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# **The Clear Terminus**

**A Kierkegaardian Reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus***

by

**Bruce Howes**

**Thesis presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Canada**

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### **Abstract**

The metaphysical root of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* represents a departure from a pervasive philosophical assumption found originally in Plato's *Meno*. This departure is directly inspired by a critique of the *Meno* found in the works by Søren Kierkegaard written under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus.

The central implication of Kierkegaard's influence for *Tractatus* interpretation is that thought -- or thinking -- referred to in the *Tractatus* of necessity extends beyond the limits of language.

There are at present two competing interpretative readings of the *Tractatus* in the literature. One reading -- referred to as the "Standard" reading since it is propounded by almost all notable Wittgenstein scholars, e.g., Pears, Hacker, McGuinness, Anscombe, Rhees, Malcolm -- has it that the "mystical" sections of the *Tractatus* must be, to some degree, taken seriously. The other reading -- a "New" reading advocated most prominently by Winch, Diamond, and Conant -- argues that the Standard reading is self-contradictory in that it maintains that the limits of language and those of thought are the same while it simultaneously maintains that there is a sort of Mystical residue left over even after the *Tractatus* has (according to the dictates of section 6.54) been "thrown away". The New reading sees Wittgenstein's point as being precisely that there is no such left-over residue and that we must accept this.

Both readings are however incorrect in regard to Wittgenstein's view of limits in the *Tractatus*. While the New reading takes somewhat seriously the influence of Kierkegaard on the *Tractatus*, it asserts that a Kierkegaardian influence bolsters the New reading's view of the mystical as well as its view that language and thought share the same limits in the *Tractatus*. The opposite is in fact the case. *Das Mystische* corresponds to Kierkegaard's "absolutely unknown" that language -- *but not thought* -- runs up against as a limit. Wittgenstein himself alludes to this correspondence in conversation with members of the Vienna Circle in 1929. As such, if the influence of Kierkegaard is to be seen in its proper light, the problem is not with the Standard reading of *Das Mystische*, but rather with the view that the limits of thought and language in the *Tractatus* are the same. For Kierkegaard, unless thought extends beyond the limit of language there is no conceivable nexus for the subject or the divine. This is precisely his critique of Plato's *Meno* in *Fragments*. That this view is also the bedrock of the *Tractatus*' metaphysics is what the present thesis argues is the proper "Kierkegaardian reading" of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

## **Acknowledgements**

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I would especially like to thank Dr. Mathieu Marion for his support and consistent conviction (sometimes contrary to my own view) that my topic would constitute a "contribution to knowledge" (as they say). If the present thesis is such a contribution, it is in no small part due to his patient tutelage, his textual insight -- and, of course, his editing skills.

Thanks as well should go to the many professors and students that I have met at conferences or during the research process. When most required, their interest in my topic was invigorating.

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B. H.,  
St. Catharines, 2001

## **Introduction: Wittgenstein's Encounter with Kierkegaard's Thought**

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

So people stop short at natural laws as at something unassailable, as did the ancients at God and Fate.

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

-- *Tractatus* 6.371-2

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a work of metaphysics. True, most of its sentences deal in the structure, analysis, and delimitation of factual language. But at the outskirts of this work, through obscure passages, in the very direction of certain avenues of thought and, through a sharp turn at the end, the reader is led to a destination that is something more than a mere system of logic. Indeed, Wittgenstein himself considered the *Tractatus* a book whose *point* is ethical, not logical (LVF<sup>1</sup>: 94-5). The point is the practice that surrounds system making.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is, as we will see<sup>2</sup>, an *act* of metaphysics.

The view of most English speaking commentators has been that Wittgenstein's initial interests in philosophical problems arose primarily from his interest, while an engineering student in Manchester, in the fundamental problems of mathematics. As such consideration of Bertrand Russell's and Gottlob Frege's influence in Wittgenstein's early philosophy is front and centre (not without reason, of course). Commentators seem to look further afield only when the need arises. In the *Tractatus* such a need does not *clearly* arise until the book's closing pages where questions

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<sup>1</sup> See "References" section for the meaning of such abbreviated references.

<sup>2</sup> C.II.2. below.

of ethics, aesthetics, the will -- in short, questions of "*das Mystische*" -- are broached. These passages are of such a nature that they clearly fall outside any possible Fregean or Russellian framework.

To explain *das Mystische*, Arthur Schopenhauer's works are generally referred to.<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein himself acknowledged that Schopenhauer was an early philosophical influence. The thoroughness with which this influence has been documented is commendable.<sup>4</sup> One effect that this acknowledgement of Schopenhauer's influence should have had on the most weighty commentators is to open wide the Pandora's box of early influences on Wittgenstein's thought. For to acknowledge Schopenhauer's influence is an admission on the part of those most influential critics that Wittgenstein brought with him from Vienna to Manchester to Cambridge, a sense -- indeed it would need, for the purposes of the problems dealt with in the mystical section, to be a fairly profound sense -- of some central questions and issues of philosophy. And that this sense was undoubtedly what informed his puzzlement on encountering certain aspects of mathematics in engineering at Manchester.<sup>5</sup> Given this, the notion that the mystical section yields no insight into

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Hacker 1986: 81ff, Anscombe 1971: 169ff, Zemach 1966: 371ff., or Pears 1987: 21ff., in this regard.

<sup>4</sup> See especially Weiner 1992, and Griffiths 1972. There are of course basic distinctions to be made between Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein. One more important one in the present context is their respective views of the world. For Schopenhauer, the world is suffering due to the dominance of what he refers to as "the will to live": "Everything in life proclaims that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated.... The grounds for this lie deep in the very nature of things" (Schopenhauer 1844: 573). The way in which one overcome life's suffering is simply to frustrate the will to live by either aesthetic (Schopenhauer 1818: 167ff.) or ascetic means (*Ibid.*: 269ff.). Wittgenstein however sees life's suffering as a consequence of personal disharmony with the world rather than life's essence: "In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And that is what 'being happy' means" (NB: 75). So the world of the happy, being in agreement with the world "is quite another than that of the unhappy", as he says in the *Tractatus* (6.43). Hence unhappiness and suffering are not intrinsic to the world for Wittgenstein as they are for Schopenhauer. There is a remedy to unhappiness for the early Wittgenstein: bring oneself in line with the world (see C.III.1. below).

<sup>5</sup> For a recent view that objects to any suggestion of early Viennese mystical questions informing later Cambridgean logical ones, see Glock 1992: 13. Ray Monk's biography of Wittgenstein -- *The Duty of Genius* -- provides an analysis of Wittgenstein's works taking an early philosophical experience as pivotal. Unfortunately he sees Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* as the key text in his biographical explanation, a connection that seems

other aspects of the *Tractatus* seems dubious at best. Indeed the view that this section is an add on and hence its detachment would bear little on the book's logic (e.g., Hacker 1986: 101) is to get things backwards; for it is to view the mystical section, if not as simply superfluous, then as parasitic upon the logic when in fact a clearer argument can be made that the logic is subservient to the mystical elements.<sup>6</sup>

Another effect of accounting for the influence of Wittgenstein's early Vienna days (permitted by acknowledging the influence of Schopenhauer) is that it leads to the following question: are there any other figures in Wittgenstein's early intellectual development who are as influential as Schopenhauer?

In 1931, Wittgenstein composed a list of the names of those he conceived of as having some impact on his thought. The names he came up with were Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, and Sraffa (CV: 18-19). He came across many of these thinkers in his early Vienna days. Of course, this list should be considered neither exhaustive nor authoritative. For it is clear from many sources that an exhaustive list would include such names as Tolstoy, James, and Dostoyevsky.

Another name notable for its absence from this list is that of Søren Kierkegaard.

2. In conversation, Miles Drury once asked Wittgenstein to tell him about Søren Kierkegaard. Since the year of the conversation was 1930, and it was to be another four or five years before any of his works were translated into English,<sup>7</sup> Kierkegaard was then a thinker relatively thin and forced (Monk 1990: 16ff).

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<sup>6</sup> This was his friend Paul Engelmann's conclusion: "... it could be said with greater justice that Wittgenstein drew certain logical conclusions from his fundamental mystical attitude to life and the world" (ENG: 97).

unknown to Drury and largely unknown to the English speaking world. Wittgenstein's immediate response to Drury's query was to say that

Kierkegaard was by far the most profound thinker of the last century.  
(Drury 1984a: 102).

Though the influence on Wittgenstein of someone like Schopenhauer cannot be seriously doubted, it seems that if Wittgenstein refers to a thinker other than Schopenhauer as 'by far the most profound thinker' of the 19th century, then room must be made for that other in any study of Wittgenstein.

Further, if it is taken into account that Wittgenstein considered Kierkegaard to be unbeatably profound, *and* it is established that Wittgenstein read Kierkegaard in his Vienna days, then the place of Kierkegaard's thought in the *Tractatus* may well be more prominent than has heretofore been credited. My full thesis is of course intended as an argument that this is so. It will be appropriate here however to give the basic historical elements of this argument. I will first deal with the question of *which* Kierkegaard works Wittgenstein was familiar with. Having done this, I will then turn to the question of *when* Wittgenstein was familiar with them.

Concerning which Kierkegaard texts Wittgenstein knew, much can be surmised at a surface level. In the same conversation with Drury, Wittgenstein mentions Kierkegaard's three life categories: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. These categories are found throughout several of Kierkegaard's works. Most of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors themselves fall into one or the other of these categories, but there are only three works where these categories are explicitly identified and referred to. As such, this piece of evidence demonstrates that Wittgenstein was familiar with at least one of the following of Kierkegaard's

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<sup>7</sup> *Philosophical Fragments*, for example, was first translated in 1936.

works: *Stages on Life's Way*, *Either/Or*, and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. This last book is considered by many to be Kierkegaard's magnum opus and is too seen as representing an attempt to encompass the message of the previous pseudonymous works. Kierkegaard himself considered it this way (POV: 13, 75).

It seems reasonable to single the *Postscript* out as one that Wittgenstein almost certainly read. If for no other reason than that the resolution of the *Tractatus* is strikingly parallel to that of the *Postscript* (see C.I. and II. below). Wittgenstein famously ends the *Tractatus* by pointing out that the book itself, is *unsinnig* [nonsensical] (6.54), and that (to accentuate further the paradox) he who has understood him will have gathered this. Kierkegaard writes at the end of the *Postscript* that

...what I write *contains* the notice that everything is to be understood in such a way that it is revoked, that the book has not only an end but has a revocation to boot. One can ask for no more than that (CUP: 619; emphasis added).

It is fairly safe to say that no other book, prior to the *Tractatus*, contains such an impossible ending.<sup>8</sup>

There is textual evidence as well for the addition of Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* as a work with which Wittgenstein was familiar. *Fragments* is the work to which the *Postscript* is a postscript (the full title is *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*). The evidence that Wittgenstein was familiar with this work is provided by the transcribed conversations he had with certain Vienna Circle members in Vienna between December of 1929 and January 1931. Wittgenstein states there that:

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Conant 1989; 1990.

Anything we might say is *a priori* bound to be mere nonsense [*Unsinn*]. Nevertheless we do run up against the limits of language. Kierkegaard too saw that there is this running up against something and he referred to it in a fairly similar way (as running up against paradox). (WVC: 68)

That he knows Kierkegaard to have "referred to it in a fairly similar way" is significant because that work in which Kierkegaard clearly does refer to this in a similar way is *Fragments*:

The paradoxical passion of the understanding is, then, continually colliding with this unknown.... To declare that it is the unknown because we cannot know it, and that even if we could know it we could not express it, does not satisfy the passion although it has correctly perceived the unknown as frontier.... It is the frontier that is continually arrived at (PF: 44).<sup>9</sup>

As we will see in a moment, the particular connection shown in these passages proves decisive in determining just *what* Kierkegaard's legacy was to Wittgenstein's early thought.

Sticking for now however to the historical problem of whether there *was* a possible legacy, the important question is *when* Wittgenstein read these works of Kierkegaard's. We know that he certainly had read Kierkegaard by the time of the above mentioned conversation with Drury in 1930 (Drury 1984b: 121). In terms of textual evidence prior to this date, we have Russell's 1919 letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell in which he writes that though he registered that there was a mystical sense to the *Tractatus* when he first read it, he was astonished to find that Wittgenstein had become "a complete mystic" and was reading people such as Kierkegaard (CL: 140). But by the time of Russell's observation, the *Tractatus* was in approximately the form in which it was eventually published in 1921.

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<sup>9</sup> The editor of the English publication of these conversations with Wittgenstein, entitled *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, points out in a footnote the similarity between Wittgenstein's statement cited above and this statement from Kierkegaard's in *Fragments* (WVC: 68).

However, in their book *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin throughout treat an early encounter with the works of Kierkegaard as a given (Janik and Toulmin 1973: 172, 245). One reason for this is that Wittgenstein's sister Margarete was an avid reader of all that was considered 'modern' in philosophy and literature and was in the habit of passing such works to young Ludwig (Janik and Toulmin 1973: 172). And Margarete almost certainly would have read Kierkegaard because, in the intellectual and artistic circles of fin de siècle Vienna, there was something of a Kierkegaardian renaissance. This 'renaissance' was due to several factors. Firstly, the city itself was a thriving centre of avant-gardism in ideas ranging from philosophy, psychology, and science, to art, architecture, and music; Wittgenstein's family, one of the wealthiest in Europe at the time, was in many ways very much in step with, and supportive of, this modernist wave. Kierkegaard was seen as a key progenitor of modern ideas.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, since an edition of the collected works of Kierkegaard had been published between 1910 and 1913, it had recently become *possible* to read in German almost all that Kierkegaard had written<sup>11</sup>. This is significant because Wittgenstein composed the bulk of the *Tractatus* between 1914 and 1919.

Thirdly, the Kierkegaard revival was largely inspired and lead by the respected literary journal *Der Brenner*. Theodore Haecker's book *Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit* (Haecker 1913), in which he argues that Kierkegaard was principally a critic of language, was published as a monograph in *Der Brenner* in 1913. The journal also published, before the Great War, several Kierkegaard translations done by Haecker. These translations

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<sup>10</sup> For example, [info.pitt.edu/~kafka/k\\_s\\_bibII.html](http://info.pitt.edu/~kafka/k_s_bibII.html), which lists the contents of the personal library of Franz Kafka includes several volumes of Kierkegaard's work in their earliest German edition (see next note).

<sup>11</sup> *Gesammelte Werke*. Jena: Eugen Diedrich, 1910-1913.

included *The Present Age*, "Discourse on Death", and "Prefaces". We know that Wittgenstein, like much of the Vienna's elite, was an avid reader of *Der Brenner*. Indeed Wittgenstein was on close personal terms with *Der Brenner's* publisher, Ludwig von Ficker. Allan Janik points out that early in the second decade of this century, Haecker set out to bring Kierkegaard's thought to prominence in the German speaking world. To that end he received much assistance from *Der Brenner* and Ficker (Janik 1979: 185ff).<sup>12</sup>

To add to the preceding circumstantial evidence, Desmond Lee, a friend and student of Wittgenstein's at Cambridge, claims that Wittgenstein told him in conversation that he had learned Danish, and he had learned it *in order to* read Kierkegaard's works (Lee 1979: 218). That Wittgenstein knew Danish is indirectly confirmed by Drury:

When some years later Kierkegaard was translated into English, largely by Walter Lowrie, Wittgenstein was displeased with the poor style of this translator. He completely failed to reproduce the elegance of the original Danish (Drury 1984a: 103).

And further it can be inferred that Wittgenstein learned Danish fairly early on since we do know that he was a frequent visitor to Norway and by 1913 spoke Norwegian, a language closely related to Danish, with some proficiency (McGuinness 1988: 189).<sup>13</sup>

However, one might say, even if Wittgenstein read Kierkegaard before the composition of the *Tractatus*, what evidence is there that Kierkegaardian ideas have an influence on the book?

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<sup>12</sup> As well as indirect support from Wittgenstein who gave, through the intermediacy of Ficker, much of his inherited fortune away to Viennese artists and intellectuals, one of whom was Haecker. Wittgenstein did not however appreciate Haecker's work. In a letter to Ficker (4/12/1919) in which Wittgenstein asks Ficker to consider publishing the *Tractatus* in *Der Brenner*, Wittgenstein says that if *Der Brenner* publishes the likes of Haecker, it can certainly publish his work (LVF: 96). See also McGuinness 1988: 206-9.

<sup>13</sup> Also see Wittgenstein's letter of Oct. 13, 1913 to Russell in which can be seen Wittgenstein's keenness to learn Norwegian at the beginning of his 6-8 month stay in Norway (CP: 45-6).

For Wittgenstein no doubt read many things: are we to presume that the ideas of each are ingredients in the stew?

Perhaps the most compelling piece of evidence of *de facto* influence is one that has already been cited in passing above. I speak here of Wittgenstein's own pronouncement of a similarity between his and Kierkegaard's approach to the limits of language: "Kierkegaard too saw that there is this running up against something and he referred to it in a fairly similar way (as running up against paradox)" (WVC: 68). One of the Vienna Circle members who attended almost all the discussions with Wittgenstein was Friedrich Waismann. In fact it is through Waismann's copious note taking that we have a record of these discussions. The reason Waismann so carefully wrote down what Wittgenstein had to say on these occasions is that he planned to write an expository book on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, tentatively entitled *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*.<sup>14</sup> In fact, by the end of 1929 Waismann had it seems convinced Wittgenstein (in spite of the latter's marked antipathy toward the burgeoning evangelical scientism of the Circle) to himself undertake co-authorship of the book (Monk 1990: 283). We can infer that this proposed project was the main impetus for Waismann's rigorously explicatory notes, since they begin in mid to late December of 1929, though Wittgenstein had been meeting fairly regularly with Circle members, including Waismann, as far back as mid 1927 (Monk 1990: 243).

Since the running up against the limits of language is the key to the metaphysics of the *Tractatus*, the comparison of it to Kierkegaard's views in the context of compiling material for an expository work on the *Tractatus* is of more than passing significance. And it is more than a passing remark. For in his "Lecture on Ethics" (given six weeks earlier) Wittgenstein speaks of the wish to describe something absolute with the mundane tools of language as a "paradox" found

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<sup>14</sup> Posthumously published as *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy* (Waismann 1965).

at the limits of language (LE: 43-4). Here is a reiteration of the Kierkegaardian connection in a "Lecture" that is very much an extension of Wittgenstein's early views. Wittgenstein clearly knew that the *Tractatus*' metaphysics would be clarified by reference to Kierkegaard's work.

3. Many commentators speak of some strong Kierkegaardian conceptual influence on the early Wittgenstein; but, because such a connection is usually considered peripheral to their topic, most consider this influence all too briefly. Jeremy Walker, for example, takes the time to dig out some very significant passages in Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* and points out that some of Wittgenstein's remarks in both the "Lecture on Ethics" and the *Tractatus* echo these passages. However there is no follow up: Walker merely lists these remarks with no accompanying analysis -- he literally writes "Here Kierkegaard says things like these:...." and then lists the statements in point form manner (Walker 1968: 224). Richard Brockhaus too points to "deep and illuminating parallels between the two thinkers" (Brockhaus 1991: 322). Brockhaus touches on (what I would argue is) *the* key pedagogical point of commerce between Kierkegaard's and Wittgenstein's ideas: "We shall see the difficult role of Socratic midwife in which Wittgenstein has placed himself, a role best explored (perhaps to Wittgenstein's satisfaction) in Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*" (Brockhaus 1991: 6-7). Brockhaus, however, fails to follow up these deep illuminating parallels.

Benjamin Tilghman points to the influence of Kierkegaard's notion of 'indirect communication' (Tilghman 1991: 63). This is the Kierkegaardian idea that gets the most mention as a possible 'illuminating parallel' with Wittgenstein. For the most part however, it too receives very little analysis, as is the case with Tilghman's book.<sup>15</sup> In his biography of the early

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<sup>15</sup> However, see Goodman 1986: 345ff, Creegan 1991: 47ff, as well as Conant 1989; 1990.

Wittgenstein, Brian McGuinness builds a case that there is a well thought out indirect method of communication being employed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (McGuinness 1988). What McGuinness is looking squarely (though unknowingly) at is the germ of Kierkegaard's presence in that text.<sup>16</sup> McGuinness however nowhere even *mentions* Kierkegaard as a possible source of this indirect method and it seems clear that he is unaware of this possibility.<sup>17</sup>

In his *Point of View of My Work as an Author*, Kierkegaard writes that what Christendom needs is "an entirely new military science.... The gist of it all can be expressed in one word: the method must be indirect" (POV: 38). For Kierkegaard, such indirection is required to move a person from illusion to truth. For the illusion stands in the way of reception of the truth; the deluded person does not even know how to 'hear' the truth. Kierkegaard frankly concludes that a person faltering under an illusion must be "deceived into the truth" (POV: 39). The point is to "trick something away" from the person. This seems contradictory but, as Kierkegaard puts it with one of his sharp metaphors, when one comes across a man who cannot ingest food because his mouth is too full, one must remove food from the man's mouth to stop him from starving:

Similarly, when a man is very knowledgeable but his knowledge is meaningless or virtually meaningless to him, does sensible communication consist in giving him more to know, even if he loudly proclaims that this is what he needs, or does it consist, instead, in taking something away from him? (CUP: 275)

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<sup>16</sup> As Conant rightly points out in his review of McGuinness' book (Conant 1990: 331-2).

<sup>17</sup> Drury for his part actually uses the term "indirect communication" and sees Wittgenstein as attempting, "by so limiting the sphere of 'what can be said' that we create a feeling of spiritual claustrophobia", to create a desire for the absolute good (Drury: 1984a: 99). However, Kierkegaard is not mentioned in reference to his use of this term.

