not required by the German text of § 245. The German word "*denn*" can express incredulity, but it can also be used to formulate a serious question. And it unambiguously means 'For' only when it occurs at the beginning of a sentence or a clause, which is not the case in § 245.<sup>7</sup>

It is much more plausible that § 245 is not asked rhetorically but *diagnostically*. That is, it is not meant to *close* some issue but to *open* one. This, I think, is the basic character of § 245. (And I have rendered § 245 above accordingly.)

Peter Hacker also reads § 245 as a diagnostic rather than a rhetorical question. He describes the temptation under diagnosis as arising in the following way:

[...] pain-behaviour can occur without pain. And, it seems, when another manifests pain-behaviour, I can never be sure, but only believe, that he is in pain (*cf.* §§ 246, 303). But in my own case, one is inclined to think, I *know* I am. So my saying 'I am in pain', unlike emitting a groan, is a *true description* of how things are with me, and not mere behaviour, let alone a description of my behaviour (§ 244b). In my case I can apprehend directly, virtually perceive 'clearly and distinctly', the difference between pain plus pain-behaviour and mere pain-behaviour unaccompanied by pain. And 'I am in pain', at any rate *for me*, describes the inner experience.

That is how one wants to insert language between pain and its expression, i.e. that is how one is tempted into this position.

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<sup>7</sup> Both these points have been confirmed to me by four native speakers of German (all philosophers). The first point had also been noted by Hintikka (1969, p. 423), before Kenny's *Wittgenstein* (1973). It seems certain from what he wrote that Kenny was using Anscombe's translation. His doing so may or may not have been based on a philosophical judgment.

He continues:

But why is this called ‘inserting language between pain and its expression’? On this conception, ‘I have a pain’ is thought to be closer to the pain [...] than is expressive pain-behaviour [...]. For surely it is as close to it as a proposition is to the fact that makes it true (and what could be closer than that [...]!). But if so, then the meaning of ‘pain’ must be independent of the expression of pain [...] It is in this sense that we are tempted to insert language between pain and its expression [...].<sup>8</sup>

I will not discuss the details of Hacker’s exegesis (I find many of them questionable). I only want to note that he exclusively focuses on the first-personal case, indeed on the case of a highly self-reflective ‘I’-user (as his allusion to Descartes makes clear).

This focus pulls § 245 away from § 244 and toward § 246, because the first-personal case is prominent in § 246 but hardly present in § 244. Hacker’s citation of § 246 (together with § 303, a related section) seems to be intended to register this contextual connection.

Now the temptation Hacker takes § 245 to be diagnostically drawing attention to is the idea of a super-direct, super-close connection between “I am in pain” or “I have a pain” and my pain.<sup>9</sup> This idea is doubtless under attack by Wittgenstein hereabouts (e.g., in § 246 and § 303). But it is unclear how it is a case of the temptation to use language to get between pain and its expression.

For the very idea of a *direct* connection makes salient so to speak two-ness (here is the pain, there is the bit of language using ‘pain’: they are directly connected), whereas the idea of *getting between* makes salient three-ness (the pain, the pain-expression, and the bit of language trying to get between the two). It is characteristic of the idea of a super-direct connection in Hacker’s exegesis (and of the closely related idea of a private ostensive definition, attacked in e.g. § 258) that the behavior expressive of pain is hardly even in view. That is, the behavior is not so much being cut asunder from the pain as *already forgotten*. The cut was inflicted *earlier*. And it is the earlier

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<sup>8</sup> See his *Analytical Commentary*, Vol. 3, exegesis of § 245. I slightly modified his style of reference to conform to mine.

<sup>9</sup> Hacker does not use the prefix “super” when he speaks of the directness and closeness. But it seems to be implicit in his exegesis. In any case, for Wittgenstein the idea of a direct connection between language and reality is itself unproblematic (§ 95). What is wrong is the idea that the direct connection is something superlative (in the sense of § 192) or queer (in the sense of § 195).



cut that makes it possible, sometimes likely, for us to forget the original-natural unity of pain and its expression. The capacity to reflect upon one's own sensations, in which reflection that unity is very easily forgotten and the temptation toward the idea of a super-direct connection is especially strong, is a *late* achievement.

Similar consideration applies to the behaviorist idea attacked in § 244b, though in Hacker's account § 244 is really quite disconnected from § 245.<sup>10</sup> This idea also focuses on two-ness (here is the word 'pain', there is the pain-behavior: the former *means* the latter). The third element (the pain itself) is completely out of the picture. So the idea of *getting between* also does not fit it.<sup>11</sup>

So Hacker's exegesis, though it does identify an important temptation in the vicinity of what § 245 is diagnostically urging us to pay attention to, does not hit § 245 on the head: the image of between-ness, of separation, is lost.

Stanley Cavell is, characteristically, fully alive to the image of between-ness and separation. He writes:

"For how can I go so far as to try to use language to get between pain and its expression?" (§ 245). This question is, apparently, an attempt on Wittgenstein's part to express a frame of mind in which one feels that in order to insure the connection between a sensation and its name one has to get to the sensation apart from its expression, get past the merely outward expression, which blocks our vision as it were. But Wittgenstein's question is: How can one so much as try to do this? How can one so much as be of a mind to? [Cavell goes on to try an answer, but the discussion is inconclusive.]

I draw various morals from this question Wittgenstein poses himself. "Between" is first of all a picture. I can go so far as to wish to wedge language in because the picture of something between experience and expression is not necessarily a bad one (any more than the picture of something behind our words and actions is necessarily a bad one). The reason I want to wedge in language is that our working knowledge of one another's (inner) lives can reach no further than our (outward) expressions, and we have cause to be disappointed in these expressions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Hacker's attempt, if it is an attempt, to connect § 245 to § 244 is not convincing. His mention of § 244b can effect a connection only if § 244b can concern a first-personal case. This is not impossible but strained, because § 244b is most naturally read as concerning the case of the crying child in § 244a, who is hardly an instance of the cool user of 'I' figuring in Hacker's exegesis.

<sup>11</sup> This should be no surprise, since behaviorism and the idea of privacy are, as we saw, two sides of the same coin.

<sup>12</sup> See his *The Claim of Reason*, p. 341.

Cavell also reads § 245 as a diagnostic question.<sup>13</sup> But unlike Hacker, he keeps the image of language getting *between* sensation and its expression. This surely shows a firmer grip on § 245.

Cavell's focus on the image of between-ness is motivated by his characteristic concern with the separateness between human beings. His real focus is on our ability, or inability, to reach *one another's* inner lives. In other words, he focuses on second- and third-personal cases of sensation (while Hacker focuses on the first-personal case).

This focus corrects Hacker's exegesis's one-sided contextual pull of § 245 away from § 244 and toward § 246, as the case in § 244 (the child who cries and the adults who comfort and teach him) is a paradigmatically second-personal case. (One could add a third-personal element to it by adding detail, e.g., by supposing that the adults, while responding to the child, are also discussing among themselves about how to treat his injury.)