So only in taking away speculative metaphysics -- metaphysics as a quasi-science and body of doctrines -- is the person able to 'see' clearly what it is metaphysics tries, but distorts and inevitably fails, to say *directly*.

According to Kierkegaard, what one must do is let go the attempt to communicate the metaphysical as if it were an object of study quite akin to geography or astronomy (PF: 44). The paradox that is continually run up against remains so long as it is continually run up against. In this sense the paradox, which is an "offence" to reason, is clearly seen by Kierkegaard to be a *function* of reason. Reason cannot accept that it is bounded by any limit other than the totality of what is. For Reason<sup>18</sup> says: "we do not know it; ergo it is not there" (CUPII: 51). If 'it' *is*, it can be known. What Reason runs up against then, Reason feels must be knowable.

In *Fragments* Kierkegaard traces this basis of Reason's offence back to Plato's theory of *anamnesis*<sup>19</sup> which posits a metaphysics in which knowledge (or the possibility thereof) "overcomes" life; gives life a "meaning". It is this rationalist turn in metaphysics (i.e. knowability as a criterion of existence) that instigates the illusion that in turn causes the paradox. The positive need to quantify the metaphysical if it is to be considered more than a delusion -- is precisely the problem. As Kierkegaard emphasizes in the *Postscript*:

*Objectively the emphasis is on what is said; subjectively the emphasis is on how it is said* (CUP: 202).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kierkegaard often so personifies "Reason" (as well as "the understanding" etc.). Thompson's definition is correct: "By 'Reason' K means that agency which carries out the movements of discursive thought in mathematics, the sciences, and in everyday life" (Thompson 1967: 142).

<sup>19</sup> Though it could perhaps be traced back still further to Parmenides' unity of Being.

<sup>20</sup> The emphasis Kierkegaard gives to this passage (as shown) is unique in the *Postscript*. It is interesting to note that Frege discerned in the *Tractatus* the same distinction as that made by Kierkegaard in the *Postscript*. He wrote to confirm whether Wittgenstein was really wishing to say what he seemed to be saying in the Preface to the *Tractatus*; namely that "what is said in it [the *Tractatus*] takes second place to the way in which it is said" (Monk 1990: 174).

It is only through the subjective -- in "inwardness" that the divine announces itself. And silence, is the protective brackets around one's inwardness (TA: 92).

Wittgenstein wrote to von Ficker that the *Tractatus* consisted of two parts:

the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written.... In brief, I think: All of that which *many* are babbling today, I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it (LVF: 94-5).

The written part of the *Tractatus*, insofar as it concretely delimits language, by so doing inexorably highlights the unwritten section. The attempted *expression* of this limit entangles one in what Kierkegaard refers to as the Absolute Paradox.

4. Similar to Kierkegaard<sup>21</sup>, Wittgenstein, as in his lecture on "Ethics" (a word which he capitalized and defined broadly to include essentially the subject matter of aesthetics and the religious), sees that to approach the Ethical with the tools of reason in hand is to miss the point. For it is mistaken to attempt to *explain* an Ethical utterance as one might explain a factual one (LE: 44; cf. APR: 57ff.).

A letter to Engelmann of April 9, 1917, puts the point in its clearest light. Engelmann sent him a poem by Uhland in the letter and Wittgenstein wrote back describing his agreement to the sentiments the poem expressed:

And this is how it is: if only you do not try to utter what is unspeakable then *nothing* gets lost. But the unspeakable will be -- unspeakably -- *contained* in what has been spoken (ENG: 7)<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> As Klemke puts it, for Kierkegaard "each individual is isolated and exists by himself with respect to his ethical requirement. Thus, none can legislate for another concerning his existence and behaviour. Therefore, the attempt to find intersubjectively valid ethical judgements ('One ought to do...') is futile. There are, and can be, no such judgements" (Klemke 1960: 327).

<sup>22</sup> I have rendered "*das Unsagbare*" as 'unspeakable' rather than 'unutterable' so as to coincide with the next

He reiterates this point in the *Tractatus* when he writes that philosophy "will mean the unspeakable by clearly displaying the speakable" (4.115). What is *meant* [*gemeint*] is both what is *said* -- i.e. propositions<sup>23</sup> of fact -- and what is *shown*. What these propositions show -- or, put another way, what they indirectly communicate -- is what must be in place in order that they can *say* anything at all. So, in the attempt to say what shows, as Wittgenstein puts it, things, both said and shown, "get lost".

In a letter to von Ficker (cited above), Wittgenstein asks him to focus on the Preface and conclusion for elucidation of the *Tractatus*. In the Preface, Wittgenstein speaks briefly of the two-part division of the book:

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather -- not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for in order to draw a limit to thinking, we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense [*Unsinn*] (p27).

The limit here referred to is what divides the book's two parts mentioned in the letter to von Ficker. Now, one constant in Wittgenstein scholarship<sup>24</sup> is that what Wittgenstein means to do by the preceding passage is merely affirm that the limits of thinking and the limits of expression are one and the same. However, regardless of the commentators' veritable consensus on this point, the fact is that this *cannot* be the correct interpretation of this passage. For Wittgenstein says "we should have to be able to *think* both sides of the limit of thought" in order to draw such a limit.

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cited passage which cites the Ogden translation of the *Tractatus*.

<sup>23</sup> In what follows 'proposition' will be used as the equivalent of *Satz*. As such it will not be used as a synonym of 'statement' or 'sentence', but will be used to refer to what these later terms *mean*.

<sup>24</sup> See Part B.II.2. below for a detailed accounting of this.

We have no reason to believe however that this is a criterion Wittgenstein considered to be only applicable to drawing a limit to *thought*. Rather, it seems clear that Wittgenstein is here giving what he sees as a necessary criterion of drawing *any* limit. The way in which it is stated makes it clear that he is applying a general rule of limit drawing in order to rule out the possibility of a specific limitation to thought being drawn. If this rule is applied to the expressed purpose of the *Tractatus* itself -- i.e. drawing a limit to the *expression* of thought -- then it must be inferred that this limit is possibly drawn *only* if one can *think* both sides of it. Hence, if Wittgenstein considered the limits of thought and language coextensive, as is generally considered the case, the limitation of language -- i.e. the purported task of the *Tractatus* -- *would be impossible* since the limitation of thought is explicitly shown as impossible. The conclusion must either be that with the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein very consciously constructed an elaborate ruse -- signifying nothing -- or he considered that thinking *must* transgress the limits of language in order for there to be such a limit at all. It is a central contention of the present thesis that the latter is surely the case. The other side of the limit *must be thinkable*; but it is the *expression* of that on the other side of the limit that is *Unsinn*. Hence the reason the "second part" of the *Tractatus*, as it is referred to in the von Ficker letter, is not written. Otherwise Wittgenstein would be referring von Ficker to something not even thinkable -- and calling it the "most important" part of the book!

The present thesis then is an attempt to show that Wittgenstein's treatment of the fundamental philosophical problem of limits at the bottom of his *Tractatus* is taken from Kierkegaard's critique of Plato's 'solution' to this problem found in *Fragments* and *Postscript*. In both Kierkegaard's Climacus works<sup>25</sup> and the *Tractatus* the problem is given back its proper

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<sup>25</sup> Kierkegaard wrote a number of books under pseudonyms. *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* are written under the name Johannes Climacus. This *nom de plume* is likely an allusion to the sixth century abbot of St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, John Klimakos. Given Wittgenstein's ladder

'weight' (see introduction to Part A. below). That is, it is shown to be fundamentally indissoluble -- fundamentally paradoxical. Hence it is not to be considered a problem at all in the normal sense. Since a limit [*Grenze*] implies two sides (p27), the talk of limiting knowledge or language embroils one in this profound 'problem'. When one mentions such limits one is confronted by what Kierkegaard refers to as the Absolute Paradox: if every limit has two sides, then to acknowledge a limit of knowledge or language is to acknowledge the *other* side; so such an acknowledgement is to set a relation to precisely that which one hoped thoroughly to exclude. But to refuse to acknowledge such a limit is not a viable option either. Such a refusal implies illimitability and so would defeat *any* attempt at all to exclude metaphysics. All the metaphysical chatter one wished to avoid would (like everything else) be permissible. One could acknowledge a limit but refuse to see in this an admission of such a limit's two-sidedness. This is what Kierkegaard calls 'offence' at the paradox and is a common attitude of rationalism reaching back to Plato's solution to Meno's paradox. The best strategy then would be to acknowledge -- but *say* nothing of -- a limit and a 'something' exterior to our knowledge, *das Mystische*, which we discern when, in the very process of delimiting our knowledge, we run up against it. I would contend that, for Wittgenstein, this latter acknowledgement would have been seen as the only *honest*, fruitful way. And this, for Kierkegaard, was Socrates' strategy before the system building of Plato: "The significance of Socratic ignorance was precisely to keep ethics from becoming scholarly knowledge -- instead of practice" (JP: 3871).

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metaphor in section 6.54 of the *Tractatus*, Kierkegaard's allusion might be seen, in the present context, as quite suggestive. For if Klimakos retains any renown it is for his doctrine for the "moral fortitude of monks" which invokes a thirty rung ladder representing the thirty virtues. A monk must steadfastly climb this ladder while being assailed by an equal number of vices (Roob 1997: 291). Though there is certainly the odour of "moral fortitude" about the *Tractatus*, as there is about most of Kierkegaard's works, the present work will not attempt to follow the scent in the direction of Klimakos. Wittgenstein's ladder metaphor will of course be dealt with extensively (See C.II. below).

## **Part A. Kierkegaard and Meno's Paradox**

I would contend at all costs both in word and deed as far as I could that we will be better men, braver and less idle, if we believe that one must search for the things one does not know, rather than if we believe that it is not possible to find out what we do not know and that we must not look for it.

– Plato, the *Meno*

The paradoxical passion of the understanding is, then, continually colliding with this unknown, which certainly does exist but is also unknown and to that extent does not exist.

– Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*

As a preliminary step in this thesis I need to show, with respect to the limits of knowledge, thought and language, precisely what Kierkegaard's critique of Plato is in *Philosophical Fragments*. From this we can move on to see that various of Kierkegaard's views on Platonism can be found in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

For Kierkegaard, the basic problem with the Platonic approach is that it is the crystallization of what has become the persistent conclusion that all philosophical roads lead to: that everything already is, as it is, eternally. That the world we individually experience is an illusion, behind which stands Truth fixed for eternity, is a pervasive precept of the philosophical tradition. Unfortunately, an effect of the view that everything already is as it is eternally is that existence does not amount to much. For Kierkegaard, such a view entails that nothing that occurs in the world as it is encountered by "poor existing human beings" is actually of any significance:

The way of objective reflection turns the subjective individual into something accidental and thereby turns existence into an indifferent, vanishing something. (CUP: 193)

That this notion is inherently reprehensible is in effect a bottom line assumption of Kierkegaard's philosophical writings. The only remedy is to postulate a way in which the moment in time can have "decisive significance":

Now if the moment is to acquire decisive significance, then the seeker up until that moment must not have possessed the truth, not even in the form of ignorance, for in that case the moment becomes merely the moment of occasion; indeed, he must not even be a seeker. (PF: 13)

With great indifference to the possibility of thereby placing himself outside the philosophical tradition<sup>26</sup>, Kierkegaard wants to make room for the decisive significance of the moment. He begins by focusing on the supposed paradox at 80e of Plato's *Meno*. For here Plato first asserts the thesis that all knowing is a recollecting as a solution to the 'paradox' put forth by Meno. Kierkegaard sets great importance on this passage and implies this is the first importation of 'Platonism' into writings that had previously been largely Socratic. As he puts it, the *Meno* represents the point where "the road swings off" and speculative metaphysics becomes cemented as the cornerstone of Western philosophy (CUP: 205); and the thesis of recollection [*anamnesis*] is "an intimation of the beginning of speculative thought" (CUP: 205). For Kierkegaard, Plato derives from this thesis that there are no absolute limits which human knowledge runs up against; all that *is*, can be known. This newly found sovereignty of human knowledge, which makes way for Kierkegaard's arch-nemesis -- the Hegelian "System" -- has the effects of annulling simultaneously any absolute beyond the grasp of human knowledge and of making mere trifles of "the moment" and the "subjective individual". As we will see, those who later in the history of philosophy attempt to free philosophy of the "sophistry and illusion" of metaphysics, for Kierkegaard neglect to reverse these effects. *Fragments* then is most fruitfully seen as a meditation upon the 'paradox' at *Meno* 80e and an attempt to, if not belatedly effect a 'correct' turn, at least examine what a correct turn might look like.

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<sup>26</sup> As should become clear, nothing could be further from Kierkegaard's intention than to, by way of the Climacus works, give "a new way of *justifying* religious belief" as Edwards believes (Edwards 1971: 89ff).

## **I. Kierkegaards *Meno***

This chapter will set the stage then by an exegesis of the *Meno* and thus a preliminary examination of the ideas which Kierkegaard is specifically reacting to in the Climacus works as well as those specific reactions in the context of Kierkegaard's general views. In Section 1. the background and particulars of Meno's 'paradox' are stated as are some details of Plato's fourfold justification of his theory of *anamnesis*. Section 2. briefly outlines Kierkegaard's overall strategy as a prelude to the critique of the Plato's *anamnesis* found in *Fragments* and the *Postscript*, along with some indications of how this critique relates to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, the details of which will be filled out later.

### **1. *The Meno***

#### **(a) *Anamnesis* and Articulation**

In an early dialogue entitled *Laches* Socrates says "So, since we know what it is, we could also, presumably, *say* what it is?" (*Laches*: 190c) The articulability of what one knows is clearly the measure of what one knows throughout all the subsequent Platonic dialogues. Many, if not all, of Socrates' interlocutors fail insofar as they claim to know what *x* is (e.g. what Justice is, what Piety is, etc.), but cannot articulate *x* beyond a mere recounting of instances of *x*, or half thought out theories of *x*. The implication is clearly that the interlocutor in such a situation does *not* know *x*. Since Socrates straight away puts forth the hypothesis that virtue is a kind of knowledge, this articulability rule is a principle which Plato comes back to again and again in the *Meno*.

According to the doctrine of *anamnesis* put forth in the *Meno*, all knowledge comes from within in the way memory does. It follows from this that virtue cannot be taught as such. If, however, learning is an internal process, it does not follow from the fact that virtue cannot be taught that it cannot be learned.

Now in all the dialogues, Socrates never finds anyone who can say what they think they know. In the *Meno*, virtue is seen as having never been articulated in its essence. So we are left with a conundrum at the end of the *Meno*: virtue is knowledge insofar as it is learned through *anamnesis*, but is also *unknown* insofar as the criterion for someone being knowledgeable is that they can *say* what they know. With *anamnesis* however this ignorance is turned upside-down. Virtue is not unknown, but rather necessarily and universally known to each individual. Articulability is still a criterion of knowledge, but not now in the sense of an end product ready for transmission to an open mind. Rather, the articulation that is a criterion of possessed knowledge is a *question*. If one can ask a question, one can, eventually, give an answer. In the *Meno* then, the fact that one can ask "What is virtue?" already answers the question of whether or not virtue is knowledge. If one can ask "What is x?", one knows an answer is possible, according to the doctrine of *anamnesis*.

The passage beginning at 80d in the *Meno* represents the first working out by Plato of his theory (reiterated in many places, e.g. the *Phaedo*) reminiscence or *anamnesis*. This theory is of course intimately related to Plato's theory of "forms". What is being remembered, in the case of virtue, is the *form* of virtue. The reason we label a particular act virtuous, for example, is that we 'recall' the form of virtue and the act in some way corresponds to or 'participates' in that form. The virtuous act involves at least a hint of a transcendent essence or nature which is Virtue itself.

And in the staunch realism of Platonism, such participation applies across the board: moral, or any other type of knowledge, is all the same for Plato.<sup>27</sup> The red shoe, for example, participates in Redness itself. In this view, all words have referents; and words of a wide ranging and general applicability, such as 'red', *must* apply directly to a thing that is Red-ness itself. As such 'red' can apply only indirectly to particular red things.

For Plato there are several distinct and identifiable 'levels' of *anamnesis*, from question to answer<sup>28</sup>:

- (1) an intuition of knowledge which originally manifests itself in the question 'What is *x*?'
- (2) the state of unacknowledged ignorance, i.e. when one confidently says what *x* is *incorrectly*.
- (3) the state of *acknowledged* ignorance, i.e. when one is rendered silent by the realization that what one said before about *x* (in the state of unacknowledged ignorance) was wrong.
- (4) the state of true opinion or belief, i.e. when one can say correctly what *x* is but without knowledge of *why* one is correct.
- (5) the state of knowledge, wherein one knows correctly and can *say* what *x* is and can explain the correctness of what one knows (Laches: 190c). This fifth level, the state of true knowledge, is what is often referred to in the literature as "expert knowledge" (Bostock 1987: 16) or "craft-knowledge" (Reeve 1989: 61). Craft-knowledge amounts to being able to *say* and thus explain what one claims to know.

So to *know* truly what, e.g., virtue is, involves for Plato more than being able to identify examples of virtuous acts. Even if to be able to identify such examples implies knowledge of an intuitive order, this is not knowledge proper. Knowledge proper is *articulate*.

At 80d in the *Meno* then, Meno asks Socrates how he can come to know what virtue is:

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<sup>27</sup> Vlastos argues convincingly that the "wild" assertion that all types of knowledge are akin, is attributable to Plato, not Socrates; and that such an idea occurs first at 81c of *Meno* (Vlastos 1994: 5, 29, 79; Vlastos 1991: 45-80).

<sup>28</sup> These five 'levels' are a slightly altered version of Alexander Sesonske's succinct rendering in Sesonske 1965: 92.

**Meno:** How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?

**Socrates:** I know what you want to say, Meno. Do you realize what a debater's argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows since he knows it, there is no need to search -- nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for.

**M:** Does that argument not seem sound to you, Socrates?

**S:** Not to me.

According to A.E. Taylor, Meno's problem, coming where it does in the dialogue, is "an irrelevant issue", a "Sophistic puzzle" (Taylor 1963: 127; also Cornford 1952: 116). Paul Shorey calls Meno's argument an "eristic and lazy argument" (Shorey 1933: 157), while Constantin Ritter simply considers it an encumbrance placed by Meno in the way of furthering the debate (Ritter 1968: 102). Bernard Phillips sees it (at least on one level) as a classical sophistic "dodge" (Phillips 1965: 78). Thus the paradox is generally not considered relevant to the discussion of virtue as knowledge. Rather it is seen more as a dramatic effect.

#### **(b) Meno's 'Paradox' Rebutted**

It is clear from the beginning that the merits of Meno's argument do not lie in its logical coherence. Socrates shows this immediately. The 'paradox' in its essential form is:

**( $\alpha$ )** One cannot seek what one knows because, since one knows it already, there is no need to seek it.

**( $\beta$ )** One cannot seek what one does not know because, since one does not know it, one has no way of seeking it; or indeed recognizing it if one were to come across it.

Socrates points out that each 'horn' of the argument employs the word 'know' in a different sense. The statement "One cannot seek what one knows, since one already knows it" in ( $\alpha$ ) says in effect that, with knowledge, our search is at an end. This is intelligible *only* if "knows" is here referring to *articulability* (our level 5 from the previous section, l.a. above), which is the end of all seeking, i.e. knowledge proper. For it cannot be merely an intuited knowledge (level 1) since to intuit something is really only the beginning of seeking to know that thing. Hence one *can* seek to articulate what one has only intuited. So "know" in ( $\alpha$ ) must as such refer to the articulable. On the other hand, the statement "One cannot seek what one does not know... since one does not know what it is one is seeking" in ( $\beta$ ) is intelligible *only* if "know" refers to the intuited. For ( $\beta$ ) makes the point that unless one knows what one is seeking in some sense one cannot begin the search. So "know" in ( $\beta$ ) must be referring to the intuitively known that is the *beginning* of seeking.

As such Meno's paradox is not seen to be a paradox at all, given the view of knowledge post-*anamnesis*.<sup>29</sup> It is, however, the occasion for the turning in the road that the theory of *anamnesis* causes.

For Plato then, *any*  $x$  is unknown since one cannot say what it is, but is knowable since one can ask about it. Hence  $x$ , i.e. anything that we can ask about, is only *contingently* unknown. That one has acquaintance with  $x$  is precisely what shows that one can have insight into  $x$ ; this latter is shown by the fact that one can ask about  $x$ . So that one can ask a question about  $x$  shows that one can have insight into  $x$  -- it is knowable. There are effectively no limits to what we can

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<sup>29</sup> Indeed Plato first exposes this 'debaters paradox' in the early dialogue *Euthydemus* wherein two Sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, mockingly argue first that one can only learn what one already knows, and then once there interlocutor has agreed, proceed to argue that one can only learn what one does not know (Euthydemus: 275c-277c).

ask about since our only limit is the total of that with which we are acquainted. We cannot say anything at all about what we are *not* acquainted with. For of course we are not at all aware of that with which we are not acquainted. So we could not begin to say anything about it. Indeed it would not occur to us to speak of that with which we are in no way acquainted.

Similarly it would in no way occur to us to inquire into that for which we already have an answer. So for Plato the context of knowledge is bordered on the one verge by the question, and on the other by the answer -- this is the context of *anamnesis*, and so all knowledge. But this is not a *limit*. For there *is* simply nothing -- *epistemically* -- beyond which one can ask a question.

So Meno's 'paradox' dissolves, in Plato's hands, from an epistemological roadblock to a mere setting of parameters. The two meanings of knowledge equivocated upon in the 'paradox', remain as fence-posts marking the terrain across which knowledge must travail, the journey from the question to the answer (As in 1.a. above). And beyond these markers is simply nothing at all. In effect, with the dissolution of Meno's paradox, epistemology comes to be seen as that which sets the parameters of ontology.

However, in answering this "dodge" with three further distinct arguments, Socrates shows that Meno's 'paradox' actually goes to the ground of something deeper in the Platonist enterprise. For it can be seen as questioning what is implicit in Platonism: that there *are* real essences behind the things named as virtue, justice, piety, truth, etc. Similarly (as we will see in C.II.3. and C.III.1. below) Meno's argument suggests that it is by no means clear that, even given such essences, mankind has the capacity to *know* such essences in the full sense, i.e. is able to *say* them (Phillips 1965: 79). So Socrates makes the following additional arguments to bolster to root assumptions of Platonism: (i) is an appeal to what is '*analytically*' true, which defends the notion

that there are such essences in the first place that they can be known and so said by man; (ii) is an appeal to *the divine*, which further defends the assumption that such essences are knowable by giving an explanation of how we come to know them; and (iii) is an appeal to what is '*pragmatic*', which argues strongly that even if one is not convinced by (i) and (ii) we would still be better off in *believing* that there are essences and that we can know them.

(i) *The Analytic Appeal* -- The 'evidence' that Plato provides for the existence of essential knowledge is what I will call (anachronistically) the *analytic* argument. Socrates shows that we humans each already have total knowledge by demonstrating that one of Meno's slaves has an intuitive understanding of geometry (Meno: 85d-e). This exercise demonstrates that humans do indeed possess a type of *a priori* or essential knowledge without necessarily being aware of possessing it: the implication that one can be shown to know the essence of geometry, is that the full plenum of essences is similarly known. For Socrates is in fact demonstrating that much more than we apparently know can be *deduced* from what we apparently know. That which is deduced is for Plato knowable, prior to the deduction.

So the key point Plato is making with the analytic argument is that we are only limited in our knowledge by what *is* (in the ideal sense). And the divine appeal shows how we know all of what *is* (in the ideal sense).

(ii) *The Divine Appeal* -- The question that faces Plato, implicit in Meno's paradox, is the nature of the 'intuited' knowledge that begins inquiry. If one can ask a question about *x*, one can get an answer about *x*; and if one can ask about *x* one must, in a sense, know *x*, i.e. be acquainted with *x*. If one is *re*-collecting, how came we originally upon the knowledge which is here merely being recalled? To answer this question Plato through Socrates invokes the "divine":

I have heard wise men and women talk about divine matters.... They say that the human soul is immortal.... As the soul is immortal, has been born often and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtue and other things. As the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only -- a process men call learning -- discovering everything else for himself... (Meno: 80d-81d).

So the original knowledge of which, in the process called learning, one is recollecting, can only be explained with reference to a non-corporeal, immortal soul. The answer to the question then of where we learned that which is the basis of all learning, is that we never *learned* it as such but rather always knew it. And since *any* question we can ask is, according to Platonic doctrine, *eo ipso* answerable, it must be the case too that we latently know the answer to every possible question -- 'every possible question' here, again, clearly seen as in no way externally limited. That is, with the notion that my soul knows all that is knowable, there is no sense that the divine, for instance, is a limiting factor in that which is knowable, or that there is something like an exclusively divine knowledge.<sup>30</sup> But at any rate, Plato further argues that, regardless of whether we are or are not limited, we *should* not consider ourselves as limited. This is what I am calling Plato's 'pragmatic' appeal in the *Meno*.

(iii) *The Pragmatic Appeal* -- Socrates puts forth a final appeal against the fundamental issues Meno raises:

We must, therefore, not believe that debater's argument, for it would make us idle, and fainthearted men like to hear it, whereas my argument makes them energetic and keen on the search (Meno: 81e).

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<sup>30</sup> This view is clearly spelled out as such in the dialogue *Euthyphro* wherein Socrates is seen to suggest that the gods' knowledge of what is, is on a par with human knowledge. And that the gods do not define what is in any way: "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" (Euthyphro: 10a). but merely reflect it as humans do. With Christianity, as we will see, a different view of the relation between the divine and reality comes into play. See C.II.3. and C.III.1. below.

In other words, it would *go better for us* if we were to believe that all that is can be known.<sup>31</sup> This *pragmatic* argument is perhaps Plato's most profound appeal. For it calls on us to agree that, not only can we know everything, but also that any arguments to the contrary are essentially counter-productive. It is as such better for us to *fully* believe that humans have the capacity to know everything. To believe then that we can know everything is to believe that the unknown is a merely contingently unknown. The unknowable then is an illusion. There is only the known and the not *yet* known. But the problem then is how does one move from one to the other? Stated as Kierkegaard might state it, how is it that the unknown is knowable if it is unknown? Here's where the analogy to memory is of overwhelming importance. For there is a phenomenon that all have experienced in which one knows but does not know: the phenomenon of having forgotten what one once (perhaps only moments before) knew. If the unknown is considered akin to something that is forgotten, then as with those everyday things which we forget, the unknown is, in some sense, known.

## 2. *Pseudonymity*

Since this is a thesis about Wittgenstein not about Kierkegaard, I will but briefly explicate background of Kierkegaard's influences, motivations and general *Weltanschauung*. As Brockhaus says, the parallels between Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein are "deep and illuminating". This is on the one hand good in that the Kierkegaardian views have penetrated Wittgenstein works yielding no end of rich examples with which to show this parallel. On the other hand however, the depth of penetration means that often these examples must, as it were, speak for themselves. The

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<sup>31</sup> See Cornford 1952: 115.

challenge is to display only ones that prove decisive and display them in such a way that they are seen as such.

(a) The Function of Pseudonym

There have been many books written on pseudonymity in Kierkegaard's works<sup>32</sup>. And, though it is strictly impossible to avoid in any study involving Kierkegaard, in the present study more than a glance in the direction of the pseudonyms and their meaning would not be germane. For at the time Wittgenstein first read Kierkegaard, the role of the pseudonyms would have probably been irrelevant to him.<sup>33</sup> However the pseudonyms do give the reader a sense of the distance from his works Kierkegaard felt it necessary to keep. In part this was a strategy to learn about himself and deepen his own inwardness.<sup>34</sup> For my purposes here, the most important reason for the pseudonyms is that Kierkegaard wanted these works to be *acts*, not mere treatises. The pseudonyms were his way of putting himself outside the frame and so encouraging the reader to confront these ideas in the context of his or her own life. This was how Kierkegaard (to borrow a phrase) attempts to throw away *his* ladder.

Most of Kierkegaard's early works are written under various pseudonyms that make for a source of misdirection and confusion if one is seeking the true Kierkegaardian view. The works written under the name Johannes Climacus (*Philosophical Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific*

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<sup>32</sup> See e.g., Thompson 1967; Lowrie 1938; Swenson 1945; Mackey 1971; Thomas 1957; Diem 1959; Malantschuk 1971; Manheimer 1977.

<sup>33</sup> I know of no place where, in referring to Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein mentions any of the pseudonyms.

<sup>34</sup> As one pseudonym hints at: "There is probably no young person with any imagination who has not at some time been enthralled by the magic of the theatre and wished to be swept along into the artificial actuality in order like a double to see and hear himself and to split himself up into every possible variation of himself, and nevertheless in such a way that every variation is still himself" (REP: 154).

*Postscript*, and the 'autobiographical' *Johannes Climacus*), for example, are in many ways generally compatible with those written under various other pseudonyms such as Johannes de silentio, Constantin Constantius, Vigilnius Haufniensus, etc.<sup>35</sup> However Kierkegaard often insists on a stark contrast between himself and his pseudonymous characters, as is seen clearly in a passage at the end of the *Postscript*:

What has been written, then, is mine, but only insofar as I, by means of audible lines, have placed the life-view of the creating, poetically actual individual in his mouth, for my relation is even more remote than that of the poet, who poetized characters and yet in the preface is *himself* the *author*. That is, I am impersonally or personally in the third person a *souffleur* who has poetically produced the *authors*.... Thus in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me. I have no opinion about them except as a third party, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader ... (CUP: 625-26).

Kierkegaard, it seems, is claiming that the views found in a pseudonymous work are not his own but rather the pseudonymous author's. Kierkegaard sees himself as a peripheral player, i.e. a *souffleur* (prompter) or (as in *Fragments*) editor. Hence, insofar as all his works have up to the *Postscript* been 'written' by these pseudonymous authors, he sees himself as in fact not having written anything.

The conceivability of such a distance of an author to his work, of course, strains credulity. However, in often equating his pseudonymous deeds with those of Socrates<sup>36</sup>, Kierkegaard shows that the pseudonyms are meant to guard against the works being taken as theories or systems. Rather, they are to be conceived as the means of a mid-wife of knowledge. Kierkegaard merely

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas argues for a view of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works as variations on a unitary view rather than a "piece meal" view (Thomas 1957: 45ff.).

<sup>36</sup> E.g., "I do not find it unsettling that I cannot quite be said to have achieved anything or, what is of less importance, attained anything in the outer world. I find it ironically in order that the honorarium, at least, in virtue of the production and of my equivocal authorship, has been rather Socratic" (CUP: 628).

provides the occasion for others to put forth their views.<sup>37</sup> For a writer to worry whether one has created something lasting, or important, or original bearing one's signature or copyright at the bottom, is, for Kierkegaard, to miss the point completely.

In *The Point Of View For My Work As An Author* there is a steadfast attempt to create an opaque barrier between the pseudonymous works and Kierkegaard himself. However he explains at one point that he sees this as not merely a wish to remain personally free of responsibility for what is pseudonymously written, nor even to guard against, as it were, 'authorial authority', but as a very real problem of expression itself:

It goes without saying that I cannot explain my work as an author wholly, i.e. with the *purely personal inwardness in which I possess the explanation* of it.... though naturally there is much in this which for me serves to explain my work as an author (POV: 9; emphasis added).

This is an important passage for our purposes. For it shows that Kierkegaard believes that an outward explanation can never capture or exhaust how one sees oneself relating to one's works. Even if he wanted to explain himself thoroughly to the reader, he simply could not; even though there *is*, as with any person, a simple connection the attempted expression of which makes for this connection's oft supposed complexity.

As well, in the *Postscript* Kierkegaard speaks of the achievement of "double reflection" as something toward which his pseudonymous writing is aimed (see C.I.3. below). The 'double' of "double reflection" refers to the fact that this indirect form of communication is meant to cause the reader to reflect on the writer's reflections, as opposed to the reader unreflectively absorbing what information is conveyed by a more direct form of communication. The aim is to have the reader reflect on what is being written rather than receiving it in rote form, e.g. "Climacus'

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<sup>37</sup> See C.I.4. below.

position is...<sup>n38</sup>.

(b) Stages of Life

In the pseudonymous works, Kierkegaard puts forward a model of 'progress' toward faith much akin to Plato's model of progress toward knowledge. This model is characterized by four categories or stages that recur in his works: the aesthetic, the ethical, religiousness A, and religiousness B. These represent four quite distinguishable modes of human being which delineate a progression from a transitory existence to one of faith. It is unclear that these Kierkegaardian categories are directly relevant to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Certainly Wittgenstein never uses the term ethical or aesthetic there to denote a "stage" in individual development. He does (as we have seen) mention these categories in a conversation about Kierkegaard with Drury, and one might easily show connections between these categories and Wittgenstein the man (Drury 1984a: 102-3). However, they seem generally outside the purview of the *Tractatus* and thus lack in relevance to the present project. As such the meaning accorded these two determinations by Kierkegaard will be only glossed over here in favour of the latter two religious categories.

The aesthetic state, typified by Constantine Constantius in *Repetition* and the author known only as "A" in *Either/Or*, is one in which one hovers between an ideal of a poetic existence and the sombre reality of one's life. "A" says he wishes to live as if "upon the spear of the moment of choice" (E/O: 163). The aesthete is trapped amidst the immediacy of facts without the ability to appropriate the whole. As the character named "A" puts it in *Either/Or*, for the aesthete "pleasure disappoints, possibility does not" (E/O: 41).

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<sup>38</sup> See also PH: 177ff.

At the level of the ethical, typified by Judge William in *Either/Or*, one gains a frame of reference with respect to facts, and thus a separation of oneself from finite explanation. While the aesthete finds freedom in the moment of many possibilities, the ethical person finds freedom in the choice between those possibilities by way of concrete guidelines and criteria, i.e. freedom in the actual. The ethical person can be seen as one who has chosen himself.

The terms "religiousness A" and "religiousness B" are Kierkegaard's own short forms for the two final 'stages'. They originate from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, wherein part two, section II, chapter iv, division 2 -- is itself divided in two: namely 2A and 2B. Religiousness A essentially involves a consciousness of the necessity of absolute presupposition without which reason cannot proceed, and which reason itself cannot examine without realizing its own lack of ultimate foundation. That is, one feels that absolute foundations for one's choices are lacking; thus one's choices, so to speak, rest on an abyss.<sup>39</sup> As such those choices are absurd. Religiousness A requires a sort of resignation before this mystery, or an "existential pathos" (CUP: 559). At this level, one can only talk about the mystery negatively or indirectly; one thus experiences anxiety [*Angst*] at one's lack of ability to quantify directly and thus subsume this mystery under a framework:

... pure thinking, in mystical suspension and with no relation to an existing person, explains everything within itself but not itself, explains everything within itself, whereby the decisive explanation regarding the real question becomes impossible (CUP: 313).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *The Concept of Anxiety* (CA), chapter V.

<sup>40</sup> A variant of the last clause here is found Kierkegaard's *Journals* and is given in the appendix to the Hong and Hong translation: "by which means everything about which there is a real question cannot possibly be answered (CUPII: 73).

Hence religiousness A can be "the religiousness of everyone who is not decisively Christian" (CUP: 557). It is a resignation before the unknown.

It is noteworthy that a variant of the last clause in the above indented quotation, from Kierkegaard's Journals, reads: "...by which means everything about which there is a real question cannot possibly be answered" (CUPII: 73). This is enticingly close to the sentiment Wittgenstein expresses at 6.52, at the end of 6.4312 and elsewhere in the *Tractatus*. The only questions that can be answered are scientific ones (6.52), and these are not the ones that most require solving (6.4312). Kierkegaard's Religiousness A must then be seen as the stage into which the *Tractatus* best fits. The wish for clarification of language, the mystical suspension to which this clarification ultimately leads, and the isolation of the subject from the world so clarified -- all are at the root of the special kind of pathos that the *Tractatus* cultivates in its prefatory self-dismissal ("...how little has been done when these problems ['solved' in the *Tractatus*] have been solved"), and in its penultimate self-revocation ("...finally recognizes them [the propositions of the *Tractatus*] as nonsensical" (6.54)). The sense here is that, though this is the best that can be done, nonetheless this is not good enough. Something is missing, or being sacrificed.

But to go beyond this resignation, this pathos, and thus beyond the philosophical, is Kierkegaard's goal. For one has three choices when confronted with the mystery: (1) one flees from this mystery because it is "an offence to reason" (PF: 49-54) back into the ethical where there is duty and standards to uphold, but one is always by way of the ethical brought back to the mystical and thus one is constantly tempted to defuse the paradox of truth and synthesize the finite and the infinite (in the manner of Hegel); or (2) one observes the distinction between what can be encompassed by reason (which amounts to the same thing as what can be *said*) and that

which one is acquainted with that is the beginning point of any inquiry which leads to such encompassing; or (3) one ends one's fleeing and makes a leap of faith to religiousness B, wherein one regains ethical action on the basis of one's belief in that which nonetheless cannot be known. In this leap one is "reborn". And there is in this rebirth a radical separation from the state of existence that came before (PF: 43; 102). One's world is radically transformed.<sup>41</sup>

With this ultimate notion (3), Wittgenstein seemed to have no trade, as perhaps no dedicated 'hand-maiden' can. Malcolm said it best in saying that for Wittgenstein, there was always the *possibility* of religion, rather than its actuality. As we will see, the *Tractatus* can easily be read as coming right to the cusp of such a breakthrough.

### 3. *Paradox and Limits*

#### (a) Plato, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer

In Kierkegaard's philosophical works, perhaps for the first time credence is given to paradox. Paradox, for Kierkegaard, is not merely as something that needs overcoming through the creation of a plausible distinction, but is rather a permanent fixture of man's knowledge of the universe. The corollary of this respect for paradox is a scepticism of the universalizing pretensions of knowledge and science originating in Plato (i.e. everything that is can be known). Certainly these philosophical works lean heavily on the framework and questions raised in Kant's works. It could be argued that the problem of the limits of thought in considering 'the whole' in Kant's section on the antinomies, is important to the Climacus works. As with Kant, Kierkegaard is on the one hand critical of metaphysical speculation, so prominent in his day, as that which goes

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<sup>41</sup> Unlike Mackey who argues that Kierkegaard's man of faith appropriates *absolute* freedom (Mackey 1962: 616ff.), it will become clear that this variant of acosmism cannot be Kierkegaard's view. Rather I take there to be a version of the divine command theory at work in, particularly, the Climacus writings (see C.III.1. below).

beyond these limits. And on the other hand, Kierkegaard does not conclude that only 'the evidence of the senses' is to be admitted as true thought; for the very *limit* of that evidence is itself what makes that conclusion problematic. The limit cannot be exceeded; yet neither can it be ignored *qua* limit. The mistake on the metaphysical side, for Kierkegaard, is to see the seeming illimitability of *language* as evidence of the illimitability of knowledge, *and* as permitting the outlining of transcendent theories. While on the empirical, so called realist side, the mistake is to see language as limitable to the empirical.

Some of this is quite Kantian. However, Kierkegaard breaks from the Kantian view for the same reason he does with Platonism. Namely, with the Kantian, the ontological is either utterly inaccessible if the real is equated with the noumenal, or is within the categorical and apperceptive strictures of the epistemological, if it is equated with the phenomenological. For Kierkegaard the mistake here is, as with Plato, the equation of *talk* of the real with *experience* of the real -- i.e., the idea that the former fully captures the latter. But the 'noumenal' (though Kierkegaard never uses such a term) is just one's immediate experience, one's actions, one's life; and this is not inaccessible but merely *inexpressible*. And the 'phenomenal' is then that same immediacy mediated by language. One's *characterization* of the real then is within the bounds of the epistemological for Kierkegaard. But the *experience* of the real, the *existential*, is most decidedly not.

Kierkegaard, throughout his writings, wages a constant attack on what he calls 'The System'. This is nominally a reference to the Hegelian application of dialectical logic to every facet of life including the ethical, the historical and the religious. Kierkegaard was concerned to show that such a project represented something very clever but based on a ludicrous premise that

existing humans can speculatively transcend themselves *qua* existing humans. He admits, that "speculation" for each human, "is a temptation, the most precarious of all" (CUP: 214). But, as he states it:

a human being is an individual existing being (and this holds for the best brain just as fully as the obtuse) whose essential task therefore cannot be to think *sub specie aeterni*, because as long as he exists, he himself, although eternal, is essentially an existing person (CUP: 217).

In everything then, one needs to be ever vigilant that one is never detached from one's actions though it seems that one's talk, one's doctrine, bears one away from and helps one transcend one's immediacy.

In his journals, Kierkegaard acknowledges the power of Schopenhauer's critique. But ultimately he balks at any endorsement of his fellow anti-Hegelian. In fact he perceives himself as in an "inverse relation" to Schopenhauer<sup>42</sup>, precisely because the latter makes the same Kantian mistake of taking what can be characterized as equivalent to what can be experienced.

In his remarks on Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard reveals the ethical aspect of his objection to Schopenhauer's error. Of inwardness and its connection to ethics and faith, Kierkegaard writes,

But someone will object: if a man is inwardly so pious, in such a degree devoted to the good, then let him say it outright, and if God's will is that he shall be honoured and esteemed for it, let him accept it, that is the simplest thing.

But then reflection discovers that to serve the good in truth is to avoid the appearance of so doing. (JP: 810)

One may proclaim the good in weighty philosophical tomes, but for Kierkegaard writing should be a *gesture*; but not one carried out as a proclamation of the good but as an attempt to *bring*

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<sup>42</sup> Kierkegaard writes in his journal there that this inverse relation is reflected in their initials: Schopenhauer's being A. S., and Kierkegaard's being S. A. (Søren Aabye). Kierkegaard says he finds A. S. very interesting "in spite of a total disagreement" (JP: 3877).

*about the good*. Writing is itself an *act*. The content of what is written is in itself of value insofar as it describes other actions, things or situations. Epistemically or phenomenally, the author of that description is judged in terms of accuracy of phrase to the corresponding actions, things or situations. Ethically, however, the author is judged on what his writing is meant to *do*. The merit of the act of writing is shown in *how* something is written, rather than in *what* is written (cf. CUP: 202).

For Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer "turns ethics into genius" (JP: 3877). That is, Schopenhauer says in his ethics that, as some are gifted with mathematical acumen, others are gifted with ascetic and ethical abilities. Such an equation is ridiculous to Kierkegaard. For it is to treat the ethical as if it were a matter of natural science measuring one's ethical behaviour and that the level of this behaviour thus ascribed is simply a function of one's natural proclivities in that regard. Writing and talking of the Good, for Kierkegaard, will always lead to a sense that actions are measurable in this way; but all that is so measured is the talk itself.