But the second- and third-personal cases Cavell has in mind, it seems, are cases of separate-ness between human *adults*.<sup>14</sup> So, *if* we want to see a closer connection between § 244 and § 245, we need to leave the sophistication of the human beings that concern Cavell in the above passage and return to the primitive innocence of the crying child in § 244.

### 10.2.2 Original Contexts of § 245

I emphasize the "*if*" above because it is not obvious that Wittgenstein *intends* a closer connection between § 244 and § 245. In fact, there is strong evidence that he intends § 245 to float relatively free from its context (both § 244 and § 246). This is the third interpretative possibility mentioned above and, I think, the most fruitful way to read § 245.

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<sup>13</sup> He does so with some unease ("apparently"). This is probably caused by Anscombe's translation. But, to his credit, his sense of unease is only fleeting, for he goes on to firmly read § 245 as a diagnostic question, saying, e.g., that it is a question that Wittgenstein poses *himself* (rather than some interlocutor, as Anscombe's 'For' requires).

<sup>14</sup> This is detectable in his talk of disappointment at the end. It is very clear in the discussion I omitted. There Cavell speaks of the expression of one's sensation being "genuine, uncontrived, candid" and being "uncandid", "feigned". The capacity to feign a sensation (let alone the capacity for genuineness *after* having lost one's childish innocence) is an adult capacity.

Let me consider this evidence before I develop the interpretation. This will also confirm the suggestion that § 245 is in fact posed diagnostically rather than rhetorically.

The evidence is in four earlier contexts of § 245. They are quoted below in probable chronological order.<sup>15</sup> The second context is similar to the first since it is a reworking of the same material. So in a sense there are only three earlier contexts. The last two contexts are from typescripts. Typically, typescripts are distillations of manuscripts and add numbering. So it is no surprise that transitions between passages are jumpier in typescripts than in manuscripts. It seems certain that there is no other context of even fragments of § 245 in the entire *Nachlass*.<sup>16</sup>

The reader should be prepared for a measure of frustration, even shock, when reading these contexts, since he will quickly see that none of these contexts casts any immediate light on § 245. But patience will pay.

§ 245 is the same, word for word, in all five contexts. I have underlined it to help the reader keep track, though Wittgenstein never does this.

#### **Context 1** (MS 124, p. 270-1, on or after 3.7.1944)

“I can only *believe* that someone else is in pain, but I *know* it if I am.”—Yes. One can make the decision to say “I believe he is in pain” instead of “He is in pain” and “I know I am in pain” instead of “I am in pain”. But that is all.—What looks like an explanation here, or like a statement about a mental process, is in truth only an exchange of one expression for another which, while we are doing philosophy, occurs to us as the *more appropriate* one. [Cf. § 303a]

But it has to do with the appropriate expression here only insofar as it shows our tendencies more clearly.

I want to declare to a philosopher: “I assure you I don’t just behave as if I were in pain, I really feel it; I know exactly what ‘pain’ means.”—Why should he not say: All this is just more pain-behaviour.

We must distinguish between what we say in a language-game and what we, when we philosophize about it, are inclined to say.

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<sup>15</sup> I have ventured to use my own translations for some passages, but have followed Anscombe as far as possible for passages that end up (content-wise) in the *Investigations*. I also made silent choices amongst variant formulations in the manuscripts. Whatever infelicity I commit will not matter, since I will not rely on fine details. I annotate the texts at various points, using square brackets.

<sup>16</sup> This is based upon exhaustive electronic searches in the *Nachlass* for these fragments of § 245: “*wie kann ich denn*”, “*zwischen die Schmerzäußerung*”, “*und den Schmerz*”, and “*treten w\*||\**” (the asterisks being wild cards).

How can I then still want to use language to get between pain and pain-expression? [§ 245]

It shows a fundamental misunderstanding if I am inclined to study the headache I have now in order to get clear about the philosophical problem of sensation. [§ 314]

**Context 2** (MS 179, pp. 17v-18r, 1945)

We must distinguish between what we say *in the language-game* and what we, when we philosophize about it, — are inclined to say.

And philosophy does not consist in what we are inclined to say but rather has to explain this inclination to ourselves.

When one reads philosophers one would like to supplement every sentence of theirs with “I would like to say”.

The first error we make when approaching a philosophical problem is the question we ask. [*Cf.* § 308]

How can I then still want to use language to get between pain and pain-expression? [§ 245]

It shows a fundamental misunderstanding if I am inclined to study the headache I have now in order to get clear about the philosophical problem of sensation. [§ 314]

**Context 3** (TS 228, pp. 167-8, on or after 1.6.1945)

625. Instead of hypostasizing something, observe that you have the inclination to do so; and now *explain* this inclination.

626. How can I then still want to use language to get between pain and pain-expression? [§ 245]

627. Being unable—when we surrender ourselves to philosophical thought—to help saying such-and-such; being irresistibly inclined to say it—does not mean being forced into an *assumption*, or having an immediate perception or knowledge of a state of affairs. [§ 299]

**Context 4** (TS 230, pp. 92-3, on or after 1.8.1945)

342. It is—we should like to say—not merely the picture of the behaviour that plays a part in the language-game with the words “being in pain”, but also the picture of the pain. But the image of pain is not a picture and this image is not replaceable in the language-game by anything that we should call a picture.—The image of pain certainly enters into the language-game in a sense. Only not as a picture. [*Cf.* § 300]

343. How can I then still want to use language to get between pain and pain-expression? [§ 245]

344. “I feel great joy.”—Where?—This sounds nonsensical. And yet we say “I feel a joyous agitation in my breast.” —But why is joy not localized? Is it because it’s distributed over the whole body?—It is not localized even when it is the feeling that evokes it; when [e.g.] we enjoy the smell of a flower.—The joy expresses itself in facial expression, in behavior. But we don’t say that we enjoyed it in the face. [Cf. § 361]

A striking feature of these contexts is the enigmatic abruptness with which § 245 appears in them. This abruptness makes it very obscure how § 245 relates, in specific detail, to any of these contexts.<sup>17</sup>

This is frustrating but also tells us something. The difficulty of making out specific relations between § 245 and its contexts is a strong sign, I think, that it is in fact not *meant* to be related to them in any specific manner but only in a loose, general manner. In other words, it is meant to be relatively free from whatever context it is placed in.

In what general manner, then, does § 245 relate to these four contexts? The answer emerges when we realize a general pattern in them: § 245 always follows on the heels of warnings against certain distinctively philosophical inclinations. These inclinations are described in general terms in Contexts 1-3 (confusing what is said in and what is said about a language-game, unreflectively asking prejudiced questions at the very beginning of inquiry, hypostasizing things). In Context 4 the inclination (marked by the “we should like to say”) is specifically related to pain (though it is hard to see how this specificity helps connect the inclination to § 245 in specific detail).

This pattern, I think, makes it amply clear that § 245 is asked in a diagnostic mood. It is as if Wittgenstein were saying: “Now there are these problematic inclinations. How do they arise? E.g. how does the inclination to use language to get between pain and its expression arise?” Reading § 245 as a rhetorical question makes no sense of its position in these contexts. So the function of

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<sup>17</sup> One might hope that enlarging Contexts 2-4 will reduce the obscurity. (Context 1 is already quite extensive.) Unfortunately this is not the case. What precedes Context 2 is substantially the same as the earlier portions of Context 1. What precedes Context 3 is a series of passages about rule-following. As to what precedes Context 4, # 340 concerns a conception of God and # 341 is in fact § 373: “Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)” These wider contexts (and still wider ones) simply do not help.

§ 245 in this pattern is, to repeat, not to *close* some matter but to *open* into a region of diagnostic inquiry.

This also makes sense of the fact that in Contexts 1 and 2 what follows § 245 is § 314, since § 314 is clearly a piece of diagnosis in the relevant region. But the opening-into relation between § 245 and § 314 is not very direct. For § 314, which focuses on a first-personal case, in particular on the phenomenon of inner concentration, is closely related to the temptation toward the idea of a private ostensive definition. This temptation, as I noted while discussing Hacker, does not keep the image of between-ness in § 245. So, in Contexts 1 and 2, § 245 is related to its following text, just as it is to its preceding text, only in a loose, general manner.

Admittedly, it is hard to find an opening-into relation in Context 3 and Context 4. But as we noted, transitions between passages in typescripts are jumpier than in manuscripts anyway.

To sum up, what we can gather definitely from these earlier contexts is this: The question of § 245 is asked in a diagnostic mood and functions within its contexts to link what precedes it and what follows it in a loose, general way. I will use this as a basic guide for interpreting § 245 in its context in the *Investigations*.

### 10.3 INTERPRETATION OF § 245

The phenomenon of the incision of language is the key to understanding how the intellectual use of language tends to pull us towards the intellectualist conception of language. This phenomenon can be profitably read, in its full generality and with all its ambiguities, into § 245.

The basic shape of this reading of § 245 is as follows. I will, taking some license, read § 245 as covering a very wide continuum of phenomena, from the humble beginnings of the learning of a sensation-language all the way to the sophisticated temptation towards the idea of sensations as private objects, a temptation that is strongest in first-personal reflections on sensation. The thread running through this continuum is precisely the development-cum-incision of language, which is essentially the same as that of the intellect, of the “I” in the “I think”.

Wittgenstein’s own focus, at least in the *Investigations*, is primarily on the sophisticated end of the continuum. He does of course discuss the learning of a sensation-language (in, e.g., § 244),

but he does not exhibit this learning in any negative light, as so to speak sowing the seeds of later temptations. Rather, it serves as a healthy reminder.

I propose, in the spirit of a Wittgensteinian *critique of language*, to detect the roots of intellectualism, which has a great deal to do with the predominance of the intellectual use of language in advanced human cultures, as far back as possible, namely in the very first steps of linguistic or intellectual development. In doing so, I do not mean to bemoan the ‘Fall of Thought’, but only to point out a certain ambiguity or cause for ambivalence in that development. The development of language must remain an essentially positive, enabling phenomenon on any account, because any *account* itself has to be given in language. Calling the essentials of language into question means calling philosophy itself into question (*cf.* § 133c).

But I do think a deep sense of ambivalence about language animates much of Wittgenstein’s thinking. I will later try to heighten this sense by bringing the two poles of the continuum (primitiveness and sophistication) to a kind of meeting point, where one’s sense of ambivalence is perhaps strongest.

The use that I propose to make of § 245 is not based on interpretation in the narrower sense, but involves a degree of license. This license has some textual ground in the four earlier contexts of § 245 discussed above. But the main ground is philosophical, namely the spirit of a *critique of language* just sketched. For convenient reference, let me call this license the aphoristic license of § 245.<sup>18</sup>

### 10.3.1 The Incision of Language as a Primitive Phenomenon

We saw that it is hard to relate § 245 in specific detail to its context in the *Investigations*. This, in the light of our examination of its four earlier contexts, is likely intended by Wittgenstein. But he

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<sup>18</sup> § 245 has an aphoristic character: it is short, intense, and thought-provoking. Like many other aphorisms of Wittgenstein’s, it is (1) crafted in general terms and (2) related to the context in a general way, in particular as a separate general statement drawn out of some specific discussion that precedes it. (In these respects § 245 is like e.g. §§ 255, 326, 371.) And these features are substantially the same as the textual ground of the license.

did choose to place § 245 after § 244, which seems to indicate *some* connection between the two sections. What might the connection be?

The answer, given the basic spirit of my reading, should be obvious. And it has already been given: the child's acquisition of verbal (initially quasi-verbal) channels of pain-expression, as we saw in the dual-aspect schema (Figure 2 and Figure 4), is at the same time also an act of incision by language. It is exactly in the learning of a pain-language that language *gets between* pain and its primitive expression.

This way of connecting § 245 to § 244 takes the aphoristic license in two related ways: (1) it takes the pain and pain-expression spoken of in § 245 to be those of the crying child in § 244 and (2) it takes the "I" in § 245 to be not a self-absorbed philosopher but a concerned adult (typically a mother). So taken, the answer to the question of § 245 is: Because the mother not only wants to comfort her child but also *wants to know how it is with him*. (The "not only ... but also" structure now interprets the "still [*noch*]" in § 245.) It is this desire for knowledge, an elemental desire for knowledge of another's inner life, that is the main force driving the incision of language by her.<sup>19</sup>

For it is deeply natural for us to want to know how it is with someone on the inside (how he feels, what he thinks) by *asking* him, that is, by means of language. The depth of this natural tendency comes out in the fact that, even when we know or can see that the other is incapable of answering (e.g., knowing the child is pre-linguistic or seeing that the adult is nearly knocked out by pain), our first, instinctive reaction of concern is frequently still to *ask* ("What is it (with you)?"). It takes *training* to suppress this natural impulse and keep a cool head in the immediate presence of real pain. (It takes training to become a nurse, a doctor, or even an experienced mother.) There may of course be no concern for the other in any particular case. But when there is, it is *language* that we instinctively use to try to reach the inside of the other, or get past his behaviour when this is disappointing (to echo Cavell).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> I say 'main' because the desire to comfort the child by vocal-linguistic means also plays a part, but it is a minor part. It is minor because the significance of language, when it is used to comfort, is inarticulate in character (there are of course degrees), whereas articulateness is a *primary* feature of language and the demand for knowledge through language is a demand for articulateness. (I speak explicitly of desire here to echo the word *wollen* in § 245, translated by Anscombe as "try" and by me as "want".)