Schopenhauer's whole philosophy is foiled by *how* it is written. Kierkegaard regards Schopenhauer as clearly wishing to be himself acknowledged as a genius. He longs for recognition of his genius, and in so doing usurps it. To write in the time worn philosophical style of the "Treatise", to say 'here is how things are in the cosmos', is the style that Kierkegaard rejects on principle. For it is aimed at least in part, he suspects, at self-aggrandisement rather than at effecting change in the reader. The question that is answered in how one writes is 'how are things with *you*?' So Schopenhauer does not, in his actions (i.e. his writings) serve the good. And this shows:

But look now! How does S. live. He lives withdrawn and then once in a while sends out a thunderstorm of abuse -- which is ignored. Well, there we have it (*Ibid.*).

Nothing further need be said for Kierkegaard. In his abuse, Schopenhauer aims to cast a contrasting light on rival philosophical ideas. Schopenhauer thus shows his true concerns in his philosophical *actions*.

Kierkegaard refers disparagingly to Schopenhauer's frequent claims of being the first to have shown this or that, as 'professor talk'. Of course with this Kierkegaard is implying that his own approach is different. And there is much evidence that Kierkegaard did not care (or at least tried not to care) to take credit for the ideas he brought forward.<sup>43</sup> Wittgenstein also took the seeking of credit as a negative character trait. The Preface to the *Tractatus* makes his views on this clear: "what I have written makes no claim to novelty in points of detail" (p27).<sup>44</sup>

Characteristically, in his final critique of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard refers to the ancients, in an assessment that reflects the esteem in which he holds Socrates:

... sophistry lies in the distance between what a person understands and what one is; a person who does not stand in the character of what he understands is a Sophist.... this is the case with Schopenhauer. (JP: 3883)

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<sup>43</sup> Three chapters in *Fragments* end with Climacus in discussion with an interlocutor who accuses him of plagiarism. E.g.: "Those phrases do not belong to you but are very familiar, and everyone knows to whom they belong'... Ah, my dear fellow, what you say does not pain me as you perhaps think it does; no, it pleases me immensely..." (PF: 53). Also, in the *Postscript* he attributes to Lessing that idea that he is commonly considered the author of (what Kierkegaard calls "*meine Zuthat*" ["my contribution"] in *Fragments*); namely, 'the leap of faith'.

<sup>44</sup> However, the sin of pride was one to which Wittgenstein frequently -- much to his own chagrin -- fell prey (cf. Monk 1990: 413ff.).

(b) Language

In the work entitled *Johannes Climacus*, Kierkegaard comes closest to a full discussion of his views on language. The book, posthumously published in an unfinished state, though written many years before his death, is principally about doubt and its role in modern philosophy. The subject is presented in the guise of an autobiography of its pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus. Here Kierkegaard examines the 'modern' view that, in philosophy, "everything begins with doubt". He contrasts this first with the *ancient* view that philosophy begins with wonder, then with the Christian view, similar but not the same as the ancient view, that philosophical inquiry must rest upon something outside the reach of that inquiry.

The view that everything can begin with doubt is, for Kierkegaard, impossible because "doubt is precisely a polemic against what went before" (JC: 145). It cannot begin anything since it requires something logically prior to itself. And doubting, is the prior step to seeking verification or falsification of something. What then is logically prior to this state? Kierkegaard calls what is prior *immediacy*. Immediacy is for Kierkegaard a *subjective* state (JC: 153) not a universal, objective state of immediacy; though it is easy, he says, for "a person is led to think of man (an abstraction) instead of himself" (JPII: 7).

Again Kierkegaard is pointing out that the Platonic view carries over into modernism by showing that doubt is about the epistemological. And to start with doubt is to assert implicitly the view that all that is resides within the purview of *episteme*.

Consciousness (i.e. my consciousness) is thus characterized by the contradiction between *immediacy* and *mediacy*. Immediacy is, for Kierkegaard, simply my perception of my

surroundings, my registering *that* things are. Language is the means of objective mediation of immediacy (JC: 168). Consciousness is that in which reality is linked to language:

That the external is, that I see, but in the same instant I bring it into relation with something that also is, something that is the same and that will also explain that the other is the same.... Ideality and reality therefore collide -- in what medium?... In consciousness. (JC: 171)

It is through mediacy that I see *how* things are, how they relate to each other, etc. It is by way of language that one comes to judge truth or falsity, and thus it is by way of language, not the immediate, that doubt is possible. For "if consciousness can remain in immediacy, then the question of truth is cancelled" (JC: 167).

If two objects are beside each other, ideality is what gives them their relation (JC: 251); i.e. their 'beside-each-other-ness' is not merely stumbled upon in the immediate, but something formulated in the mediate. In the immediate the two things simply are, without any particular inter-relation. Language "abstracts" particular relations.

Perhaps here a small *Gedankenexperiment* is required to clarify Climacus' view. Take the following hypothetical scene: I can say of the scene 'The salt and pepper shakers are on the table'; 'The salt is to the left of the pepper'; 'The table cloth is checked red and white'; 'The table has a cloth on it'; 'The table is beneath the salt and pepper'; 'The table is supporting the salt and pepper'; and so on. These are all propositions of fact about the scene I have come upon. The diverse facts of the simple scene given in immediacy are in fact 'extracted' from the scene by way of the mediacy of language. Put another way, the scene is 'put into words'. However, the scene about which these various facts are given remains simple. The scene itself, is indeterminate (JC: 167); and one's immediate relation to it has nothing to do with these facts. Of course, one can only *give*

a description of the scene by way of factual propositions. My immediate relation to it cannot itself be expressed. But as Kierkegaard says, the immediate relation is nonetheless "presupposed" in the mediate (JC: 168).

Kierkegaard never brings forward a more comprehensive view of language than is found in *Climacus*. The last chapter of this incomplete work seems as close as Kierkegaard ever got to theorizing, bringing forth a "positive" view in straight discursive language. And though it is unclear that Kierkegaard would have published *Johannes Climacus* in the form it was left in,<sup>45</sup> similar views on language are to be found in many places in the Journals. Until his last year (1855) he seems to have maintained the view that language creates a divergent human interaction with reality. In 1854 he wrote:

When, for example, I see a deer in heat, I see what it means.... If it could talk, we would perhaps hear some rubbish about its being motivated by a sense of duty, that out of duty to society and the race it wants to propagate the species, plus the fact that it is performing the greatest service, etc....

Take the power of speech from man -- and you will see that human existence will no longer be so difficult to explain (JPII: 13-4).

Kierkegaard's view of language is distinct from the Hegelian view in that consciousness, in which the relation between the immediate and the mediate takes place, is not an achieved synthesis but a maintained *contradiction* [*Modsigelse*]. Immediacy is not annulled/subsumed in mediacy; it is portrayed with definite contours in language but the indefinite immediate is not thereby subsumed/annulled [i.e. *aufgehoben*]. This for Kierkegaard simply means that our immediate interactions in life -- with things, people, etc. -- are never completely rationalizable in a systematic understanding since the latter is formed in the mediacy of language. And, to

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<sup>45</sup> I.e. without a revocation as in the *Postscript* or qualification as a "Thought-Project" as in *Fragments*.

foreshadow what is to come later when we deal with Wittgenstein, the picture made by language does not capture the essence of the situation pictured. For its essence is its existence, which is precisely what, for Kierkegaard, is left over.

Kierkegaard's view is distinct from a Kantian approach in that there is no sense of inaccessible noumena. The duality between the real and the phenomenal that is a hallmark of Western metaphysics is found in Kierkegaard's view, but since language is a mediacy, reality itself [*Realitet*] is accessible in immediacy, though it is inexpressible. This is also distinct from 19th Century language critical Kantians such as Conrad Hermann, who saw language as "a medium between us and the external world and in this position it is characteristically a limit and a bridge."<sup>46</sup>

#### (c) Meno's Paradox

As we have seen (1.a above), in refuting Meno's 'paradox' Plato introduces his theory of *anamnesis*. He regards the paradox as a "debater's argument", a sophistic ploy. The paradox is fallacious insofar as it uses 'know' in two distinct senses: to know as having acquaintance with, and know as having insight into.

Perhaps the contrast between Kierkegaard's view and that of Plato can best be summed up by Kierkegaard's statement that for Plato the truth is not introduced into the person but is already in him (PF: 9). For Kierkegaard this view makes life superfluous. What has meaning, for this view, falls between the question and the answer. And so the important thing is not life itself, but that life have (rationalizable) meaning.

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<sup>46</sup> Cited in Cloeren 1988: 140.

By setting the question and the answer as the parameters of knowledge, and so dissolving Meno's paradox, however, Plato must too deny that there *is* anything outside these parameters:

The Socratic line of thought in effect annulled the disjunction, since it appeared that basically every human being possesses the truth. That was his explanation. We have seen what resulted with regard to the moment.  
(PF: 13)

What resulted with regard to the moment is that the moment is merely an occasion for recalling what one has known eternally. And there can simply be nothing beyond what one has known eternally: "We do not know it; ergo it is not there" (CUP II: 51). However, as Kierkegaard and, I will argue, Wittgenstein show, this is already to create a relation to an 'it'.

The upshot of the 'paradox' is supposedly that we cannot come to know anything: with respect to what we know, the search is superfluous; with respect to what we do not know, the search is impossible. If there is anything left over once the paradox has been shown to be a fallacy, it is the nominalist question: how can we ask a question about a thing such as virtue in the first place? For Kierkegaard, Plato's answer is that the very fact that one can ask such a question *means* that there is such a thing as virtue to ask about. For how could one ask at all were one in complete ignorance of virtue? And, given *anamnasis*, if we can ask, this just means that an answer is forthcoming. The question itself, for Plato, thus implies potential articulability.

One consequence of Plato's treatment is that there are different levels of knowledge that are markers on the way from acquaintance to insight (see 1.a above). However, an assumption of Plato's treatment is that all knowledge is of the same type: both ethical knowledge and empirical knowledge travel along the way from question to answer, from acquaintance to insight. For Plato, to ask for a definition of 'broom' is in essence the same procedure as to ask for the

definition of 'virtue'. To ask an ethical question is the same procedure as to ask an empirical one.<sup>47</sup>

With the divine appeal (1.b.ii above), Plato shows that he sees the empirical and the ethical as cut from the same cloth. For he says in explaining human knowledge by way of the divine that we have acquainted ourselves with virtue and "such things here and in the underworld" by way of previous lives (81c). Regardless of the story it is embedded in, it is certainly the case that for Plato the postulate of ethical knowledge, like empirical knowledge, implies acquaintance with the object known.

Kierkegaard's critique of this view is subtle as well as part of a larger critique, and so it is not easily clarified. The aim of his critique, as we have seen, is to valorize human existence.

With the ethical, there must be a *that* to which we are referring; otherwise inquiry could not begin. However, Kierkegaard asserts that inquiry *need* not begin with acquaintance in this way. Inquiry can begin with belief. And to begin an inquiry based on belief is to already be asking a different type of question than one based on acquaintance. If one assumes that inquiry is proceeding from acquaintance (*à la* Plato) then the question 'what is virtue?' implies the real existence of a *that* to which 'virtue' corresponds. If however one sees the inquiry as proceeding from presumption (*à la* Kierkegaard), then one does not by this means inquire into a *that*, but rather one inquires into one's own presumption. One is not asking about the Real, about the outward objective state of things; one is inquiring about one's own *inwardness* and one's own subjective relation to existence.

This then is how Kierkegaard makes the distinction between Plato and Socrates. The former was looking for the real 'furniture of the universe', while the latter recognized the intimacy

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<sup>47</sup> See Cornford 1971: 124; Vlastos 1973.

of the questions he was asking. For Kierkegaard, Socrates' inquiries demonstrate, not the least by their aporetic conclusions, that the very act of asking tends to mislead one into thinking that ethical inquiry is about the Real. Why, it might be asked, did Socrates not end his ethical investigations? Was it indeed his will to 'mislead' the youth of Athens as he was ultimately charged? For Kierkegaard, Socrates' direct deception -- by way of the very form of inquiry itself -- is necessary to show *indirectly* that the insight to be gained by such inquiry is *insight into oneself*. (See C.III.3 below).

In this way then, questions about the transcendental are for Kierkegaard actually questions about the *immediate*. Or rather, the transcendental and the immediate are the same thing seen from different philosophical vantage points, as it were: the former from a scientific-realist viewpoint, the latter from what I will call a more 'holistic'<sup>48</sup> one. In the former, one runs up against the limit of the knowable and one continues to run up against it since one cannot clearly see that the means of 'running', i.e. inquiry itself, is what stands in the way. Whereas in the latter, one understands that this is self-inquiry. This is what Kierkegaard means when he speaks of Socrates, unlike Plato, as constantly breaking from the thesis of *anamnesis*, because he wants to live (CUP: 205).

#### (d) The Absolute Paradox

With the theory of *anamnesis* there is nothing outside of human knowledge: one can find the answer to *x*, *because* one can ask a question about *x*. We can ask a question about *x*, *because* *x* exists. As with Meno's paradox, if *x* did not exist, then inquiry into *x* would be impossible. But

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<sup>48</sup> Pears uses this term (Pears 1987: 132, 193) with respect to one of Wittgenstein's metaphysical tendencies in the *Tractatus* (the other being 'atomism') and I think it is appropriate to use it here as well.

the fact that one has mentioned *x* shows that *x* does exist, and shows that inquiry into *x* can begin. For Plato, that a question can be asked implies existence of that about which one is asking.

Kierkegaard points out that the Absolute paradox follows directly from Plato's solution to Meno's 'debater's paradox'. The Absolute paradox is found in the combination of the absolute difference between God and man, with the Christian supposition that "God has existed in human form, was born, grew up, etc." (CUP: 217). Put another way, the paradox is that "the moment" is the point of departure for mankind's eternal consciousness. Existence -- not knowledge (in the Platonic sense) -- is man's purview:

... the absolute difference between God and a human is simply this, that a human being is an individual existing being (and this holds for the best brain just as fully as for the most obtuse), whose essential task therefore cannot be to think *sub specie aeterni*, because as long as he exists, he himself, although eternal, is essentially an existing person and the essential for him must therefore be inwardness in existence. (CUP: 217)

But the wish to speculate, to think *sub specie aeterni*, and so to submit to the most precarious temptation of the understanding (CUP: 214), is at bottom the determination to void this absolute difference. It is an attempted movement beyond this absolute difference, in other words an attempted "synthesis"<sup>49</sup>, prompted by the equation of being and language promulgated by Plato's solution to Meno's paradox. For Plato, what can be asked about can be answered; and what can be asked about -- *is*. Kierkegaard takes this attempt to void the absolute difference as stemming from what he refers to as the understanding being "*offended*" by the suggestion that, in running up against the limit, it is running up against an absolutely unknown:

The paradoxical passion of the understanding is, then, continually colliding with this unknown, which certainly does exist but is also

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<sup>49</sup> As it would be considered in a Hegelian context.

unknown and to that extent does not exist. The understanding does not go beyond this; yet in its paradoxicality the understanding cannot stop reaching it and being engaged with it, because wanting to express its relation to it by saying that this unknown does not exist will not do, since just saying that involves a relation. (PF: 44)

The "paradoxical passion of the understanding" is that the understanding moves toward a collision with the paradox and, "in one way or another the collision must become its [the understanding's] downfall" (PF: 37). "In one way or another" because (1) there is no 'solution' as such to the absolute paradox; it precisely marks that which the human understanding cannot "embrace"<sup>50</sup>, i.e. that which cannot be said. So too for Wittgenstein. As we will see in Part C., some questions are for him nonsensical, as are any purported answers to those questions. Wittgenstein asserts that some "nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence" (LE: 44). So the understanding is defeated in its attempted "embrace" of the absolutely unknown. On the other hand, (2) in supposedly encompassing the difference, the understanding confuses the different with the same. Existence, the unknown, God, are not encompassed but merely conceptualized (PF: 43).

In short, the absolute paradox is a tale of misdirected passion. The hubris of human understanding encouraged by Plato's solution to Meno's paradox (particularly his pragmatic solution) is for Kierkegaard precisely that which stands in the way of a proper appreciation of the paradox. The attempt of the understanding, in its "passion", to encompass and master the absolute paradox blocks the potential brush with the absolutely unknown which can only occur to a 'poor existing human being', rather than a knowing being. One must make a *leap*, that the understanding could only take as a 'leap of logic', to discover one's direct subjective relation to the

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<sup>50</sup> This is the term Descartes uses which he contrasts with our ability to "touch" such questions (see C.II.3. below).

absolute. And such a leap is only possible when one is unencumbered by the understanding. So one must, in such a leap, let go of the understanding as that faculty which directs one's existence<sup>51</sup>. If one does not leap, one is left to cope with a passion that habitually oversteps the limits of a much humbled understanding -- a move that the understanding nonetheless refuses to recognize as legitimate according to its own standards.

(e) The Leap

Kierkegaard's view of Christianity is not, as with Pascal, that belief is a wager. Neither is belief something that can be supported by proofs that show that what one believes in is, in fact, true. It is rather a leap of faith. For Kierkegaard, to postulate wagers, proofs and the like is to disengage the prospective believer from the situation wherein faith is what is required. For what would be the purpose of the requirement of faith were a rational explanation determinable? What would be its purpose were concrete replicable evidence available? What is at play in Kierkegaard's view of Christian faith is a variation of Tertullian's *Credo quia absurdum*. One has faith in something that is in no way supported by evidence or deduction. In fact the necessary concomitant of faith is the absolutely unknown.

In short, Christian faith cannot be encompassed by philosophy. Charges of irrationalism aimed at such a view are perhaps justified. For it is clear that, seen as a theological strategy, faith of this kind cuts off any potential argument against it by conceding that there is no argument in favour of it. So it might well be said that such a faith would fall outside the bounds of any responsible belief.

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<sup>51</sup> In the *Postscript*, Kierkegaard speaks of the necessity of the "true Christian" using his understanding to guard against its own movement beyond its limits (CUP: 567ff.). It seems that Kierkegaard's view of the understanding after the leap of faith is that of a humbled and deflated human faculty.

Kierkegaard, however, never shies away from this view of faith. He always characterizes the paradoxical nature of such faith in its starkest terms. For example, in *Fragments* he refers to our wish "to discover what thought itself cannot think" (PF: 37). This "passion of thought"<sup>52</sup> as he calls it is

fundamentally present everywhere in thought, also in the single individual's thought insofar as he, thinking, is not merely himself (PF: 37).

Of course to discover what thought cannot think is impossible if "think" here means to hit upon in any way, i.e. to become acquainted with. If one could not hit upon a thing at all, the thought of it would never arise, so a question about it could not be asked, and one could not then wish to discover it. There must be an 'it' for one to be "passionate" about. If one can think 'it' in this preliminary way in order for the search to begin, then what "think" means in the above passage is 'think through' or have insight into. So Kierkegaard is pointing out here that we wish to have answered every question that can possibly be formulated. This is the Platonist legacy.

Recall, however, that existence only matters according to Kierkegaard if the thinker can be given, in the moment, something absolutely new. One wishes to discover a thought that is not merely inference from already held thoughts, but rather something which was formerly impossible to think: "if the moment is to acquire decisive significance, then the seeker up until that point must *not* have possessed the truth..." (PF: 13); i.e., if the thinker knows, at one point, what he cannot know. In short, so as not to fall back into 'the Socratic', i.e. the Platonic, the thinker *wishes* to have existence matter, to give existence meaning; and in this he shows that he "*wants*" to think what cannot be thought. For Kierkegaard, the Platonic view says, quite rightly, that this is

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<sup>52</sup> In *The Concept of Anxiety* Kierkegaard (writing as Vigilius Haufniensis) puts this point in ethical terms: "Man's desire is for the forbidden" (CA: 40).

impossible. In the Platonic view I *must* myself already know (i.e. be acquainted with) what I come to inquire into. There can be no notion of 'discovering' that which is the beginning of any inquiry. It can only be that we know all already and can merely recollect and articulate what we know. But this cannot be so for Kierkegaard if my life is to matter.

So, starkly put, for Kierkegaard the nub of the matter comes down to my existence being of little import, unless I *believe* the impossible can be thought; unless I believe it possible to know something which I in no way could know, unless I believe that there is something 'outside' learning à la *anamnesis*, which requires an *a priori* knowledge enabling me to ask a question, my existence is superfluous. Kierkegaard is clearly arguing in *Fragments* that the implication of this is that, to think what thought itself cannot think would be impossible for the thinker -- *unassisted*. Assistance is provided in *Fragments* by the historical presence of that which was both God and man, i.e. Christ.

For Kierkegaard, what is required to believe in the impossible, and thereby, so to speak, revivify existence, is nothing less than that the individual 'downgrade' the role of reason. No wonder then that the understanding is offended by the notion of the impossible. One is being asked to treat the impossible as possible. It is by the light of reason that the impossible *is* impossible. Hence to believe the impossible, the entire frame of reference by whose categories it is deemed impossible must be set aside. It is precisely the demand that reasons be given for faith that must be set aside.

Put somewhat differently again, what Kierkegaard is suggesting is that if existence is to matter at all, we must set aside our objective understanding for the *subjective*. Kierkegaard defines subjective truth as "*an objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the*

*most passionate inwardness*" (CUP: 203).<sup>53</sup> Recall that the "passion of thought" in the above quotation that is "fundamentally present everywhere in thought" is further qualified by Kierkegaard. The passion of thought to attempt to surpass the limits of the known is the individual's passion "insofar as he, thinking, is not merely himself" (PF: 37). That is, this passion of thought is his who thinks objectively. One does not of course set out in factual discourse to establish private truths. One sets out to establish certitude for all and for all time. One sets out to know *thought*, not thoughts, as Frege put it. Within this frame of reference then the thinker is "continually colliding with the unknown". The understanding cannot go beyond this barrier:

yet in its paradoxicality the understanding cannot stop reaching it and being engaged with it. Because wanting to *express* its relation to it by *saying* that this unknown does not exist will not do, since just *saying* that involves a relation (PF: 44; emphasis added).