<sup>20</sup> By "instinctively" I do not of course mean that we are born with the impulse to ask. That impulse can come only after we have *learned* to ask questions (as part of learning language). Also, pre-linguistic children, even those who already have some language,



This elemental desire for knowledge of the inside of others, which primarily manifests itself in the phenomenon of asking after it, is surely crucial for the child's development of a sensation-language. It is a specifically human manifestation of the elemental instinct of care for others (and it is strongest in the case of care for the young).

The theme of disappointment echoes but does not repeat Cavell in the passage quoted above. For the disappointment can be not only the kind of disappointment that concerns Cavell most, i.e., disappointment due to the separateness of ordinary adults (because of their loss of childish innocence, their art and pretence), but also a disappointment in nature, as when the crying of the child tells us too little. We want to ask: "*Where* does it hurt? *How* did you get hurt?" Sometimes we do blurt out such questions to the child. But there is no answer, only the inarticulate and helpless cry of nature. We want to know more, but are disappointed by nature. *We* are also helpless.

There is thus a *need* for convention, for coming together—'con-vening'—through language. (This shows the deeper significance of the conventional aspect of language.) This need, which is a need for art *against* nature, constantly drives the incision of language. To say this is not to fault this need itself, because it is really none other than the elemental human need for community, for *help*. Without this need language could not live, because it would be pointless.

Yet there *is* cause for ambivalence, however slight, in the development of our language, i.e., in the development of our most important technique for community. For the incision of language against nature does sow the seeds of the possibility of language cutting nature not at its joints. (A particularly violent instance of butchery, we saw, is the queer little private box in § 293 trying to insert itself between the pain and its expression.) It is this slight sense of ambivalence that allows us to retain a slight mood of diagnosis in the question of § 245 while connecting it directly to the case of the crying child in § 244. (It is true that, in the light of its earlier contexts, § 245 is probably asked in a much heavier diagnostic mood by Wittgenstein. But I have taken aphoristic license and the philosophical ground for it is in the spirit of a Wittgensteinian critique of language.)

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show a very marked natural indifference to the suffering of others. They have to be *taught* to feel for others. My "instinctively" is meant to apply to normal adults, in whom language has become second nature. (The emphasis on language here is meant to echo Wittgenstein's phrase "*mit der Sprache*" in § 245.)

### 10.3.2 The Incision of Language as a Sophisticated Phenomenon

Let us now jump across the entire continuum to the pole of sophistication. Suppose, then, that the work of the incision of language has been fully done and there is now a fully fledged intellect, an ‘I’ of the ‘I think’. In other words, there is now a firmly established distance between two spaces: an inner space (sensation and thought) and an outer space (their expression). As repeatedly noted, the temptation toward the idea of a private object is particularly strong when the ‘I’ reflects on its own sensation. This idea is the malignant flower of the dualism of the Inner and the Outer.

Wittgenstein attacks the idea of privacy from many angles. Two angles of attack are prominent: (1) pressing questions of *right* (of correctness and of justification) against the supposed use of bits of a supposed private language (to designate private objects) and (2) exposing the unnatural and unhealthy character of the idea of privacy by careful description of the phenomenology of *dualistic cutting* at the root of that idea. The first angle of attack is prominent in such sections as §§ 258, 261, 280, 289, but absent in such sections as §§ 304, 293, 245.<sup>21</sup> By converse, the second angle of attack is absent in the former sections but present in the latter sections. Since these latter sections are my focus, I will only consider the second angle of attack in the following. This is not to imply that the first angle of attack is unimportant or unrelated to the second. (It is the contrary, on both counts.)

Now the image of language *getting between* (the inner and the outer) is central to § 245. We noted that this phenomenon, the incision of language, is a basically positive, enabling force when it comes to the initial learning of a sensation-language (or of a language in general). As we move toward greater sophistication, the negative, harmful potential of this incision increases. Under the communal demand for articulateness, the initial distinctions harden into, so to speak, “dried” cuts. And as the dried cuts become more and more entrenched, the potential trap of the dualism of the Inner and the Outer becomes wider and deeper. The beetle in the box in § 293 is a culmination of this progression.

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<sup>21</sup> A qualification here is needed for § 293a, in which one can of course easily discern an implicit question of justification pressed against the “irresponsible” generalization (from my own case to the cases of all others). But this qualification is very minor, since the rest of § 293, which is our focus, is thematically quite distant from that irresponsible generalization.

To give a rough picture of that portion of the continuum that leads up to this culmination, or in other words to roughly indicate how the diagnostic mood of § 245 becomes heavier and heavier, let us concentrate on what we might call the phenomenon of *contemplative detachment*, since this phenomenon is prominent in Wittgenstein's second angle of attack described above.

This contemplative detachment can also be described as an inward withdrawal, a retreat into oneself. It comes out in e.g. § 314, which we saw immediately follows § 245 in its earlier manuscript contexts. This continuation is perfectly natural if we take, as we certainly can, the pain and pain-expression in § 245 to be that of the "I"-user himself. For the case in § 314 is first-personal:

It shows a fundamental misunderstanding if I am inclined to study the headache I have now in order to get clear about the philosophical problem of sensation.

Note also that the suspect tendency here is to concentrate on (to "study") one's own *present* sensation (on the headache I have *now*).<sup>22</sup> This makes the contemplative mood involved in § 314 very similar to that of the Cartesian meditator, who also concentrates particularly strongly on his own *present* consciousness (the invincibility of the *cogito* is in the *now*).

There is of course such a thing as concentrating on one's own consciousness, even on one's own present consciousness. But this capacity for inner- or self-concentration, which is a capacity that only a self or a full-fledged 'I'-user can possess, has much potential to mislead us. Things go wrong when the inner concentration leads us to as it were *detach*, like detaching a membrane, an inner or psychological aspect of our sensation (from, let us say, the steam of life which is its vital context). This kind of detachment, Wittgenstein says, "ought to arouse our suspicions" (*cf.* § 276, which also supplies the phenomenology of "like a membrane").

If our suspicions fail to be aroused, the waves of the tendency towards detachment will keep rising. They reach a high-water mark in the following passage adapted from § 358a:

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<sup>22</sup> There is a parallel passage, concerning thought (the intellectual) rather than sensation (the sensuous), in the neighbouring § 316: "In order to get clear about the meaning of the word 'think' we watch ourselves *while* we think; what we observe will be what the word means!—But this concept is not used like that." (The emphasis on 'while' is mine.)

But isn't it my *feeling* it that gives meaning to the word 'pain'? And 'feeling it' is something in the sphere of the mind. But it is also something private! It is the intangible *something*; only comparable to consciousness itself.<sup>23</sup>

The waves subside when we realize that that intangible *something*, consciousness conceived as a realm '*in itself*', is a something about which nothing could be said. This idea of a private, intangible something is chimerical, as it were "a dream of our language" (§ 358b).

The shattering of this dreamy illusion is most dramatic in § 293. There, in the beetle-in-the-box parable in § 293b, the dream becomes as it were concrete: the private object gets concretized into the beetle in the queer little private box. Wittgenstein then delivers his punch: there need not be anything in the box at all — it might even be *empty*.

It is this punch-point that removes the temptation, particularly recalcitrant in this vicinity, to suppose that even though the thing in the box has no place in the language-game of the tribe (i.e., even though the private object is a something about which nothing can be said), there is nonetheless an '*it*' in the box, an ineffable bit of inner reality. But this '*it*' is really a nothing, just as there is nothing more to the fractions 4/6, 6/9, 10/15 ... than the fraction 2/3: the illusory element, be it a factor of 2 or 3 or 5 or ..., can be divided through, cancelled out. It drops out of the calculation as irrelevant.<sup>24</sup> The analogue of the private object here is the number 1. It might look like a factor that cannot be cancelled out, but is not really a *factor* at all: multiplying or dividing by 1 changes nothing.

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<sup>23</sup> The original passage concerns *meaning* [*Meinen*] rather than *feeling*, i.e. the intellectual rather than affective aspect of our consciousness. But the two cases are broadly parallel, as indicated by the parallelism between § 314 and § 316. More could be said to establish the parallel firmly, but I will not digress.

<sup>24</sup> This seems to be how Wittgenstein means his mathematical analogy at the end of § 293b. (His "'gekürzt werden'", or "'divided through'", is very likely a reference to the mathematical operation of simplifying a fraction. The quotation marks on the phrase are doing the analogizing.) The idea of language as a kind of calculation is prominent in the *Tractatus*. (The related idea that *thinking* is calculating is fairly old.) This idea has descendents in the later Wittgenstein, for whom mathematical calculation is both a kind of move-making in language-games and a model for the move-making in various other, non-mathematical language-games.

### 10.3.3 The Ingratitude of Thought

But the punch of § 293 may not work. This is not because the argument is defective, but because the temptation toward privacy is more a matter of *will* than a matter of understanding.<sup>25</sup>

This peculiar will to misunderstanding (*cf.* the peculiar “urge to misunderstand” the working of our language in § 109 and the peculiar fate of human reason Kant speaks of when he opens the *A-Preface*) has no doubt far more sources than I can hope to trace. But to help overcome this peculiar will, I will discuss one particular source that is especially powerful because it is rooted in a very general and natural phenomenon.

Before I bring this phenomenon into view, it will be helpful to first introduce a metaphor of light in connection with § 293.

One way to put the punch of § 293, namely that the little box might even be empty, is to say that the box is really a pocket of *darkness*. To put it by adapting § 272: the essential thing about a private object is not that no one knows whether others also have *this* kind of thing (call it a *K*) or not, but that no one knows whether others also have an *A* or a *B* or a *C* or a *D* ... — or nothing at all (the punch of § 293). The choice between a *K* and not a *K* is a choice made possible by *retaining the concept K*, while the choice between an *A* and a *B* and a *C* and a *D* and ... is not a choice at all. Absolutely no field of choice has been determined (since *no concept* has been retained), so one does not even know how to *begin* considering the choices. To put it in more traditional terms: the matter here is not a matter of existence but a matter of essence.<sup>26</sup>

So the essential thing is that no *concept* whatsoever can penetrate the little private box. Now to acquire mastery of a battery of concepts is to acquire mastery of a language-game, and to master a whole language is to acquire an intellect, and to possess an intellect is to possess the light of reason. So to say no concept can penetrate the box is to say it is impervious to the light of reason. It is a box in whose darkness all cows are black: it does not matter whether the cows are black or

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<sup>25</sup> Wittgenstein says the difficulty of philosophy is not an intellectual difficulty but the difficulty of overcoming resistances of the will (*The Big Typescript*, section 86, which section is also collected in *Philosophical Occasions*, pp. 160-3).

<sup>26</sup> Note that in § 272 Wittgenstein writes not “*this* or not” but “*this* or something else”. I have exploited the utter indeterminacy of the “something else”.

white or ... or whether there is any cow or thing at all. This darkness is utter *privation*, and this is what privacy really means.

But (and this is where the temptation is strongest) one still wants to protest vigorously: “But *I see* it!” That is, my box appears to me perfectly well illuminated: *I* can look into it and see what is in there. The light needed for my seeing is shining. Where does this light come from? — Why, from myself! When I concentrate my attention on the inside of the box, it gets illuminated by that very attention itself. *I see* it — *by my own light*.

The characteristic phenomenology hereabouts is therefore this: when I look into my box and see something, it is as if I had *created my own light*.

But this light of my own must be radically different from the light of reason, from the public light in the public space of reasons. For, *ex hypothesi*, if I see anything it must not be by any single ray of *that* light. By symmetry, the special light of my own is *mine* in a sense in which it cannot be a light for any other person (*cf.* § 280: “To him his private impression of the picture means what he has imagined, in a sense in which the picture cannot mean this to others”).

This special light of my own is, of course, an illusion. Just as the answer to “But *I see* it!” is “You do not even *see* it” (§ 398a), the answer to claiming this special light of reason for oneself, to this claim of pseudo-reason, is “If as a matter of logic you exclude other people from claiming this light, it loses even its sense to claim it for yourself” (adapting § 398a).

But the temptation here can be extraordinarily strong. What are its sources?

The one source that I want to discuss is rooted in a very general and natural phenomenon. It will be appropriate if I bring this phenomenon into view by revisiting § 304b. (We have revisited § 293.)

What is wrong with the idea that the *only* function of language is to convey thought is that it *radicalizes* or *deforms* an innocent picture of the relation between the inner and the outer, turning it into a picture of the relation between the Inner and the Outer, between two realms conceived as independently intelligible. We have so far focused on the *sensuous* case of the relation (innocent or vicious), but there is also an intellectual case that runs parallel.

The innocent picture in the intellectual case is just the ordinary and unproblematic picture of thought as something interior: one can keep one’s thoughts to oneself and need not convey them overtly through language. What goes wrong is when this innocent independence of thought from language is turned into a radical one, namely when the very *capacity* for thought is conceived as

independent from the *capacity* for language, or in other words, when thought is conceived as essentially *wordless*. The radicalization or deformation can seem innocuous, amounting to no more than an “easy” transition like this one (§ 344):

“If people always said things only to themselves, then they would merely be doing *always* what as it is they do *sometimes*.”—So it is quite easy to imagine this: one need only make the easy transition from some to all.

But the effect of this seemingly innocuous transition is really radical: it is namely to seal off all thoughts into an independent realm, Thought, conceived as essentially independent of another realm, Language.

It is of course in Wittgenstein’s spirit to attack this radical idea in relation to the *learning* of language, in relation to the process through which alone the child (that is, each of us at one stage) acquires a mind. The radical idea is then the idea that the language-learning child “could already *think*, only not yet speak” (§ 32), or Mr. Ballard’s idea that he had had various wordless thoughts before he learnt a language (§ 342).