Here then is the sticking point for objectivity. Objectively, the absolutely unknown (i.e. the unknowable) is denied. However it cannot be denied because, within the objective framework, to deny it is to deny '*it*'. Hence the unknown is acknowledged in its being denied. 'Acknowledged', that is, but not affirmed. Existence of an '*it*' cannot for Kierkegaard be denied or doubted or, conversely, demonstrated, because existence is, in any of these operations, *presupposed*. The effect of denying the existence of the unknown is to show that it is presupposed:

...whether I am moving in the world of sensate palpability or in the world of thought, I never reason in conclusion to existence, but I reason in conclusion from existence. For example, I do not demonstrate that a stone exists but something which exists is a stone (PF: 40).

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<sup>53</sup> Kierkegaard's emphasis. When Sontag says "[o]ur experience of the uncertainty of existence pervades our metaphysics and our theory of knowledge", I take it that he means the "uncertainty" of the unfolding of existence, thus an objective uncertainty, rather than the uncertainty of the (so to speak) 'fact' of existence (Sontag 1994: 19).

But though the existence of the unknown is asserted in our very inquiry into it, one can go no further in elucidating 'it' -- since it is unknown.

## **Part B. The Limits Drawn In the *Tractatus***

If I do not know what something is, how could I know what qualities it possesses?

-- Plato, the *Meno*

Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way that science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness.

-- Wittgenstein, *The Blue Book*

In Part A, I touched on the salient points of background to the present study of the metaphysics of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. This then is an appropriate place to, by way of recapitulation, present these points, without their accompanying arguments, to show clearly the direction in which all this is heading.

In the *Meno*, Plato (through Socrates) is confronted with what we have been referring to as 'Meno's paradox'. This nominalistic, eristic dilemma arises in response to the principle query in the dialogue, namely, 'What is virtue?' The paradox is not a direct response to that question, but rather one that puts the question into question, as it were. It asks: can we even begin to ask such a question? This is to put the very essence of the Socratic/Platonic project in jeopardy. In response, Plato points out that the paradox is in fact a fallacy in that it equivocates on the word 'know': know means in one instance in the paradox 'acquaintance' and in the other 'insight'. Plato then argues that these two senses of 'know' must in fact mark the alpha and omega of a *process* of knowing, normally referred to as 'learning'. The fact that we can ask a question about virtue, for example, shows that we are *acquainted* with virtue. This acquaintance, he argues stems from the immortality of the soul; it signals that one's soul has insight into virtue but that, in earthly guise, this insight has been forgotten. The *process* of learning then is, in fact, simply a process of remembering forgotten insight. This then is the theory of *anamnesis* or reminiscence. At the end

of the process of remembering, one has fully recovered that insight and so can *say* what that insight is.

For Kierkegaard, the upshot of Plato's theory of *anamnesis* is that we can ask a question about anything whatsoever that is; and also that every formable question has a knowable/sayable answer. So then, *we can find an answer to a query about anything whatsoever that is*. Certain other key inferences follow on from this: nothing is unknowable; knowledge encompasses existence; human knowledge and divine knowledge share the same limits<sup>54</sup>; all that can be thought can be articulated; and (the converse of the previous point) all that is, is sayable, and all that is sayable (i.e. answerable) is determinate of all that is, in any way, thinkable.

In short, what follows from the theory of *anamnesis* is that there is no meaning to talk of limits because knowledge, thought, and language are all in no way inhibited from extending out, as it were, 'all the way'; that is, as far as *being* extends beyond which there is ----; there simply is no 'beyond'. There is strictly no unknowable, unthinkable, or unsayable; only the contingently unknown, un-thought, un-said. As we have seen, Kierkegaard wishes to take issue with these basic Platonist insights because of their negative implications for the subject.

Another key Platonist point that Kierkegaard takes issue with in *Fragments* is the notion that everything that is, is eternally: everything that is always has been, and always will be. Kierkegaard thinks that this should be considered an obvious problem for Christianity. For the *truth*, for the Christian, *came into being*. And it came into being as an existing human being, i.e., Jesus Christ<sup>55</sup>. To Kierkegaard then this must be seen as something *really* new, not merely a

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<sup>54</sup> This will be more satisfactorily argued in C.III.1. below.

<sup>55</sup> As Thompson says, "[o]nly Christianity, he [Kierkegaard] emphasizes, makes such a claim concerning a temporal point of departure for an eternal consciousness" (Thompson 1967:139).

manifestation of what always was, and always will be. This event for Kierkegaard must mark a break from the perpetual unveiling of what already is (Being, Spirit, the totality of knowledge, Mind, the State, etc.); which is only for Kierkegaard to say it marks a break from paganism. And it is from just this that we are meant to be redeemed.

If nothing new can emerge beyond what always already *is*, in Kierkegaard's view human existence has no essential role; it is, in fact, superfluous. In denying this key Platonic point (of 'always-already-is'-ness), all of the other points are as well denied: (1) knowledge does *not* encompass existence, rather, existence encompasses knowledge; (2) as such existence cannot be known or 'proved' and so there is something outside of what can be humanly known; (3) what is knowable/sayable is *not* (necessarily) determinate of what is thinkable; so too, (4) not (necessarily) all that can be thought can be articulated; (5) the human and the divine then cannot be said to share the same limits of knowledge; it follows from this that (6) talk of limits is meaningful, and talk of the unknowable or absolutely unknown is as well meaningful. Finally, (7) that something is thinkable but cannot be encompassed follows directly from the thesis that existence encompasses knowledge, and not vice versa. This being the case, (8) *it cannot (necessarily) be concluded that every query (about anything whatsoever that is) can be answered.*

In what follows then, I will attempt to show that Wittgenstein, circa the *Tractatus* (at least), is an adherent of the latter, Kierkegaardian, existential model, rather than the former, Platonic, rationalist one. I as well want to suggest that this was due, for the most part, to his encounter with certain of Kierkegaard's writings.

## **I. 'World' in the *Tractatus***

The above sketch will be instructive if it helps us keep in mind Kierkegaard's view of the absolutely unknown, when turning again to Wittgenstein's prefatory remark that "what lies on the other side of the limit" of the expressible world "will simply be nonsense [*Unsinn*]" (PM: p3) and the fact, already discussed (see Introduction above), that in the *Tractatus* the rule of limit setting is that one must be able to think both sides of the limit. Read in light of the above, Wittgenstein seems here to be affirming *Unsinn* -- or rather not *Unsinn*, but what it 'refers' to -- insofar as he is denying it. *Unsinn* lies outside logic. To echo Kierkegaard, the referent of *Unsinn* is *not* insofar as it is outside of logic; but *is* insofar as it is shown as presupposed in any denial, i.e. insofar as 'it' is 'run up against'.

In section 1. of this chapter then, I will take a preliminary position on a theme that dominates this thesis: what the limit drawn in the *Tractatus* is, what is meant to be limited thereby, and what is meant (if anything) by going 'beyond' the limit. In section 2., I will attempt to lay out in a fairly concise way an interpretation of the opening passages of the *Tractatus*, sometimes referred to as its 'ontology' (the 1s and early 2s). In section 3., a summary of Wittgenstein's picture theory is given, with an eye toward sorting out some of the arcane terminology used in these passages of the *Tractatus*. Finally, in section 4. the topic of solipsism is introduced with a specific emphasis on two statements Wittgenstein makes in the solipsism section that impact on a proper view of 'world' and its limits in the *Tractatus*; namely, "The world is my world" and "The world and life are one".

1.     ***'The World as I Found It'***

The *Tractatus* can only be seen as a drawing of limits to language from the outside. This may seem paradoxical, but it is only slightly so. The limits of language drawn in the *Tractatus* are the limits of empirically grounded language. What would be entailed by drawing such a limit from the inside would be, it seems, a listing of facts about the world such as the fictitious example Wittgenstein uses in the *Tractatus* called *The World as I Found It* (5.631). Supposedly when one runs out of facts (which, incidentally, in no way needs to be posited as an actual possibility) one would be left with no other (interesting) utterances. This inside limitation would fall in line with Wittgenstein's view that strictly speaking philosophical discourse would be a statement of the propositions of natural science, until one needed to utter a corrective word or two to someone voicing metaphysical views (6.53).

The *Tractatus* itself is clearly not an attempt at a *'The World as I Found It'* type of book. The limit that is drawn from the inside in the *Tractatus* is that limit of Ethics, not language (LVF: 94-5). Hence the *Tractatus* must be, and is, an attempt at a transcendently drawn limit of language; or at the least an attempt to set up a sound set of rules by which this 'The World as I Found It' task might be undertaken. The implications of the prefatory remarks are clear in one thing: to be able to draw such a limit to language that the *Tractatus* is meant to represent, one must be able to think both sides of that limit. And this is again clearly true if it is considered that the *Tractatus* is an example of that which cannot be said.

But then if the *Tractatus* is a transcendently drawn limit, is it the *same* limit being referred to as that which is the outer edge, as it were, of the exhaustive combination of atomic

objects and logical connectives, i.e. the limit, as it were, traced around the total of facts from the inside? Indeed it is the same limit -- the same limit, that is, from another point of view. The limit drawn from the inside is not actually a limit '*drawn*' as such. It is not a setting out of the limits but simply implies that limit -- shows that limit -- by exhausting the possible combination of objects. It shows a limit in the same way that the perimeter of a puddle shows a clear limit not by running up against some barrier but by extending as far as the water can extend given its particular physical constraints. The *drawing* of the limit of expression that the *Tractatus* represents is the *characterization* of how that limit resulting from the full extension of empirical *Sinn* [sense], is such a limit.

So one can either show the limit by stating the full quantum of propositions generated from the possible combinations of objects and the fully ramified language made from combining the resultant *Tatsache*, or one states the rules of possible combination and ramification along with the necessary assumption that the combinable objects are *simple*, not amenable to further analysis. The former is a "world as I found it" scenario, whereas the latter is the *Tractatus*. And it is clear that rules and assumptions of the latter would not (along with other things) be found in the former scenario since they are not a part of the world. Hence the rule that one must be able to think both sides of a limit to *draw* a limit would not be part of a world as I found it, but is part of the *Tractatus*.

The problem for Wittgenstein to work out then was how one gets to a "world as I found it" scenario. In a sense, the metaphysical problem addressed in the *Tractatus* is how to set aside the other side of the limit. How does one point out the rules of such a scenario without, by pointing them out, transgressing them? This is a clear instantiation of the paradox found in

*Philosophical Fragments*. How can one strictly limit the known without, in the process, forming a relation outside that limit?

So this paradox becomes fundamental to understanding the *Tractatus*. What is beyond the limits of logic, as the Preface points out, is *Unsinn*. But such locutions, though they are *Unsinn*, create a relation to that which is outside. For example, take the statement "What the solipsist means, is quite correct, only it cannot be said" (5.62). This statement creates a relation to what the solipsist means with one hand, and takes it away with the other. The solipsist's position is here in no way a denial of realism. The locus from whence that real world is seen is analogous to the human eye with respect to the field of vision (5.6331). This locus is referred to by Wittgenstein as the "metaphysical subject". Wittgenstein ends his remarks on solipsism not by having excised that viewpoint, but by having *clarified* the relation of that viewpoint to that of realism. There is, I contend, for Wittgenstein a realization that there is no way around this duality. One cannot limit all that can be thought by limiting expression; more is always implied, i.e. an other side of the limit. The solution formulated to this is to provide for a view of language that includes only propositions that are empirically grounded, i.e. propositions of fact whose constituents are the things of the world. To mention 'world', 'limits', 'subject', even 'language', 'proposition', etc., is to outline a context which, in the outline itself, sets up a relation to that which cannot be known -- that is, it sets up a relation to an unknown. Hence propositions including such words are *unsinnig* -- and "correct".

This is of course the way in which to understand the *Tractatus* itself. As an attempt to set limits to language, it is in effect an attempt to limit the very means by which one sets *any* limits. As such, the *Tractatus* must refer to the limits which it is attempting to set. However such

reference to limits, because of the relation required, is itself beyond the limits. This is the puzzle of the *Tractatus*: what sort of language would be in no way self-referential? The answer is: a language including only empirical propositions. How could one *set up* such a language using only empirical propositions, given that this implies a transition away from a non-empirical language? One cannot; *Unsinn* is necessary to define the limits of *Sinn*.

In the Preface to the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein writes:

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather -- not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought.) (p27)

While the upshot of this passage is, as we have seen, generally taken to reinforce the pervasive view that thought and language share the same limits, it is hard to understand how this passage could be read in such a way.

Firstly, the passage provides a rule by which to undertake the drawing of limits: one must be able to think both sides of the limit. The parenthetical statement says as much: one cannot think a limit of thought because one cannot think *beyond* thought (an absurdity). So the statement that the book draws a limit to the expression of thoughts, combined with the statement that one cannot draw a limit to thought itself, shows us that Wittgenstein has in mind a conception of the limits of expression as distinct from the limits of thought. Indeed, the latter is an absurd limit; the former, however, is the *raison d'être* of the *Tractatus*.

A thought is expressed by a proposition. This is clear in the *Tractatus*. However, it is not warranted to the leap to the conclusion that, with an exhaustive list of propositions, all *thought* is therein exhausted.

At this starting point then, I have accentuated the discontinuity of this "strange" (McGuinness 1988: 302) book with the tradition in which -- due to its historical and geographical context -- it has been placed. A new reading then will need to account for the distinction Wittgenstein makes in the Preface. One characterization of this distinction is that it is a distinction between *world* and -- to use, for now, an awkward but more precise phrase -- *non-world*.

## 2. *Substance, Objects, Facts*

From the first section of the *Tractatus* we get a sense of the scope of that which is to follow:

The world is everything that is the case (1).

This grandly opaque beginning is akin to the first cut made by the sculptors chisel: its meaning can only be seen with the emergence of the sculpture's shape. To call the first passages 'the ontology of the *Tractatus*' is only part of the story. For from section 1 to 2.1 fundamental terms that will subsequently be used are defined. This rather sparing act of definition is accomplished primarily by giving key terms a syntactical context. With the syntactical interrelation of terms -- such as 'world', 'object', 'state-of-affairs', 'situation', 'logical space', 'logical form', 'simple', 'content', etc. -- taken in concert, a general shape becomes apparent enough to serve as the basis to begin detailing.

That the world [*Welt*] is the totality of all facts [*Tatsachen*], not of things (1.1), is the second cut of the chisel. This makes it clear that 'world' and 'is the case' are not to be taken as

synonyms of 'every thing that is'. Once this is made clear, one then sees that 'world' and the 'totality of facts' are meant to imply more than what is merely the case (which might be seen as implied by 1). Rather 'world' also encompasses all that is not the case (1.12). 'World' as such includes all *possible* facts; but (with another cut) that 'world' is shown also to include the *medium*, so to speak, of possibility; i.e. "logical space". So 'world' emerges in its preliminary syntactical context as "[t]he facts in logical space" (1.13).

'World' in the *Tractatus* is a phrase that refers us to an already logically ordered totality of possible combinations of things and properties (2.01); not merely to a concatenation of things that are then combined with logical rules. The combination, or combinability, is presupposed and indeed must be; for such logically ordered combinations make up all possible descriptions. One could not describe what is presupposed in the very means of description. Wittgenstein simply calls what is presupposed the "totality of all objects"; and this totality is then referred to as the "substance of the world" (2.021). And this substance of the world, *qua* substance, "exists independently of what is the case" (2.024), insofar as its constituents, i.e. objects, "contain the possibility of all states of affairs" (2.014). This independence, however, "is a form of connexion" with the fact (2.0122). So objects can only be referred to when embedded as names in propositions that have *Sinn*<sup>56</sup>. Names themselves have no *Sinn*. So too, names by themselves have no *Bedeutung* [reference; meaning]; it is only in the context of propositions that one understands the thing being referred to by the name.

The world must have this "substance" if 'states of affairs' [*Sachverhalte*]<sup>57</sup> are ultimately to be independent of each other (2.061), i.e. one *Sachverhalt* cannot refer to another as the basis by

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<sup>56</sup> Hintikka and Hintikka refer to this as the "ineffability of objectual existence" (Hintikka and Hintikka 1986: 47).

which its own truth value is established (2.062). This substance then is presupposed if analysis of propositions is to be possible; and if *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* are to be conceived of as in any way fixed. If the substance of the world "is given, then at the same time all possible states of affairs are also given" (2.0124). Wittgenstein calls the substance of the world both "form and content" (2.025). We have seen in what sense it is content. The sense in which the substance of the world is form however has to do with the "internal properties" of the object (2.01231); the object must contain *a priori* all of its possible combinations in states of affairs (2.0123). This then is the object's "logical form" (2.0233), which then dictates the logical form of any proposition in which the object's name appears.<sup>58</sup>

Any possible world may differ in the *combination* of properties and objects, but its substance must be the same as the real world. 'World' then, emerges in greater detail as not necessarily *this* world, but as an organized entity whose organization is founded upon both the form and content of the substance of this world. Possible variance can occur only within the limit set by the objects of this world.

Two terms in the *Tractatus* related to 'world' are 'state of affairs' (with which we have already become acquainted) and 'reality' [*Wirklichkeit*]. 'States-of-affairs' are non-compound facts. Though earlier (1.1) Wittgenstein says that the sum totality of *Tatsachen* [facts] is the world, he says at 2.04 that the totality of existing states of affairs [*der bestehenden Sachverhalte*] is the world. These seemingly different statements are however in fact saying the same thing

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<sup>57</sup> The Ogden translation renders "*Sachlage*" as "state of affairs" whereas Pears and McGuinness render "*Sachverhalt*" as "state of affairs". The Ogden translation is however inconsistent in this; for example, at 2.11 it renders "*Sachlage*" as "fact" (2.11). For the sake of clarity then, in what follows I will use Pears and McGuinness' translation and render "*Sachverhalt*" as "state of affairs" and "*Sachlage*" as "situation".

<sup>58</sup> As we will see, 'substance' and 'logical form' play a vital role in Wittgenstein's central distinction between saying and showing, as well as in understanding 'thought', and Wittgenstein's paradoxical view of the *Tractatus* itself (cf. B.III and C.II below).

because upon analysis *Tatsachen* reduce to *Sachverhalte* (2.034). The totality of the former then is a ramification, or the "product" (CL: 125), of the totality of the latter. 'Reality' encompasses both *Tatsachen* (positive facts) and *negative Tatsachen* (negative facts) (2.06). Wittgenstein then states that the total reality is the world (2.063).

The term 'reality' seems here to be introduced for the sole purpose of differentiating picture-facts from worldly-facts. In the sections before the picture theory is introduced, the latter are referred to simply as 'facts'.

So it seems that from 1.1 to 2.063, 'world' has emerged in some state of fullness: from an initial contraction of the totality of *Tatsachen* to its essence in that of *Sachverhalte*, to an expansion that accommodates negative as well as positive *Tatsachen*. The expansion at 2.06 of the world to include negative *Tatsachen*, which were formerly only *determined* by the world (1.12), is perhaps a means of transition to the next passages in which "picturing" is the topic.

One further and important detail in Wittgenstein's syntactical sculpture is about his use of '*Welt*'. In the *Tractatus*, '*Welt*' is intrinsically linked to '*Sprache*' in a way not necessarily implied by its normal usage. The world here is delimited by language and language is delimited by world. So the linguistic concomitant of 1.1's statement that the world is the totality of facts not things, is that *propositions* express the world. A full list of names of things and properties (were such a list attainable) would not express the world.

### 3. *Picturing Facts*

According to Wittgenstein, "we make pictures [*Bilder*] of facts" (2.1). And, once made, the picture is itself also a fact (2.141). Hence one fact pictures another fact insofar as the constituents of the former are combined in the same particular and definite way as in the fact depicted. Wittgenstein calls the possibility that the constituents of the state of affairs are combined as are those of the picture, the "form of representation" [*Die Form der Abbildung*] (2.151). Indeed, that it is possible for elements of a picture to combine with each other in the same way as the objects of that which is pictured, is for Wittgenstein the very possibility of representation (2.15121).

Wittgenstein states that the picture "touches" (2.1515) the reality depicted; like lines stretching between picture and pictured elements. And for this to be the case

the representing relation [*Die abbildende Beziehung*] which makes it a picture, also belongs to the picture (2.1514).

At this point the representing relation is not clarified beyond mention as that which effects the relation -- the lines drawn -- between picture and pictured; the "feelers" by which the picture touches the reality. It is important to note carefully the distinction between the form of representation and the representing relation in this regard: the former is, as it were, the *intra*-factual relation which in picture and pictured have the same content and structure, i.e. the connection of constituents to each other in the fact -- be it picture-fact or reality-fact. The latter (i.e. the representing relation) is however the *inter*-factual relation that makes the picture a picture

of the pictured. Both the intra- and inter-factual relations are integral to picturing. There is no picture without intra-factual relations; nor is there any picture without inter-factual "feelers".

A thought is itself a picture (3) with constituents that correspond to those of the proposition and the state of affairs which the thought and proposition picture. As Wittgenstein writes to Russell, "I don't know what the constituents of a thought are but I know that it must have such constituents which correspond to the words of Language". These constituents must have, he says, "the same sort of relation to reality as words" (CL: 125); and so the thought has intra- and inter-factual relations.

But the immediacy (as Kierkegaard would say), a sort of brute thought, is not annulled by picturing. Indeed it becomes a necessary element of the picture insofar as it is a picture. If I have a thought of a possible situation [*Sachlage*], by what means do I recognize that thought as that of a possible situation? In other words, how do I discern the thought as a picture rather than some figment that simply drifts through my mind. The connecting principle by which one recognizes the thought as a picture of a possible situation is, as we have seen, the inter-relational element, i.e. the "representing relation". The representing relation is that by which one discerns the thought *as* a projection. Such discernment is necessary to all thoughts. The representing relation then is a necessary aspect of all thoughts

In the immediate, which is here only a hypothesized initial condition, facets of the world are not yet true or false.<sup>59</sup> In fact there are not yet facets as such. There is simple unreflective activity (the end toward which this activity is directed, be there any, is irrelevant) in which connections are made as part of the activity. The introduction of the picture, and so of possibility,

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<sup>59</sup> As Ricketts puts this, "[o]nly against the background of discriminating the ways things might be, is there such a thing as identifying how things stand, as saying what is the case" (Ricketts 1985: 13).

is a widening of the parameters of thought to include what is *and* what is not the case. With possibility, immediacy is seen as brute facticity annulled and included (*aufgehoben*) in possibility as the affirmative pole.

However with possibility, thinking becomes an activity in itself. The thought is itself a fact that is then linked with the possible reality pictured. And this linking, i.e. the representing relation, cannot itself become a thought. With the representing relation, we think the thought *as* a possible situation. And without this representing relation, without thinking the thought *as*, the thought is not a thought at all.<sup>60</sup>

Insofar as the thought is just the psychical constituents and the form of representation (i.e. the intra-relational holding together the elements of the thought), the thought is not a thought, since a thought is a thought *of* some possible situation. The *inter*-relation then is a necessary addition to the thought. However, this inter-relation is merely an immediate active linking of the thought to a possible situation. So it is *thinking* rather than thought.

The clearest sense one gets from the *Tractatus* that this inter-relation is an important element in its view of picturing comes with the description of the propositional sign:

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

The distinction made here between the propositional sign (i.e. the constituents and the intra-factual relation) and the proposition (i.e. the propositional sign and the inter-factual relation) is that made between the thought "sign" and the thought proper. The key to the distinction in

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<sup>60</sup> Heikki Kannisto considers thoughts and thinking as the same thing seen in a different light: "Thoughts are nothing over and above thinking; they are just thinking seen from a certain angle, *acts* seen as *facts*" (Kannisto 1986: 99). This view seems however to be based on an analogy to the ambiguous meaning of 'lines of projection' in the *Tractatus* (i.e. the 2.15s). I suggest an alternate view to this below (See B.III.2.a).

both cases is the inter-factual. In terms of the picture generally, we have seen that Wittgenstein calls this key the representing relation (2.1514); in terms of the proposition, Wittgenstein refers to this relation as "the method of projection". This method of projection is "the thinking of the sense [*Sinn*] of the proposition" (3.11). The propositional sign is used as the projection of the situation. The proposition is the propositional sign *as* the situation (see B.III.2 below). And this "*as*" requires active thinking of a relation, not merely a mental picture that mimics the elements of the proposition or situation.

More interesting still, the same must be true with the thought. Namely, there is no thought without the inter-factual relation to a possible situation; without the method of projection that is *thinking* the *Sinn* of the thought 'sign' (i.e. the fact of the thought). Thought requires thinking.

#### 4. *Solipsism*

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein develops a key distinction between "the how" and "the what":

Objects I can only *name*. Signs represent them. I can only speak *of* them.  
I cannot *assert* [*aussprechen*] *them*. A proposition can only say *how* a  
thing is, not *what* it is. (3.221)

In this passage Wittgenstein is straightforwardly pointing out the limited role names can have in propositions. Objects cannot themselves be asserted, only their worldly relations (with other objects) and properties can be asserted. That is, only How an object is can be asserted, not What it is. In a later passage about logical priority, this dichotomy is used to more interesting effect:

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

The distinction made between the What and the How is crucial. In the former passage, one cannot assert the What of an object, i.e. that it is. In the latter passage, the What -- seemingly akin to a "blind intuition" (in Kant's phrase) -- is prior to logic. That something *is*, that the world has *substance* -- in short, that there are objects, is a required condition of logic. And this is just to say that the what is a required condition of assertion. He goes on to 'illuminate' this passage with something of a riddle:

And if this were not the case, how could we apply logic? We could say: if there were a logic, even if there were no world, how then could there be a logic, since there is a world? (5.5521)

What this puzzler means is that, since logic is inherent in the substance of the world, without that substance, there is no logic. A passage from the *Notebooks* further clarifies this point:

If a point in space does not exist, then its co-ordinates do not exist either, and if the co-ordinates exist then the point exists too. That is how it is in logic (NB: 69).

To speak of logic existing without a world (a 'What') is as ridiculous as speaking of a world without logic. The point being made is the rather obvious one that the What must precede the How; otherwise the How has no content to which to apply itself. But to say anything at all about the What, logic is required. So, to say anything about the immediate without the intermediacy of logic is of course impossible. And to say anything about the immediate -- i.e. *really* say anything

about the immediate -- *with* the intermediacy of logic is also impossible, since the immediate is thus mediated. So existence 'precedes' logic, but this is not something relevant to logic, nor to language.

A more prominent example of this (existential) ambiguity is the passage that treats of solipsism:

*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*

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

So we cannot say in logic, 'The world has this in it, and this, but not that.'

For that would appear to presuppose that we were excluding certain possibilities, and this cannot be the case, since it would require that logic should go beyond the limits of the world; for only in that way could it view those limits from the other side as well.

We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot *say* either.

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

For what the solipsist *means* [*meint*] is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest [i.e. shows itself].

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. (5.6 - 5.62)

The key sentence here is "for what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but *shows* itself". What solipsism means cannot be said because it would be using logic beyond its limits, i.e. beyond the world.

Now there are two contentions that would be made using the foregoing passage that would bolster the common view of the relation between language and thought in the *Tractatus*. First, the statement "We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot *say* either." We must be careful not to read the second part of this sentence as paralleling the

first; i.e. "We cannot think what we cannot think"; so too *we cannot think what we cannot say*. What Wittgenstein *says* here is that we cannot say what we cannot think. This is uncontroversial. One has a thought and through language one expresses that thought. Still, coming on the heels of remarks on the limits of logic, this passage could easily be (and has been) interpreted as referring to thinking as falling under those same logical constraints. That is, again, if it is beyond those logical constraints, one cannot think it.

The second contention stemming from the common view would point to the statement directly following the above passages: "The world and life are one." (5.621) The general received view of this statement is the most obvious interpretation. Since *the* world is *my* world, my life and the world are in this sense the same, so Wittgenstein means that for the purposes of the *Tractatus* these words are to be used interchangeably. But this is again, I would contend, to ignore the type and tenor of the distinction Wittgenstein is drawing here. What Wittgenstein is saying in 5.62 is that solipsism is correct even though it cannot be presented in words. So a proposition such as 'These are my trees, this is my sky', is silly and *unsinnig*, yet from a completely different framework, what the words "mean" is not wrong. Wittgenstein is not however merely saying 'if we are taking up a solipsist world-view, then *x* is correct...'. Rather he is saying that solipsism, unlike taking a world-view as if I were a tree or a bat, is (for any creature reading the *Tractatus* at least) a valid one. It is a correct view. But I cannot *experience* that from which this view stems in the same way that I experience real things in the world simply because it is that through which I experience all that I can experience. Hence I cannot say that from which the view stems.

Wittgenstein is saying more than this here though. He is saying that solipsism is correct, and that that empirical realism is *also* correct. But he is, as well, saying that solipsism and realism represent two mutually exclusive sides of the same coin; or in other words, that "the world and life are one." (We will have occasion to look more specifically at the relation between world and life in the *Tractatus* in Chap. C. III. 3. below.)

## II. Thought: Can We Think What We Cannot Say?

In the *Tractatus* the key distinction made is between that which can be said with *Sinn* and that which cannot be said but shows. The general view amongst scholars is that, following from Frege and Russell, Wittgenstein sees the limits of what can be said in this way are the limits of what can be *thought*; that a legitimate thought is a mental correlate of a syntactically proper proposition. This being the case, it is supposed that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is a further attempt to discern the limits of thought in the only way possible -- by clearly defining the limits of language. Perhaps this is how Wittgenstein himself perceived his project early on. But that early project soon ran aground on a paradox: if only what is said is thinkable, how can what shows itself in what is said, show itself (see B.II.3. below)? In the Preface (to touch again upon this decisive piece of text) he attempts to put this conundrum in perspective:

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather -- not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought) (p27).

Here Wittgenstein is clearly and prominently saying that we simply cannot limit thought, only expression. As we have seen, his explanation for this is that to draw a limit is to be able to think both sides of it and one cannot think both sides of thought. And since the project of the *Tractatus* is to limit expression, Wittgenstein is making the point that one *can think* both sides of expression. That is, that thought *must* go beyond what can be said. As chapter I. above showed, there are elements of 'world' in the *Tractatus* -- objects in themselves, the representing relation between the picture and the pictured, and the metaphysical subject which is the limit of the world

-- that are inarticulable. A pertinent question to ask then about the view expressed in the *Tractatus* is: must not that which shows in propositions, but cannot be asserted by them, be *thinkable*? The question of thought and what is thinkable is clearly central to understanding the *Tractatus* and will thus occupy the main stage of the rest of this chapter and beyond.

Section 1. introduces the *Gedanke* as it is introduced by the *Tractatus* and points to an ambiguity in language concerning 'thought' that is relevant to a correct reading of the *Tractatus*. Section 2. is simply a summary of the Wittgensteinian literature pertaining to the error that is pointed out in section 1. Section 3. contemplates what is left for philosophy if it finds itself outside the limits -- especially if those limits are conceived as the limits of what can be *thought*. Finally, section 4. searches for the origins, meaning and significance of 'nonsense' [*Unsinn*] in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks 1914-1916* which pre-sage the *Tractatus*.

## 1. *Thoughts*

According to the *Tractatus*, the logical form is a form that every picture must have in common with reality (2.18). At 2.182, Wittgenstein writes that "every picture is *also* a logical picture". It is thus made clear that every other type of picture (e.g. spatial) is only interesting to Wittgenstein insofar as it is also a logical picture.

Wittgenstein first introduces the *Gedanke* [thought] in 3: "The logical picture of facts is a thought" (PM: 3) A thought is a psychical picture of a fact as Wittgenstein says in a letter to Russell (CL: 125). "The thought contains the possibility of the situation of which it is the

thought" (PM: 3.02). An "unlogical" [*unlogischen*] (3.031) picture, or one which "contradicts logic" (3.032) is impossible, unsayable, and cannot be thought (3.03).

At 5.542 Wittgenstein writes:

It is clear, however, that 'A believes that *p*', 'A has the thought *p*', and 'A says *p*' are of the form "'*p*' says *p*': and this does not involve a correlation of a fact with an object, but rather the correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects. (5.542)

Copi points out that for Wittgenstein "whatever says a composite must itself be composite" , and that 5.542 makes this point (Copi 1966: 164). If A is to say (think, picture, etc.) *p*, then A must be composite and so cannot be an object (2.021). A consists of a "bundle" of exact mental correlates of the constituents of *p*. No more, no less.

Copi points out that this confusion about the scenario depicted in 5.542 (persisting in such works as Carnap's *The Logical Syntax of Language*) is probably caused by the inherent ambiguity of terms such as belief and thought. These terms can, on the one hand, refer to *what* A believes, thinks, i.e. the object of A's thought; and on the other hand they can refer to *that* A believes, thinks, i.e. the state of so thinking. The former must be the case for Wittgenstein, Copi argues, because if the latter were the case then he would have analysed 'A thinks *p*' into 'A says "*p*"' rather than "'*p*' says *p*' (Copi 1966: 164)<sup>61</sup>.

Copi concludes that

[s]ince it is this sort of co-ordination of the names  $n_1, n_2, \dots, n_k$  in "*p*" with the objects  $o_1, o_2, \dots, o_k$  in *p* that permits "*p*" to say *p*, Wittgenstein was justified in saying that 'A believes that *p*', 'A thinks *p*', 'A says *p*', are of the form "'*p*' says *p*' (Copi 1966: 165).

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<sup>61</sup> This, Copi points out is how Carnap continued to analyse it. Peter Winch, as we will see, has more recently argued for a similar interpretation (cf. B.III.1 below).

In that letter to Russell, Wittgenstein writes that thoughts were not propositions but some mental concomitants thereof. This says nothing of an object *having* the thought (e.g. 'Charles thought...'), only certain mental constituents ( $a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n$ ) co-ordinated with factual ones ( $o_1, o_2, \dots, o_n$ ). The question of the 'mechanics' of this co-ordination are not addressed at 5.542 because they have already been addressed by the 3.1s (as we will see in B.III.1).

The confusion between '*thought*' as a noun ('*what* A thinks') and '*thought*' as a verb ('*that* A thinks) with respect to 5.542 highlights an ambiguity between 'the thought' and 'thinking' that, as we will see, runs right through the *Tractatus*.

## 2. *Limits of the Literature*

Aside from denying Frege's view that names have *Sinn* as well as *Bedeutung*, and that propositions have *Bedeutung* as well as *Sinn*, (see B.III.3.a below), Russell's early project can also be seen as taking the notion of '*Sinn*' from Frege's basic project and searching for a way to clearly represent it in language, thereby avoiding the problems of founding a 'science' (as Russell saw philosophy) on the very unempirical entity known as 'mind'. As David Pears says about Russell's early motivations:

Russell wished to replace this theory [the early theory of mind] with something more robust. His new theory would be concerned with the expression of thoughts rather than with their psychological structure, and so would make everything open to view and amenable to scientific treatment (Pears 1985: 7-8).

Wittgenstein also took this to be a crucial benefit of the form of analysis he undertook after Russell, as is made clear in *Tractatus* 3.1: "In a proposition a thought [*der Gedanke*] finds an

expression that can be perceived by the senses." So certainly the view here is that a proposition is an expression of a thought. But the converse, that if a thought cannot be expressed then it is *eo ipso* not a thought, is also commonly interpreted to be part of Wittgenstein's view.<sup>62</sup> The inference of this converse view is not justified.

Most commentators read Wittgenstein as having simply meant in the *Tractatus* that what cannot be said, cannot be thought either. Prominently P. M. S. Hacker, most recently considers it "an unargued assumption of the *Tractatus*" that one cannot think what one cannot (with *Sinn*) say (Hacker 1999: 132)<sup>63</sup>. McGuinness states -- using noun and verb form interchangeably -- that for Wittgenstein "it is only in language that we can identify *a thought*, and thus... all that is logically true of language will also define for us the limits of what can be *thought*" (McGuinness 1988: 305; emphasis added). Anscombe interprets Wittgenstein similarly: For Anscombe, Wittgenstein portrays thoughts that could not be said "as not really thinkable thoughts at all... [A]nd that is why it is not possible to say what it is that cannot be thought" (Anscombe 1971: 163). P. R. Shields, states that the meaning of the *Tractatus*' prefatory remarks about the project of limiting language is "to show what is thinkable by showing what can be said, or more specifically, to set a limit to thought by noting the limit of language" (Shields 1993: 10). Cora Diamond states that "it looks as if there is this whatever-it-is, the logical form of reality, some essential feature of reality, which reality has all right, but which we cannot say *or think* that it has" (Diamond 1993: 181; emphasis added). James Conant concurs with McGuinness on the point that "only what can be said can be thought" (Conant 1990: 340). Peter Winch sees Wittgenstein

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<sup>62</sup> This is certainly what, for example, Carnap took away from the *Tractatus*; see Carnap 1932.

<sup>63</sup> This at the end of an article defending an intentional reading of thinking in the *Tractatus* (See B.III.2. below).

as saying (in the 3.1s prominently) that the proposition *is*, for all intents and purposes, the thought. And David Pears too, echoing the Hintikkas' view (Hintikka 1966: 159; Hintikka and Hintikka 1986), states that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* "treated language as the universal medium of all thought" (Pears 1987: 144).

Though the main line in the literature is generally to maintain the equation of the limits of thought and language, it is striking that the ambiguity of the *Tractatus* on this point, in many passages, is merely replicated but never sufficiently explained in that literature. Instead there are in all major works, such as those cited above, mitigating remarks that admit to the lack of clarity as to the status (i.e. if thinkable or not) of that which *shows* and indeed of the *Tractatus* itself (as we will see in detail later). Each text would seem to wish to maintain a clear, decisive exclusion of *Unsinn* as unthinkable -- and yet each, when confronted with the actual text of the *Tractatus*, does concede that Wittgenstein's view of *Unsinn* seems to lack the uniformity called for. Pears, for example, refers to our understanding of what *shows* but is not *said* in a proposition as like reading "between the lines of factual discourse" (Pears 1987: 24). Here we see the same ambiguity that is clarified in the Preface nonetheless showing up afresh in the works of commentators. For if language were treated by Wittgenstein as the "universal medium of all *thought*", as Pears puts it, and if thought were taken as the verb form of *denken*, how then would his reading "between the lines" of discourse be possible? The phrase "universal medium" would clearly imply that there is no 'between the lines' from which to read. If such 'reading' were possible however, it would certainly imply that one is *thinking* about that which is between the lines of possible discourse; and hence that there *is* something between these lines. And this would then imply that language *cannot* be the universal medium of thought.

Regardless of the heedlessness of the idea that what cannot be said cannot be thought either, it is nevertheless generally treated with such brevity and finality of tone wherever it chances to occur that it is clear that all involved find the point being made an uncontroversial one. The consensus in the literature seems to be that the equation of the limits of thought and language is, in Hacker's words, an "unargued assumption" of the *Tractatus*.

What Wittgenstein is throughout the *Tractatus* arguing for however is the inclusion of non-incidental aspects of the thought -- e.g. its logical structure -- as falling outside the *Sinn* element of the thought. Reading the *Tractatus* as following in a direct line from Frege and Russell, and their attempts to find ways to include structural elements within the body of a proposition in order to explicate the correct *Sinn* of a proposition (e.g. Frege's "|-" symbol used to distinguish a mentioned from an asserted proposition), is perhaps to read the showing element as somehow included within the *Sinn* of a thought. In effect to see that form must be just a secondary level of content or part of a primary level. At any rate there is a clear need in Frege and Russell to include the possibility of propositions *about* propositions in what can be said. And this is what Wittgenstein argues must be excluded, regardless of the problems that thereby arise. Russell and Frege want to be able to talk about what shows. Wittgenstein is concerned to point out that the consequences of such inclusion would be to muddy a clear division -- a "clear terminus", as he calls it (6.372) -- between *Sinn* and *Unsinn*. Wittgenstein's point seems to be that what is *shown* is thought, but does not itself have a *Sinn*.

Elsewhere, Anscombe refers to a letter sent by Wittgenstein to Russell which seems to say that thought is to be considered as limited by the sayable: "The main point of the theory of what can be expressed (*gesagt*) by propositions -- i.e. by language (and, what comes to the same, what

can be *thought*) and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown (*gezeigt*); which, I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy..." (CL: 124). Again the ambiguity; the phrase "what comes to the same..." may be read as meaning to equate the limits of thinking and expression as Anscombe does, or as meaning the thoughts that can be expressed through language, i.e. what can be expressed by way of propositions and what can be thought *by way of propositions* "comes to the same thing" -- the *Sinn*. The latter interpretation is, I think, the correct one since what is "only shown" cannot in this passage refer to something which cannot itself be thought. For example, in the same letter to which Anscombe refers, Wittgenstein gives an illustration of what he has in mind in terms of showing:

Just think that, what you want to *say* by the apparent prop[osition] "there are 2 things" is shown by there being two names which have different meanings.... A prop[osition] e.g.  $\mu(a, b)$ ... doesn't say that there are two things, it says something quite different; *but whether its true or false, it SHOWS* what you want to *express* by saying "there are two things" (CL: 126).

So Anscombe's interpretation has implications that show that interpretation to be incorrect. Wittgenstein's point is not that one can only think what can be said, and so cannot think what shows (e.g. that one cannot think that there are 2 things), but rather that saying what already shows is redundant because one can ascertain the character of the proposition by merely observing the proposition. When it is acknowledged that one has been shown something, it cannot be the case that no thinking has occurred in the one to which it is shown. That which is shown may be considered unintelligible by definition insofar as any attempt to *say it* will yield an unintelligible result.<sup>64</sup> But if the shown *qua* shown is unintelligible, it would then be more accurate to refer to it as the *unshown* -- or simply not refer to 'it' at all.

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<sup>64</sup> Indeed this is Wittgenstein's critique aimed at philosophical discourse as late as his final writings

### 3. *Terra Incognita*

All the above commentators point to propositions from the *Tractatus* that, it is implied, unambiguously back up the view stated. McGuinness, for example, points to *Tractatus* section 3 ("A logical picture of facts is a thought [*der Gedanke*]") and goes on, again, to speak equivocally of thought in his comment regarding this passage: "*Only* that can be thought which satisfies the minimal conditions just laid down" (McGuinness 1988: 305). In other words, thought can *only* be of a logical nature, and as such the limits of language are the limits of thought. Here is the oft inferred view that since the limits of my world are equivalent to the limits of the world (5.62), and since the limits of language are equivalent to the limits of logic (5.61), *and* since philosophy is about the logical clarification/limitation of thoughts (4.112), *so* a limitation of thought must too be equivalent to the other aforementioned sets of limits. So clear thoughts can only be of facts. It follows that the *Sinn* of a proposition is the kernel of the thought. 'The chair is in front of the table' has an obvious factual *Sinn* which is separable from, for example, my memory of where the chair was yesterday. This latter is an extraneous subjective 'idea' that may be concurrent to the particular *Sinn* but is in no way intrinsic to it. Of course Wittgenstein does concur with Frege's view:

Does not my study of sign-language correspond to the study of thought processes which philosophers held to be so essential to the philosophy of logic? Only they got entangled for the most part in unessential psychological investigations (4.1121).