But this idea gets it exactly backwards. For if it is an important function of language (and it is) to convey thoughts, to “carry” them “over” [*über-tragen*] from an inner space into an outer or public space, a far more important function of language is to seed, cultivate, and sustain an inner space in which thought can take place at all. To put it with diametrical bluntness: If language carries thoughts *from inside out*, it is only because it has carried them *from outside in*.<sup>27</sup>

The tendency to forget that it is just by learning a language, taught us by others in the public space of reasons, that we learn to think at all is what we may call *the ingratitude of thought*. This ingratitude seems to come to us very naturally and it surely need not be blameworthy. One might even call it a general fact of nature, comparable to the fact that adult human beings naturally and

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<sup>27</sup> I have been exploiting the more literal sense of the German word *übertragen* in § 304 (rendered as “convey” by Anscombe), i.e. the sense of “carry ... over”, either from inside out or from outside in. Note that the word “in” should not be read as a preposition but adverbially. The learning of language is not a matter of carrying thoughts into a pre-existing mind. Rather, it is only by learning a language that one acquires a mind at all.

up to a point blamelessly care far more about their children than about their own parents. We can capture the affinity between these two facts of nature like this. Language, just like the human being of which it is a part, is naturally *forward-looking*: the natural posture of language is the same as the natural posture of man himself.<sup>28</sup>

But this ingratitude of thought, just because it is very natural, is very dangerous when we do philosophy, especially when we do it in a meditative mood (as e.g. in the first two *Meditations* of Descartes). Wittgenstein is well aware of this danger, as comes out in the following passage from the manuscripts. The last sentence of this passage very nicely captures the phenomenology of the ingratitude of thought:

It is an extremely important fact that in using language I don't recall how I learnt it.

I say: 'I see here a black ball'. I don't know how I learnt 'black' and 'ball'. My application of the words is independent of this learning. It is as if I had coined the words myself.

This passage shows Wittgenstein's awareness of what I called the ingratitude of thought, of both its naturalness and its danger.<sup>29</sup>

Now since Wittgenstein, in fighting philosophical temptations, is especially keen on rooting out deep sources of temptation that tend to lie naturally embedded in our language (*cf.* § 111), we can take this passage as a well-considered warning, in the spirit of a critique of language, against the natural danger of the ingratitude of thought, against the tendency to see the words that I know how to use (especially such utterly simple words as 'black' and 'ball') as coming as it were from nowhere ("as if coined by myself"), forgetting that I had in fact learned them from my elders.

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<sup>28</sup> The sense in which language is a part of the human being was discussed in section 8.5.

<sup>29</sup> The passage is from MS 109, p. 33, dated 23.8.1930 by Wittgenstein himself, my translation. The thought is not a transient one in Wittgenstein, because he finds it worthwhile to repeat basically the same thought, with slight variation in wording and example, four more times in later MSS and TSS, the last one in MS 116, p. 99, which is dated by editors of the *BEE Nachlass* as on or after 1.9.1937. (One repetition that has found its way to paper-and-ink print is in *The Big Typescript*, at the start of section 37.)

That Wittgenstein sees the fact in question as dangerous is shown by the fact that he uses not only "It is an extremely important fact" (twice) but also "It is a very remarkable fact" (three times), because the word "remarkable [*merkwürdig*]" is usually used by him to mean or connote queerness (in the sense of § 195). At least in the *Investigations* the word is nearly exclusively used in that sense or with that connotation (§§ 38, 50, 93, 94, 205, 209, 336, 363, 412, 561).



This forgetfulness is not only very natural but also very general. For, with respect to almost all words, we do not recall how we learnt them when we use them. (This is basically the point in the first paragraph quote above.) And in a very large number of cases we are *unable* to recall: we don't *know* how we learned them (as Wittgenstein puts it in the second paragraph). And it seems that the simpler a word is, the deeper its roots are buried from us and the harder it is to recall how we learnt it.

The phenomenology characteristic of the ingratitude of thought is: it is as if I had *coined the words myself*. This, given the intimate connection between mastery of a language and possession of the light of reason that I noted above, comes to the same as the phenomenology of *creating my own light*. That is how the temptation towards the idea of privacy is supported by the ingratitude of thought: One misconceives the light or word *within* oneself as *due to* oneself because one forgets that one acquired it from the common light or the common word. This support is very strong, because the ingratitude of thought is very natural, very general, and usually unconscious.

To see how the support works in the specific case of sensations, we need only to replace the words 'black' and 'ball' in the above quote with sensation-words, such as 'sharp' and 'pain'. The support is particularly strong in this case, because sensation-words, especially those for primitive sensations such as 'pain' and 'tickle', are typically learned very early in life and so their roots are buried particularly deep. The particular strength of this support comes out in the fact that it is not only nearly impossible to recall how one learned words for primitive sensations, but *already* very difficult to recall something that, after playing a role in that later-forgotten learning process, also persists into adulthood and thus *is* accessible by memory, namely the expressive function of language for one's affective states (e.g. saying "Ouch!" in pain).<sup>30</sup>

Ingratitude is a form of forgetfulness. Perhaps nature has a purpose in the natural ingratitude of thought. For our life is lived fundamentally *forward*, so it is naturally served by the fundamentally forward-looking posture of our language. (What *use* is there, in everyday life, to recall one's babbling days?) This is where our sense of ambivalence is perhaps strongest: Is it really a kind of *ingratitude* (this designation carries some reproach) or is it a naturally ordained, useful forgetful-

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<sup>30</sup> I drew attention to this difficulty when I noted that the differences that commentators usually take Wittgenstein to be urging us to pay attention to in § 304b are still *within* the intellectual function of language (see near the beginning of section 7.3).

ness? Or is it both? That we have no firm answers here is a symptom of the permanent ambiguity in the significance of language. This means that the critique of language is a never-ending task.

#### 10.3.4 A Quasi-Historical Connection

I have said, with Wittgenstein, that when we use language we usually do not recall, and often are unable to recall, how we learned it.

Now this is quite explicitly contradicted by Augustine's description, quoted by Wittgenstein at the very beginning of the *Investigations*, of how he as a child learnt a language. For Augustine very vividly describes how he saw how words got attached to objects and says that by seeing this he learnt language. This description of how a child learns a language is striking for its adult, *self-contemplative* quality: it is as if Augustine employed a special sort of seeing eye in the middle of the learning.

This formulation is meant to echo Anscombe's when she attacks (while discussing practical knowledge) the *contemplative* attitude that is pervasive in modern philosophy: "as if there were a very queer and special sort of seeing eye in the middle of the acting".<sup>31</sup> Anscombe's formulation in turn echoes Wittgenstein's in a discussion of fear. This discussion can be partly paraphrased in the style of § 314: it shows a fundamental misunderstanding if I attempt to get clear over the philosophical problem of sensation "by repeating the expression of fear and at the same time attending to myself, as it were observing my soul out of the corner of my eye" (*PI*, p. 188). The idea of this queer kind of inner observation is at the heart of the idea of privacy.