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(published in English as *On Certainty*). There he suggests that Moore's famous statement that he knows that this is a hand does not tend to dispel scepticism concerning the senses but rather gives it a handhold. For to state what is here obvious is to assert it as if it were possibly doubted -- i.e. as if the *Satz* had bivalence. It is only in philosophical discourse that there is seen to be a need to express such an idea: "I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again 'I know that that's a tree', pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: 'This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy'" (OC: 61).

So one might well argue that the uncontroversial nature of the view that thought is limited to what can be said, could be accounted for by the fact that nowhere in the *Tractatus* does Wittgenstein come right out and say this. It is (as Hacker states) an unargued assumption of the *Tractatus* and remains unargued in the literature. There are however a remarkable number of places in the book where Wittgenstein comes right to the edge of making a plain statement in this regard, and does not. This may be because the *Tractatus* itself shows how we are to consider thinking and thoughts therein.

At 4.116 he comes close to saying that the limit of thought is equivalent to the limit of language:

Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be said can be said clearly.

Wittgenstein might seem to be drawing our attention to an equivalence of "everything that can be thought" and "everything that can be said" here. But he is not explicit. Indeed the latter sentence here is echoed in the Preface as a summation of the *Tractatus*, along with section 7's admonition to be silent concerning that whereof one cannot speak. This latter might be phrased in this context as 'one should be silent concerning that whereof one cannot *with clarity* speak'. But in the preface Wittgenstein also refers to the *Tractatus* as a work within which "thoughts are expressed". It is perhaps safe to presume these too are *clear* thoughts. And if they are clear thoughts, then they cannot be the sort about which one must remain silent. For presumably to express unclear thoughts, which "cannot be thought at all", would be to express *Unsinn*. However, this creates a conundrum when 6.54 -- i.e. that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are themselves *unsinnig* -- is factored in. For then the *Tractatus* must be seen as an example of the

expression of thoughts -- presumably clear -- which are also *Unsinn*. One interpretation of this is that there is some *Unsinn* that is thinkable but not sayable. The statement directly prior to 4.116 could most readily be seen as backing up this interpretation:

It [philosophy] will mean [*bedeuten*] the unutterable by clearly displaying the utterable. (4.115)<sup>65</sup>

If the 'unspeakable' just is the 'unthinkable' in the *Tractatus*, then why would philosophy wish to mean or refer to [*bedeuten*] the unthinkable? Indeed *how* could it even aspire to this? How could philosophy begin to make reference to that which is not thinkable? Again, clearly what must be seen as the proper interpretation here as elsewhere is that what shows in a proposition but must nonetheless be thinkable, though its direct expression will be *Unsinn*. So the correct interpretation of 4.116 is not that it is the confirmation of an equation of the limits of thought and language. Rather, 4.116 is saying that to express a proposition clearly is to express not merely what is therein asserted, but is also to *show* the "unutterable". And further, in philosophy the task is to *refer* to the unutterable by way of the utterable. In philosophy when one says something clearly, one is not merely *saying* what one is thinking; one is also showing what one is thinking -- clearly.

In fact the problem arises precisely from the expectation that the limits of thought and language are the same. For one can think along with Russell (as we will see in the following section) that one can say of the world that 'there are more than three things in it' (p22) or that 'there are two individuals referred to in *p*'. And one can think that, because one infers these propositions from facts, they are thus themselves facts. The equation is readily made: if

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<sup>65</sup> This translation has been slightly altered to coincide with the following passage from a letter to Engelmann.

thinkable, then sayable. 'If you know it', as Plato's Socrates often says, 'then presumably you can say it?' Or, 'If you can ask a question about it, presumably you can find an answer and so articulate that answer?' What Wittgenstein is pointing out, as did Kierkegaard before him, is precisely that a paradox arises from such a presumption. For in presuming to say what already shows on the basis of what is thinkable, a clear terminus is blurred. So what can be said can be said clearly; and what can be thought can be thought clearly, as 4.116 suggests. But in attempting to say all that can be thought, in effect attempting to satiate our "passion" for the unknown in Kierkegaardian terms, both thought and expression are muddled. In a letter to Engelmann, Wittgenstein eloquently expresses the epiphany that joins at the root the two essential aphorisms of the *Tractatus* (i.e., 'what can be said can be said clearly', and 'whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'). He writes:

... if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then *nothing* gets lost. But the unutterable will be -- unutterably -- *contained* in what has been uttered! (ENG: 7)

In one sense, philosophy can be seen as a long term search for the proper expression of the inexpressible; because philosophy since Plato has been, and remains, a long working out of the results stemming from an unargued assumption, i.e. the equation of the limits of thought and expression. And according to the Kierkegaard of the *Fragments*, the resulting situation of philosophy is what happens to any search that starts off with bad directions. Because of our initial directions (i.e. the unargued Platonic assumption), one mistakes the frontier of the *knowable* for a frontier of *knowledge*, i.e. any frontier within a contingent, scientific purview. For our directions tell us that that the latter is the only kind of frontier we could encounter. If indeed we are under the impression that this is the only kind of frontier, then our reaction on encountering any frontier

would be stoically to repeat our attempt to push beyond it until successful. The result of repeating our encounter with the frontier of the *knowable* might be frustration and a sense too that this frontier may be different than the others we have encountered. For (to extend this parable through the looking glass, as it were) in pushing beyond this frontier we repeatedly end up where we began our effort. Double checking our directions however, we are reassured that this makes no sense and therefore cannot be. We then trudge on *ad infinitum*. Unless, of course, the possibility occurs to us at one point that it is our directions that are preventing our finding that of which we seek. Indeed Kierkegaard's solution is to throw away these directions and take another look at that frontier which

certainly does exist but is also unknown [according to our directions] and to that extent does not exist. The understanding does not go beyond this; yet in its paradoxicality the understanding cannot stop reaching it and being engaged with it, *because wanting to express its relation to it by saying that this unknown does not exist will not do, since just saying that involves a relation* (PF: 44; emphasis added).<sup>66</sup>

Attempting to say what shows and is thinkable is to attempt to know the unknowable. Kierkegaard's epistemological locution is purposefully awkward. For one knows the unknown insofar as one can think it; but one does not know it (according to Plato's directions) insofar as one cannot articulate it. Ontologically, we sense the unknowable in the knowable and so the unknowable exists. But insofar as we cannot say it, it must be a chimera. Simply put, there is something 'there' that one cannot properly include *or exclude* in a theory of knowledge or language. This then is a clear and real frontier. At the beginning of our search then, we already

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<sup>66</sup> One is here reminded of Heidegger's question "What is this Nothing?" in his "What is Metaphysics?" (Heidegger 1929: 244) and the Vienna Circle response to it (Carnap 1932: 69ff.).

have what we seek, though it is not what we expected and is thus quite disappointing. The unknown is "the absolutely different in which there is no distinguishing mark" (PF: 44-5):

To declare that it is the unknown because we cannot know it, and that even if we could know it *we could not express it*, does not satisfy the passion, although it has correctly perceived the unknown as frontier. But a frontier is expressly the passion's torment, even though it is also its incentive (PF: 44; emphasis added).

In such passages the relation between saying and knowing is revealed as key for Kierkegaard. There is for him a dysfunction between a certain kind of knowledge -- i.e. transcendental knowledge, ethical knowledge, etc. -- and language. In effect, he sees that our passion is for the concrete expression of what cannot be expressed.

#### 4. *Of Notebooks and Nonsense*

Most commentators assert the view, at times explicitly, that what is other than *Sinn*, is thereby at best an incomplete thought, at worst not thought at all. Such quasi-thoughts are seen as something extraneous to be minimized in expression, like the surface noise on an audio recording.

Quite early on, however, we can see Wittgenstein running into a problem with the Fregean view. In the *Notebooks* he ponders whether this characterization of the relation between the 'extraneous' and the essential in a thought does not necessarily exclude certain things which are assumed to be included, namely expressions about expression itself:

- (1) How can I be *told how* the proposition represents? Or can this not be said to me at all?... If it was supposed to be said to me, then this would

have to be done by means of a proposition; but the proposition could only show it (NB: 25).

In the same passage in the *Notebooks* Wittgenstein goes on to say:

- (2)       What can be said can only be said by means of a proposition, and so nothing that is necessary for the understanding of all propositions can be said (NB: 25).

It seems that for Wittgenstein one cannot speak in generalities about language itself and how it works. For as he says in the *Tractatus*' preface, the explanation must stand 'outside' what is to be explained. So in this case the expression would need to stand outside expression. Hence one either has a meta-language, or the extraneous explanation must somehow be incorporated into the proposition being explained. Since the former leads to an infinite regress and the latter to paradox, Wittgenstein concludes that no further or incorporated explanation is possible. The logical structure of the proposition must be obvious by simple perusal of the proposition. This is to say that structural elements should not be symbolized in a proper notation. For since the logical features themselves have no *Sinn*, to include any symbolization of them in the proposition would be to symbolize the merely *sinnlos* [senseless]. The logical features must then not be directly symbolized, nor require further clarifying propositions, but must show in any given proposition that has *Sinn*.

Now the corollary of the second quotation above (2) is that if something cannot be said then it does not have *Sinn*. However, this being the case, the propositions of Logical Philosophy have no *Sinn*. And since they have no *Sinn*, they are based on, at best, mal-formed thoughts. Now certainly Russell et al., considered this too high a price to pay for a 'correct' view of language. Logic books the world over would be rendered *unsinnig* [nonsensical] by such a

verdict. Yet the final remarks of the *Tractatus* make it clear that Wittgenstein did indeed hold this stark view. Logic is the structure of the propositions constructed which refer to particular relations of entities in the world which have the same structure. Propositions about the structure of propositions would then fall outside logic. They are, if you like, 'Logic' not 'logic'.<sup>67</sup> As Wittgenstein says in those next to final, self-effacing remarks:

he who understands me finally recognizes them [the propositions of the *Tractatus*] as nonsensical [*unsinnig*].... He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly (6.54).

For Wittgenstein, the propositions of Logic, of which the *Tractatus* is an example, are *unsinnig*. However the propositions of logic, since they are used merely to highlight logical relations within *sinnvol* propositions, are *sinnlos*. His book, and all others which attempt to use propositions of the former type, are by definition *Unsinn*. Nothing fundamental can be legitimately said about the foundations of language -- its structure, its conditions -- with language itself. Hence nothing at all can be said about such things. But in what *can* be said in descriptive propositions, the fundamentals of language are shown.

Are shown to whom? Presumably to us who speak and comprehend the language. So, presumably if it shows itself to us, we, so to speak, 'see' it. We, so to speak, *get* it. In short, we *think* it. We comprehend the relation though the relation can not be stated. And insofar as we do comprehend the relation, we are *thinking* that which is *sinnlos*.

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<sup>67</sup> In order to be clear about what is being said, in what follows I will institute the convention that uppercase 'L' Logic will refer to the *discipline*, *sub-section* of philosophy, or, in a Russellian view, the *science* of logic, and lowercase 'l' logic will refer to that of which upper-case 'L' Logic treats, i.e. the structure of sentences and/or thought. Hence, for example, the *Tractatus* is a work of Logic, since it contains propositions about the structure and conditions of language generally. And logic is just those structures and conditions themselves as they are. Without such a distinction, phrases such as "the propositions of logic" would remain ambiguous.

It seems then that, in Wittgenstein's view, there is much that is 'extraneous' to *Sinn*, properly conceived. And, conceived through Fregean and Russellian spectacles, these elements would as well be extraneous to *thought*. Thought without *Sinn* is impossible in this view. A 'thought' of such a kind could only be a mere shadow of a thought; a mere 'idea' subsisting on the capital of a real thought. An empty form looking for an intuition (in the Kantian phrase).

What of the logical structure of a proposition? It is not to be considered *a* thought according to Wittgenstein, as we have seen. But it would certainly have to be considered as falling within the category of thought generally. To abstractly represent the structure of a proposition is to have used one's mental faculties. And of course Logical works -- *Principia Mathematica*, etc. -- would also no doubt qualify as that which needs to be thought, though they are more or less entirely bereft (according to Wittgenstein's view) of *a* thought. So here then is a distinction between *a* thought, i.e. the mental concomitant of the *Sinn* of a proposition, and *thinking*, which is that which correlates thoughts to the propositions in works such as the *Tractatus*. Here we again have the distinction that Copi points out, mentioned above (See B.II.1. above). In this regard the *Notebooks* are again revealing. For there Wittgenstein can be seen puzzling over this correlation of thought and proposition:

- (3) It keeps looking as if the question "Are there simple things?" made sense [*Sinn*]. And surely this question must be nonsensical [*unsinnig*]!...
- (4) And yet it is clear that I have before me a concept of a thing, of simple correlation, when I think about this matter.
- (5) But how am I imagining the simple? Here all I can say is always "'x' has reference [*Bedeutung*]". Here is a great riddle! (NB: 45)

The question "Are there simple things?" is *Unsinn* simply because 'thing' does not refer to any empirical object but rather to empiricity itself. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein makes a distinction between proper/external concepts and formal/internal concepts (4.122). The former (names, properties, relations) can be elements in a proposition with sense<sup>68</sup>. The latter however, if they appear in a proposition, make the proposition nonsensical. 'Thing' is in (3) a formal concept, and formal concepts "are presented in logical symbolism by variables" *only* (4.1272). A formal concept is "already given with an object, which falls under it" (4.12721).

In the fourth statement (4) from the *Notebooks* cited above, Wittgenstein is wrestling with the status of the 'referent' of the question, since he is *thinking* about what is meant by the question -- he has the question before him though the question is *unsinnig*. In (5) he is trying to come to grips with how he can even find himself thinking about *Unsinn*. Later he seems to resolve this:

- (6) For the reason that a bit of language is nonsensical [*unsinnig*], it is still possible to go on using it (NB: 50).

That is, such bits of nonsense adhere to everyday discourse because they, by nature, cannot be contradicted. This is an important problem for Wittgenstein<sup>69</sup>. That which is an attempt to represent a necessary condition of language *in* language suffers the same unverifiable fate as certain propositions of metaphysics. The proposition "There is more than one thing" is uniformly as great a piece of *Unsinn* as "God is love". And if contradictory evidence is the only thing that should convince us to suspend usage of a proposition, then we cannot attain any such conviction

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<sup>68</sup> Though only if used properly, as we will see in B.III.3.b. below.

<sup>69</sup> Indeed he returns to this theme again much later: "So one must know that the objects whose names one teaches a child by an ostensive definition exist.... Why must one know they do? Isn't it enough that experience doesn't later show the opposite?" (OC: §477).

in either case. The implication of this is that, since both occur outside *sinnvol* language, the different facets of *Unsinn* that each proposition represent cannot be quantified -- in language.

To be sure, propositions of *Unsinn* are not for Wittgenstein representations of *thoughts*, whose constituents are mental concomitants of empirical objects (CL: 125). Yet the notion that Wittgenstein considered 'thing' and other formal concepts not *thinkable* must be wrong. To say, with Cora Diamond for example, that *Unsinn* is just "plain *Unsinn*" and that to think of it in any other way is to "chicken out" (as we will see in B.III.2. below), is to see Wittgenstein's view of *Unsinn* in the *Tractatus* as non-complex. As we have seen, this reading implies that the *Tractatus*, *Principia Mathematica*, Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, etc., are replete with propositions that are simply not thinkable. The other reading, which I am suggesting here, is that these works are understood by Wittgenstein as *Unsinn* -- but, indeed, *deep Unsinn*.

In the *Notebooks* (in such passages as those above) it can be clearly discerned that Wittgenstein's wish to find a simple explanation and approach is offset and frustrated many times by an equally strong wish for accuracy of locution and description. The remarks that find their way into the *Tractatus* perhaps represent (among other things of course) a balance of these two wishes. Ultimately, the only way to simply define the contours of something of multifaceted and obscure features is to define that thing *negatively*. That is, to say what it is *not*.<sup>70</sup> And so "*Unsinn*" and "*unsinnig*" are ultimately made to function in the *Tractatus* as blanket referents to every thing represented by language that, really, cannot be represented by language.

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<sup>70</sup> Pears makes the same point (Pears 1987: 146).

### III. 'Language'

In this chapter, I will deal with the problematic interconnection of thought and language that occurs, primarily, in the 3.1s of the *Tractatus*. In section 1., I will look at the most lively debate concerning these passages of the *Tractatus*. On one side of the debate is what has been called the "austere" view (Ferreira 1994: 31) of the relation of language and thought in the *Tractatus*, represented here by Peter Winch, whose (more positivistic) reading of the 3.1s has it that there need not be any 'extra-linguistic' (thinking, situations, or objects) involvement in *Bedeutung* and *Sinn*. On the other side is what has pejoratively been referred to as the 'mentalist' camp represented most prominently by Norman Malcolm and P. M. S. Hacker. They argue that a proper reading of the 3.1s reveals that *intention* must play a role in the determination and development of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* in the *Tractatus*. This 'camp' then argues -- as will I -- for a certain duality in the *Tractatus*' notion of *Denken*. In section 2., I will look at the austere argument, made by Cora Diamond, that in the *Tractatus* what can be *said* is meant to *determine* the 'extra-linguistic', i.e. both what can be thought and what can *be*. I will argue that Diamond's austere view, i.e. that what is not so determined by what is said is "*plain nonsense*", is critically flawed.

What will be argued throughout, using textual reference, and reference to the argument that has been developed in the preceding chapters, is that the non-mentalist position cannot provide a full account of the *Tractatus*' view and that (as the first sentence of the present thesis claims) the *Tractatus* is most fully seen as the working out of the implications of a metaphysical view that is not (for metaphysical reasons) therein explicitly argued.

## 1. *Bedeutung*

Peter Winch makes it clear that he believes that Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* most importantly discredits a particular conception of 'thought' found in the *Tractatus*: namely that a thought is *concealed* pending the proper analysis (Winch 1987: 15). That this is Wittgenstein's view in the *Tractatus*, Winch argues in Chapter 2 of his *Trying to Make Sense*. This view he contrasts with what he calls the "mentalist" view of the *Tractatus* -- typified by Norman Malcolm's interpretation<sup>71</sup> -- which claims that what Wittgenstein discredits in the *Investigations* is the view of the *Tractatus* that the *Sinn* of a propositional sign is psychical (Winch 1987: 3). Winch contends that the mentalist view is wrong because Wittgenstein's point in the *Tractatus* is precisely to disentangle *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* from any "non-linguistic" test of adequacy. For Winch, Wittgenstein never himself contended that the *Sinn* of a proposition is derived from the direct intervention of a thought.

P. M. S. Hacker has recently set out a rejoinder to Winch's critique of the mentalist view in which he gives the mentalists qualified support and finds fundamental fault with Winch's view that *Bedeutung* is determined in the *Tractatus* on the basis of language *alone*. In the present chapter I will examine this debate with the aim of considering what I perceive to be the two controversial claims of the mentalist view: (1) that the "hidden" bearer of the *Sinn* of a proposition is the thought, and (2) that the thought *actively* correlates situation and proposition. I shall then consider what aspects of the mentalist view are viable in light of this debate and in light

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<sup>71</sup> Circa his *Memory and Mind* (Malcolm 1977) and largely reiterated by *Nothing is Hidden* (Malcolm 1984).

of the conception of thought in the *Tractatus*. First, however, I will examine (to steal a phrase from Ogden) the meaning of "meaning" [*Bedeutung*] in the *Tractatus*.

(a) 'Meaningfulness'<sup>72</sup>

Winch argues that the determination of *Bedeutung* is a purely linguistic undertaking. To this end, he makes reference to several passages from the *Tractatus*:

Only facts can express a sense [*Sinn*], a class of names cannot (3.142).

In the proposition the name represents the object.

Objects I can only *name*. Signs represent them. I can only speak of them. I cannot *assert them* (3.22-3.221).

What does not get expressed in the sign is shown by its application. What the signs conceal, their application declares (3.262).

Only the proposition has sense [*Sinn*]; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning [*Bedeutung*] (3.3).

An expression has meaning [*Bedeutung*] only in a proposition (3.314).

If a sign is *not needed* then it is meaningless [*bedeutungslos*]. That is the sense [*Sinn*] of Occam's razor.

(If everything in the symbolism works as though a sign had meaning [*Bedeutung*], then it has meaning [*Bedeutung*].) (3.328)

In logical syntax the meaning [*Bedeutung*] of a sign ought never to play a role; it must admit of being established without mention being thereby made of the *meaning* [*Bedeutung*] of a sign; it ought to presuppose *only* the description of the expressions (3.33).

Winch correctly reads these passages as saying that signs depend on the propositional context for their *Bedeutung*. Only in this context is the symbol/expression, that the sign arbitrarily represents, seen. The symbolism of course implies a connection to the world and its objects. But,

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<sup>72</sup> I mean by this term the possibility of *Bedeutung*.

Winch asserts that this connection is only viable as a global connection between language and world. So in the individual sign's deployment in a proposition, the individual connection is only between sign and symbol. The worldly object cannot and need not be factored into the dynamic of *Bedeutung*.