This enables us to see a quasi-historical connection between the idea of privacy and the self- or inner-contemplative mood characteristic of much philosophy. The connection may be brought out by focusing on the idea of gratitude.

The ingratitude of thought is the phenomenon that the I, having achieved the "I think", tends to forget that it owes that achievement, owes *itself*, to something. Yet when thought reflects upon itself, it can very naturally feel a deep need to account for its own power, namely the great power

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<sup>31</sup> See her *Intention*, toward the end of section 32.

to reach *anything* (a power at which the open list in § 304b perhaps hints). So there is so to speak a need for thought to feel grateful, a need that is especially easy to feel in a self-reflective mood.

Now Augustine and Descartes after him both feel this need. It is not surprising that they also share the Christian commonality of directing their gratitude toward God. *Everything* comes from God and depends on Him (each and every moment). In particular, one's mind is a divine implantation or gift, for which one ought to be deeply grateful.

In Descartes the gratitude finds expression in his proofs of the existence of God in the *Third Meditation*, on which the whole project of the *Meditations* hinges.<sup>32</sup> Even the Archimedean point, the *cogito* itself, is eventually said to depend on God each and every moment. It is as if Descartes were saying: it is true that I have to start the proofs from the *cogito*, from the 'I think', but I must not forget that to which I owe my existence. It is as if the invincibility, the super-hardness, of the *cogito* is too much to believe – how can thought, *mere* thought, be so indestructible? No, thought itself has to be grounded on something firmer. It cannot ground itself, so it has to be grounded on something *beyond* thought (God is *inscrutable*). (This is the predicament of the Cartesian Circle.)

Augustine of course shares the conception of the human mind as a divine gift. This conception is not in the words quoted from him in § 1, but its presence becomes clear when we look at a very slightly wider context, namely *Confessions*, I.8.

The unquoted portion of *Confessions*, I.8 makes it clear that what Augustine is there writing down is not a philosophical theory about the essence of human language, or even a cool description of how a child learns its first words. It is above all, just like the whole book itself, a *giving of thanks* to God, an expression of gratitude. The whole book, as one translator puts it, is written in the mood of a sustained prayer to God.<sup>33</sup>

Let it suffice here to quote just one sentence to show that prayerful mood of thanksgiving. It is the sentence that immediately precedes Wittgenstein's quotation:

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<sup>32</sup> Earlier I said that the ingratitude of thought is especially dangerous in the kind of meditative mood exemplified in the first two *Meditations*. The reason why I only mentioned the first two *Meditations* should now be clear. The Cartesian meditator is not at all ungrateful. But he starts to acknowledge the object of his gratitude, God, only in the *Third Meditation*. (The acknowledgement, as I just said in the text, takes the form of proofs for the existence of God.)

<sup>33</sup> The translator is Albert Outler, who notes the prayerful mood of the *Confessions* in his introduction to the book as a whole and again in his brief introduction to its Book I, the Book from which Wittgenstein quotes. I will be using Outler's translation.

[...] But I myself, when I was unable to communicate all I wished to say to whomever I wished by means of whimperings and grunts and various gestures of my limbs (which I used to reinforce my demands), I myself repeated the sounds already stored in my memory by the mind which thou, O my God, hadst given me. [At this point Wittgenstein's quotation begins.]

Now a central target of Wittgenstein's in the *Investigations* is what is usually called Platonism.<sup>34</sup> Both Augustine and Descartes are steeped in the Platonist tradition. And theirs is of course a Christianized Platonism, an important part of which is just the idea that the mind is a divine gift. It is clear overall that Wittgenstein would reject this idea. But it is not explicitly attacked. Rather, his attacks are on un-divinized Platonism. (He only rarely draws the idea of God into discussion.)

This comes out in how Wittgenstein attacks the Platonism that is present in the Augustinian conception of language. This presence is not evident in the opening sections of the *Investigations*. But it comes out in § 32b, where Wittgenstein describes as Augustinian the idea that the learning of language is a process undergone by a child who “could already *think*, only not yet speak”. The attribution to Augustine is perfectly correct, for the Platonist idea would have been natural to him. Augustine thought that, when he began to learn an earthly tongue, God had already worked wonders in him (as comes out in the sentence just quoted). His mind had already been in place before all else, in particular before the merely earthly sounds of any tongue had been uttered or heard. It was put in place by God.

Now the idea Wittgenstein explicitly attacks in § 32b is not this idea of the mind as a divine gift, but the idea that the child “could already *think*, only not yet speak”. This is not a trivial fact.

For, as we noted, the mood of prayerful thanksgiving to God is pervasive in the *Confessions* and Wittgenstein, who knew the book very well (he once said that it is possibly “the most serious book ever written”), cannot have missed it. Yet his quotation of Augustine in § 1 starts precisely after, and so leaves out, Augustine's expression of gratitude toward God. So he seems to be quite

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<sup>34</sup> McDowell has repeatedly voiced skepticism as to whether Plato himself is a Platonist in the relevant sense. I am too ignorant to have an opinion here. I will keep using the usual label ‘Platonism’ for a type of thinking attacked by Wittgenstein, without implying any connection with Plato himself.

deliberately separating the idea of a God from what he finds worth attacking in Augustine, which includes a good deal of Platonism.

I will not attempt to answer the question why Wittgenstein chose to attack un-divinized Platonism but not divinized Platonism. (It is not a trivial question.) Instead, I will just use this fact to bring out a feature of the *Investigations*.

The difference between divinized Platonism and the largely un-divinized Platonism attacked by Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* is that any object at which thought might direct its gratitude largely disappears in the latter. As a result of this disappearance, thought can easily slip back into its natural ingratitude. Yet it is natural, as we noted, for thought to continue to feel a deep need to account for its own power. Various mythologies then spring up to meet this need: the mythology of rules as rails invisibly laid to infinity, the mythology of meanings as the *last* interpretations of rules, the mythology of the power of the mind as something occult, the mythology of the mind as an ethereal substance or an infallible logical machine, the mythology of the super-hardness of the logical *must*, the mythology of a queer way in which past, present, future meet in a flash, in short, the whole mythology of *superlative facts*. These mythologies are as it were disarrayed displacements or transferences of the now inchoate desire to be grateful.<sup>35</sup>

Note the *disarray*. It is caused by the disappearance of a singular object of gratitude, namely God, from our general philosophical culture. It used to be thought (and still is by some) that God is the absolute foundation of *everything*. This foundation is now gone, but the hankering after absolute foundations is not. It has only become unfocused in expression, cropping up in all kinds of place and frequently in entangled ways. This forces the therapeutic treatment of this hankering to be piecemeal and crisscrossing (*cf.* § 133d and the second paragraph of the *Preface*).

But Wittgenstein's therapeutic philosophy *does* have a general focus, a center. The center is *the living human being*, in particular *the living language* as its essential expression.

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<sup>35</sup> I said "largely" because I do not know whether there are channels for the feeling of gratitude in occult or magical practices. But it is clear that the overwhelming majority of the mythologized things attacked in the *Investigations* do not invite the conception of them as objects of gratitude. It would be a much better fit, phenomenologically, to regard the mythologizing as producing objects of *fetishism* (in a sense echoing Marx and Freud).

This is not to imply that the human being, or language, is now God. Rather, the *concept* of a God, of absolute foundation, is discarded. Or to put it with more nuance: the Word or the Natural Light of Reason (these are one in the Judeo-Christian metaphysical tradition) is gingerly brought down to the word or the natural light of reason (these are one in Wittgenstein). The task is a delicate one ('gingerly') because Wittgenstein, rightly I think, has far more sympathy and respect for that metaphysical tradition than for doctrines that make the world mindless or lightless.

The natural light of reason or our language does owe itself to something. But this something is not some singular, hypostasized object, such as God or the Self. Rather, the proper object of its gratitude is "the stream of life, or the stream of the world" itself, to use Wittgenstein's phrases.<sup>36</sup>

The stream of the world is the 'es' in "*Es regnet*", "*Es tut weh*", "*Es denkt*" (Lichtenberg), ... It is not a nothing, but not a something either.

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<sup>36</sup> The phrases are deliberately lifted from their context (which is verification in the *present* against the background of permanent flux, a theme that occupied Wittgenstein from late 1929 to 1932). The apparent apposition is Wittgenstein's own. It is directly derivable from *Tractatus* 5.621: "The world and life are one".

## 10.4 STARING AND SELF-OBJECTIFICATION

The contemplative attitude characteristic of much philosophy has a root in something that comes to us quite naturally, namely the phenomenon of *staring*. Wittgenstein once put it this way:

The phenomenon of *staring* is closely bound up with the whole puzzle of solipsism.<sup>37</sup>

He is well aware of the temptation to think or feel that the human stare has a magical power. Thus he says the following of staring and of the associated form of words (namely “this is ...”):

When I stare at a coloured object and say “this is red”, I seem to know exactly to what I give the name red. As it were, to that which I am drinking in.

It is as though there was a magic power in the words “*this is ...*”<sup>38</sup>

The magical power can even seem to be positively *active* (rather than just contemplative), as the following passage from the lecture notes taken by Rush Rhees shows:

If I say “This is round” and stare at a knob [Rhees reports that Wittgenstein was at the moment holding an unfixed brass doorknob in hand], it seems as though I had almost done something to the thing I stared at when I talked about it.<sup>39</sup>

Almost *done* something! This idea or feeling that staring *does* something to the object stared at, even to such a hard outer object as a doorknob, appears to come to us fairly naturally.<sup>40</sup> It also seems to have roots in some magical practices.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See *Notes for Lectures on “Private Experience” and “Sense Data”*, collected in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 272.

<sup>38</sup> See *Notes for Lectures on “Private Experience” and “Sense Data”*, collected in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 269. The imagery of drinking-in figures in § 277 and is closely related to the contemplative detachment figuring in § 276. All echo § 314.

<sup>39</sup> See *The Language of Sense Data and Private Experience* (notes taken by Rhees), collected in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 324.

<sup>40</sup> Language teaches us something here. The Chinese verb for “to witness” (e.g. a traffic accident) literally means “to eye-hit”.

<sup>41</sup> As Curt Sachs reports (*The History of Musical Instruments*), it is not uncommon in primitive societies that musical instruments used in magic rituals must be kept unseen (except on special occasions). The hardness of this magical *must* comes out in the prac-

We civilized minds dismiss this blatantly magical idea, and rightly. But we are less on guard against a survival of it in our contemplation of *inner* objects, that is, in self-contemplation, where the idea of staring as doing has a particularly strong foothold.

This particular strength comes out in the phenomenology of a super-direct, super-close connection between I who am staring and the object that I am staring at:

There is no difference, for me, between *I* and *this* ↗.<sup>42</sup>

The arrow in this context is probably Wittgenstein's sign for private pointing or staring. The phenomenology here is this: the I *goes over* into the object, pouring itself into the object.

This, I think, can be fairly called inner- or self-objectification, which is a specific case of the general tendency to objectify the human being. It is particularly insidious because it is a civilized disease, a disease that only someone capable of *self*-contemplation can contract.

The disease is not merely intellectual but also moral: objectifying the inner *dehumanizes our own selves*. It turns, tragically, what is in fact closest to us (our own sensations, thoughts, desires, moods, almost our whole world itself) into what is far from and alien to us. It is therefore a form of inner-alienation or self-alienation (in a sense echoing Marx's notion of the alienation of labor). We treat our own inner lives as a field of detached theoretical *research*, not realizing that in making this very first step we have left *ourselves* out.<sup>43</sup> The moral danger here is that, when we so to speak go on a suspenseful hunt for beasts in the jungle, we fail to turn around and realize that the beasts are in *us*, or we realize this too late.<sup>44</sup>

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tice in some societies that if someone who is not supposed to see an instrument sees it, she is put to death (p. 50). Sachs also says that "in Oceania a drum is useless if a woman sees it before it is completely made" (p. 36).

<sup>42</sup> See *Notes for Lectures on "Private Experience" and "Sense-Data"*, in *Philosophical Occasions*, p. 269. The sentence was also quoted earlier in Chapter 8, note 9 (subsection 8.3.1).

<sup>43</sup> This is meant to echo § 308, in which Wittgenstein says, in connection with problems about the mental and about behaviourism, that the decisive move of the conjuring trick is the just first, seemingly innocent one. The first move here is the commitment to "a particular way of looking at the matter", which I have tried to identify as an attitude of detached theoretical research. The German word translated by Anscombe as "unexplored", *unerforschten*, can also be translated as "un-researched".

<sup>44</sup> I am alluding to Henry James's story *The Beast in the Jungle*.



The cure (this is of course easier prescribed than administered) is to restore the concept of a *living* human being at the center of philosophy. Our sensation and thought are the very pulse and glow of our life. To objectify them is to suffer a peculiar form of self-forgetfulness.

Let me end by quoting a pair of passages (the first is a repeated quote). They run parallel:

Only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious. [§ 281]

We only say of a human being and what is like one that it thinks. [§ 360]

One might object that in § 360 Wittgenstein is merely making a statement about what we *in fact* say (instead of about what we *can* say, as in § 281) and then insist that we need not credit the capacity for thought only to adult human beings and what is like them: our ordinary way of talking may be a mere a habit of ours, or worse, a mistake.

The Wittgensteinian answer to this is that the ordinary ways of our language in such matters are deeply rooted in our ways of life and it is not the aim of philosophy to reform our language in unheard-of ways (§ 133). Not trying to reform our language in *unheard-of* ways is not conservatism or passive resignation, but something like humility before or simple acceptance of humanity. That Wittgenstein bases his attacks on grammatical illusions lying deep in our forms of language, which attacks can be regarded as attempts to reform our language, on this humility or acceptance is precisely a realization of the very idea of a critique of language by language itself.

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