Hacker however sees Winch's view as lacking in one essential ingredient: "what is needed is to account for a name's having the meaning that it has" (Hacker 1999: 122). Winch argues that it is by way of the name's appearance in a proposition, that is, by its "significant use", that its *Bedeutung* is determined. And indeed the passages cited above seem clearly to point to this: only in a proposition has a sign *Bedeutung*; and if it looks as though it has a *Bedeutung*, then the sign just does have a *Bedeutung* (3.314; 3.328). But Winch, as Hacker points out, is making a stronger claim than can be supported by the evidence contained in these passages from the *Tractatus*. For Winch is claiming on these bases that a name "*having the meaning it does* just consists in its 'significant use'" (Winch 1987: 9; emphasis added). In other words, for Winch, sign plus syntax yields *particular Bedeutung*. What Hacker correctly asserts is that what is shown by a name's use is *that* it has a meaning [*Bedeutung*]; i.e. what is shown is *meaningfulness*. But it is in no way clear that the *particular Bedeutung* that the name names (i.e. the object to which it refers), can be shown this way. 3.142, 3.3 and 3.314 show that a name alone is meaningless, and 3.328 and 3.262 do point to an active role that the propositional context has in vivifying the name. But none of these sections go beyond the determination of a sign's *meaningfulness*. None say that the *particular Bedeutung* is established by syntax alone; rather they say *that* a name has *Bedeutung* is established by syntax alone. The passages point out that syntax alone establishes *meaningfulness*, not *particular meaning*.

So the proposition lends only *meaningfulness* to the sign. This is indeed all that the determination of *Sinn* requires. That a proposition has *Sinn* can be determined on the basis of the meaningfulness of its signs alone. The particular *Bedeutung*, as 3.33 points out, need not, and indeed "*should*" not, play a role. However, as Hacker points out, 3.203 defines a name's particular *Bedeutung* as the object to which it refers: "The name means [*bedeutet*] the object. The object is its meaning [*Bedeutung*]" (3.203). So *Bedeutung* cannot be established *without* logical syntax. *But* also the establishment of the logical syntax of a sign is not in itself sufficient to give the sign's *Bedeutung*, i.e. the non-linguistic object. As Hacker points out, it would only be so sufficient if literally each symbol had its own distinct syntax, which is not the case (Hacker 1999: 124). Many different symbols have the same syntax. For example, colours. Including "'this point is red' and excluding the combination 'this sound is red' *because* a spatio-temporal point can be red, but a sound cannot" as Russell wishes to, is wrong; what is excluded and included is determined solely by the colour syntax of 'red' (Hacker 1999: 124). In fact I need not be at all acquainted with this specific colour to be able to use its name significantly. I need only know that it is a colour. With this I know the name has meaningfulness. But to know the particular *Bedeutung* of 'red' I must be acquainted with red-ness. If a friend says 'My new couch is "Asian piccolo blue"', the proposition has *Sinn* and "Asian piccolo blue" *has Bedeutung*, even though it is not a colour that I have previously encountered, and as such do not know *what* the name means:

if *colour* is a formal concept, then one may know that '*a*' is a colour name by knowing its logical syntax, but without knowing its meaning (Hacker 1999: 124).

That is, I can know from '*a*'s syntax that it is a colour, without being able to pick *a* out of a crowd of colours, so to speak. Syntax then is not related to particular *Bedeutung*, but to class or category membership of a word.

Winch's view is that passages such as 3.328 and 3.33 are meant to warn us away from the interpretation that "a name's meaning is something other than and prior to its logico-syntactic role" (Winch 1987: 10); an interpretation that a brazen reading of 3.203 ("The name means the object. The object is its meaning"), or 3.22 ("In the proposition the name represents the object"), might prompt. As for 3.328, it refers to nothing further than whether or not a sign has *Bedeutung*. Particular meanings are not within its purview. And 3.33 is about the establishment of syntax, but again not about the establishment of particular meanings of signs. For Hacker all 3.33 actually does is again buttress the view that *Sinn* only requires the determination of meaningfulness but not of particular meaning [*Bedeutung*] which requires extra-linguistic reference (either to the object or to the thought-element).

In his dealing with the role played in *Bedeutung* by logical syntax, Hacker emphasizes passages from the 4.12s of the *Tractatus* such as "Every variable represents a constant form that all its values possess, and this can be regarded as a formal property of those values" (4.1271). At this place in the *Tractatus* the indeterminate sign is a variable, thus falling under a formal concept. Winch however emphasizes the 3.3s, which refer to the indeterminate sign (forming the outward mark of the expression) as constant and all other parts of the proposition as variable (3.312). In the 3.3s one knows the sign's *Bedeutung* if one knows all the substitution instances of the variable to which it is adjoined; i.e. if one knows all the values of the expression.

So to know the *Bedeutung* of 'a' is to know all possible propositions it can occur in, since these are presupposed in 'a'. These collectively are 'a's logical form. This form is in a sense specific to 'a'. But given 2.0233 (i.e. if two objects have the same logical form, then the only difference is that the objects are different), 'a' may have the same logical form as 'b' (as, e.g. 'red' and 'blue' have the same form). Is the "logical form" here intrinsically related to the "formal concept" of the 4.12s? Hacker concludes that it is: "All objects that fall under the formal concept in question *share the same logical form*" (Hacker 1999: 124).

The long and the short of it is then that, in the *Tractatus*, if one knows the *Bedeutung* of 'a', one can infer its logical form. But the converse -- that if one knows the logical form of 'a', one can infer its particular *Bedeutung* -- is *not* the case.

The debate here has been between one interpretation of meaning [*Bedeutung*] in the *Tractatus* that has it that logical syntax alone yields meaning, and another -- correct -- interpretation that has it that all that can be culled from syntax alone is meaningfulness. However on one point the opposing interpretations are in agreement: to wit, even if syntactical means alone yield only meaningfulness, this is all that is required of a proposition's constituents for that proposition to have *Sinn*. For as Winch puts it, if one knows the logical form under which the sign falls (e.g. 'red' falling under the logical form of 'coloured-ness'), then one thereby knows the sign's possible combinations, one knows its "logico-syntactical role" and *this is* to know the meaning of the sign. For Winch we need not be further concerned.

But the other possible conclusion is the one to which Hacker points. That is, that the important question to ask is 'what does *Sinn* require in the *Tractatus*? Meaning [*Bedeutung*] or only meaningfulness? Remembering that *Sinn* determination is distinct from *truth* determination

-- as Winch is at pains to point out -- particular meaning seems only to be required with respect to a proposition's *truth value*:

We cannot decide that one form of words expresses a proposition and another does not by comparing these expressions with something non-linguistic (as we do when it is a question of determining a proposition's *truth*) (Winch 1987: 7).

This is an important passage because it shows clearly that without extra-linguistic reference, the problematic of meaning [*Bedeutung*] is simply transferred to sense [*Sinn*]. For in the above passage Winch is referring to the "distinction" between sense and nonsense [*Unsinn*]. In other words, he is not here concerned with sense determination (i.e. 'what is the sense of "*p*"?') but rather, so to speak, *sensefulness* determination (i.e. 'does "*p*" have sense?'). Winch only shows that syntax yields the latter, not the former.

Mere meaningfulness does not yield sense, but sensefulness. For sense in the *Tractatus*, extra-linguistic reference is required. As it happens, it requires both acquaintance with the objects for which signs stand, and (to carry forward my main contention) the addition of *thinking*. I will look at these in turn.

#### (b) *Bedeutung* and Acquaintance

What allows for the proposition to have the *Sinn* that it does is acquaintance [*Kenntnis*] with the objects for which its elements stand. These objects then can only become known [*Wissen*] in a factual context.

Underneath the preceding clash of interpretations is the question of whether, in the *Tractatus*, with respect to *Bedeutung*, the name '*a*' is or is not more than the sum of its possible

propositional combinations. Hacker does, I think, argue that 'a' is more than merely its syntactical role. But Winch makes a compellingly pragmatic point: 'what does that matter?' That is, even if 'a' does refer us back to a flesh and blood object *a*; and even if this shows that 'a' is clearly more than its possible propositional combinations since it is also the *name* of *a* (as he admits (Winch: 1987: 9)), we still cannot *say* what it is. We cannot assert it; we can only say *how a* is in the world (3.221). That is, only in a propositional context has 'a' *Bedeutung*. Winch concludes that we need not care if 'a' refers to more than just the sum of its possible propositional uses.

The problem with this view is that, if the logico-syntactical role alone yielded *Bedeutung* in the *Tractatus*, and so the object was irrelevant beyond this role, the determinacy criterion of *Sinn* set out in the *Tractatus* would not be fulfilled. As Wittgenstein puts it,

[a] proposition determines reality to this extent, that one only needs to say "Yes" or "No" to it to make it agree with reality. (4.023)

Again it comes back to Hacker's intuition that Winch is, knowingly or unknowingly, putting forth a position that would necessitate the erroneous corollary position that each name has a unique logico-syntactical form. So if 'a' and 'b' do have the same logical form, how do I know strictly on the basis of the logical form (i.e. with no extra-linguistic reference) that they are not referring to the same object? And if I could not know the difference given these strictures, then I could not say that the *Sinn* of any proposition including 'a' or 'b' has a determinate *Sinn*. And this means that, for such a proposition to *have* a determinate *Sinn*, I must be acquainted with the *particular* object to which 'a' (or 'b') refers.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> I think Hintikka and Hintikka are correct in seeing section 5.552 of the *Tractatus* as supporting this point (Hintikka and Hintikka 1986: 56).

Again, the logical form can be determined if one knows [*kennt*] the object. But the opposite is not the case. However Winch argues, using the following passage, that the *Tractatus* states that one *can* know the object if one know the logical form:

The meanings [*Bedeutungen*] of primitive signs can be explained by elucidations. Elucidations are propositions which contain the primitive signs. They can, therefore only be understood when the meanings [*Bedeutungen*] of these are already known [*bekannt*]. (3.263)

Winch takes this passage to "at first blush to imply a vicious circle.... But the circle is not vicious. The point is that one cannot learn the meanings of names separately from each other; to learn their meanings *is* to learn how they combine in sentences" (Winch 1987: 11).

The above passage 3.263 does of course seem circular. But not, as Winch would have it, because the meanings of individual signs are only known, as it were, collectively. Rather, as the last sentence in the passage says, one must be familiar with the sign's referent already for examples of the sign's use to be of any consequence. For example, I might explain what I mean by 'red' by saying 'It is red like a fire-engine', red like a tomato. But this 'explanation' presupposes that I have actually laid eyes on these things otherwise I may come to understand that 'red' refers to a colour -- but not which one it refers to. Hence knowing the *Bedeutung* of a primitive sign presupposes acquaintance with that to which the sign is meant to refer. In short, red must be known [*bekannt*] for red to be known [*gewusst*]. To know a simple object is to be acquainted with it [*es zu kennen*]. So the only answer to 'what is *a*?' here is '*that is a*'.

I do not take Hacker's point that with this passage Wittgenstein is confusing description with ostensive definition (Hacker: 125-6). If I said 'that is red' and pointed, why would I need to know the *Bedeutung* of 'red' prior to the elucidation? While Hacker thinks that this is an error on

Wittgenstein's part, I would argue that Wittgenstein is not calling for an ostensive definition. The propositional elucidations that Wittgenstein speaks of cannot answer the question 'what is *a*?'; but they can answer the question 'what is "*a*"?' That is the gist of 3.263: the elucidations are to sort out the simple object to which the simple sign "*a*" is referring. Acquaintance with the simple object -- *a* -- is a necessary prerequisite of such elucidations actually being elucidating. The elucidation connects a name to an otherwise nameless, though of necessity known [*bekannt*], object.

The elucidatory propositions would after all need to have *Sinn*. So such a proposition incorporating the name of this object would have to be able to limit the world to yes or no (4.023). 'The colour of a fire-engine is red', 'The stop sign is red', would then only have *Sinn* if I was acquainted with red-ness. If I was not so acquainted the elucidations of "red" would not be proper propositions. If I did have such acquaintance however, they would be proper propositions; and they would show me that to which the primitive sign "red" refers.

So 3.263 is not in fact circular; it merely indicates a shift in the meaning of 'meaning'. A primitive sign, we are told at 3.3, has a *Bedeutung* "only in the context of a proposition". Hence, from this it is clear that a primitive sign, in and of itself, is meaningless. However, at the end of 3.261 Wittgenstein writes parenthetically that such a sign "alone and independently has a meaning [*Bedeutung*]".<sup>74</sup>

To know an object is, as Wittgenstein puts it, to know its internal properties (2.01231); that is its logic:

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<sup>74</sup> Max Black refers to simple signs as the "smallest units of meaning" and the individual sign as having in itself an incomplete meaning (Black 1966: 99-100).

A speck in a visual field need not be red, but it must have a colour; it has so to speak a colour space round it. A tone must have *a pitch*, the object of the sense of touch *a hardness*, etc. (2.0131).

What Wittgenstein is describing here are internal properties of specks, tones and objects. These properties limit the possible occurrence of specks, tones, and objects, in *Sachverhalten*. Clearly, a deaf person could not know the internal properties -- and hence the possible occurrences -- of a tone without having ever *heard* a tone. The possibilities of the object "lie in the nature of the object" (2.0123). It is by means of knowing this nature that I can use the name of the object in proposition combinations previously unknown to me (4.027).

So in 3.263 Wittgenstein is saying that a sign only has *Bedeutung* in a proposition; *but* that each sign that goes proxy for an object thereby 'contains' in its nature all possible propositions in which the sign can occur, as the object contains all such possible situations in which it can occur. A name is not articulate, but it contains all possible articulation. And a name will have all its possible articulations in common with another name if they have a common logical form.

## 2. *Sinn*

### (a) 3.13 and the Method of Projection

In *Nothing is Hidden*, Malcolm argues that the *Tractatus*' view of thoughts is that they are "*more basic than word-propositions [Sätze]*" (Malcolm 1986: 66). This position is based on a reading of the *Tractatus* as implicitly concerned with intentionality (Malcolm 1986: 82). In showing the merits of this thesis, Malcolm appeals to several pieces of textual evidence, in the

*Tractatus* and elsewhere, to back up his view. An important piece of evidence in this regard is found in Wittgenstein's response to an early query of Russell's about the *Tractatus*:

...I don't know *what* the constituents of a thought are but I know *that* it must have such constituents which correspond to the words of Language. Again the kind of relation of the constituents of thought and of the pictured fact is irrelevant. It would be a matter of psychology to find it out....

Does a *Gedanke* consist of words? No! But of psychical constituents that have the same sort of relation to reality as words. What those constituents are I don't know (CL: 125).

Malcolm sees this as showing that Wittgenstein held as an underlying assumption of the *Tractatus* that there are mental concomitants to words, and that these must nonetheless remain implicit due to the "danger" of getting "entangled" [*verwickelt*] in problems best left to empirical psychology (4.1121). For Malcolm, it is clear that Wittgenstein thought that dwelling on the subject of *der Gedanke* might lead him away from the hard won advantage that dealing strictly in language was thought to bestow. But that Wittgenstein also considered that *der Gedanke* is the intrinsic representation of the situation depicted by the proposition; and as such the thought is in fact the *Sinn* of the proposition.

Winch clearly sees Malcolm as himself entangled in the snare that Wittgenstein warns against in 4.1121. For Winch, precisely what Wittgenstein wants to show in the *Tractatus* is that the syntax of the proposition plus the sign are the adequate minimum requirement for the determination of a sign's *Bedeutung*.

Winch disputes that psychical elements intercede to connect the object-elements with the word-elements. The mentalist reading of these "psychical elements" as constituting a link between word and object is faulty insofar as the psychical constituents in the response to Russell are mere

concomitants of words and objects. Winch is quite correct that there is no privileged status allotted to 'thoughts' by the letter to Russell (CL: 124-5), nor by their 'untouchability' implied by 4.1121. However, the straightforward reading of 3.1-3.11 is that thoughts do play an active role in providing the *Sinn* of propositions:

In the proposition the thought finds expression that can be perceived through the senses.<sup>75</sup>

We use the sensibly perceptible sign (sound or written sign, etc.) of the proposition as a projection of the possible situation.<sup>76</sup>

The method of projection is the thinking of the sense [*Sinn*] of the proposition.

Malcolm interprets this last sentence in 3.11 as clearly giving thought the predominant role in the thought-proposition relation outlined in the letter to Russell. "What happens," writes Malcolm, "is that the sense of the thought is *thought into* the sentence" (Malcolm 1986: 66). The proposition then is a "derivative" picture *of* the thought, which is itself an "intrinsic" picture of the situation (Malcolm 1986: 82), whose *Sinn* arrives in the proposition by that thought's own agency. In this view, the thought is both the origin of the picture of the situation (mentalist claim (1)) and the method by which this picture's *Sinn* finds its way 'into' the proposition (claim (2)).

3.1 and 3.11 are of course key to sorting out the *Tractatus*' position on thoughts. For it does seem to give these thoughts an active role that is over and above that which it had been previously assigned; i.e. as the logical picture of a fact (3). One might conclude with some justice that 'the constituents of thought' which in the letter to Russell and elsewhere are accorded the status of mere inert equivalents of words and objects, have at 3.11 sprouted "feelers" [*Fühler*] of

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<sup>75</sup> The Ogden rendering of this passage, that the thought *is expressed* through the senses, is of course wrong. The above translation is quite close to the Pears-McGuinness version.

<sup>76</sup> Again I use "situation" for "*Sachlage*".

the kind spoken of at 2.1515 (cf. B.II.2. above). Thoughts are, for Malcolm, active in correlating themselves with the signs given. The snag here is that just before his introduction of 3.1-3.11, Malcolm states himself that Wittgenstein's remark in the letter to Russell is that all thoughts consist "*without qualification*" of psychical constituents (Malcolm 1986: 65; his emphasis). Malcolm points to this passage to underline that there are no linguistic elements essential to thoughts. But his assertion that thought itself is also the mechanism of correlation between the proposition and situation (claim (2)) is thereby made problematic. For if the thought includes *only* concomitant constituents, it then seems that there can be no "feelers" included.

Winch of course picks out this weakness with the mentalist view. Wittgenstein's letter to Russell accounts for thoughts not given expression as consisting of psychical equivalents of words but, Winch writes, "stops well short of the further claim that such a psychical state of affairs is needed in order to transmute a string of perceptible signs into a proposition" (Winch 1987: 13). The psychical situation may exist in the case of the unspoken or unwritten proposition, but is not, for Winch, required when the proposition *is* spoken or written. The letter thus does not provide any adequate proof of the mentalist claim.

3.1 and 3.11 however worry Winch somewhat more. The usual reading of 3.11 is that "thinking" *is* the "method of projection"; that is, that the means by which the proposition is imbued with *Sinn* is by the act of its being thought. This then argues in favour of the mentalist view. Winch however appeals to another reading consistent with the limited description of thought given in the letter to Russell. He points out that in the last sentence of 3.11 there is an ambiguity (which the Ogden translation, though not that of Pears and McGuinness, preserves): "*Die Projektionsmethode ist das Denken des proposition-Sinnes.*" Winch argues that "*Die*

*Projektionmethode*" [method of projection] is not meant to imply "feelers" reaching from the thought to the proposition. For the proposition is the projection of the situation; and the *method* by which the situation is projected is the written or spoken perceptible sign in 3.11.<sup>77</sup> So, Winch argues that Wittgenstein is here actually referring to the articulation of the proposition itself as the method of projection. So, in 3.11 the proposition just is "the thinking of the sense [*Sinn*] of the proposition." This is consistent with his argument that the thought is not required to explain the 'sinnvol' ['senseful'] proposition. Saying *p* is thinking *p*, with no need of assistance from a further *p*-thought actively correlating or standing in the mental shadows:

saying that *p* is *one* form that thinking that *p* may take. So: if I assert the proposition *p* I also have the thought that *p*, [but] not in the sense that besides asserting the proposition *p* I am also doing something else, [i.e.] thinking that *p* (Winch 1987: 15).

Thus does Winch, rather impressively, do away with the two pillars of the mentalist view -- thought's agency and the thought as hidden bearer of *Sinn*. One is left with the impression that one could with justice very well turn it around and see thought in the *Tractatus* as a sort of internal speaking (*à la* Ryle's *Concept of Mind*). And this would then tend to make the question of the origin of *Sinn* rather uninteresting.

Hacker is quite correct in his assessment of Winch's 'solution' as "ingenious, but mistaken" (Hacker 1999: 128). Hacker considers Winch's view of 3.11 as a "forced reading" that fails to account for the rendering of "thought" at 3.11-3.111 in the *Proto-Tractatus* as "the possibility of a situation". And it also forgets that 3.12 of the *Proto-Tractatus* defines the "method of projection" in a way which cannot be construed as meaning the assertion of the proposition:

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<sup>77</sup> Hacker states that the Winch's interpretation leaves the method of projection "unexplained and unspecified" (Hacker 1999: 128). But given Winch's thesis on the irrelevance of extra-linguistic elements in the determination of *Sinn*, his specification of the method of projection as the *Satz* itself seems clear.

The method of projection is the *manner* of applying the propositional sign. (PTLP: 3.12; emphasis added)

As Hacker says, Wittgenstein, rightly or wrongly, probably assumed the perspicuity of 3.11's last sentence, i.e. that it would be seen as an evident explanation of the projection mentioned in the sentence prior; so further clarification was redundant. Indeed Hacker implies that this lack of clarification argues against any more obscure interpretations here.

There is however a need here to cite *internal* sources, as well as the external sources that Hacker convincingly cites, to back up the "natural" interpretation of 3.11 which is consistent with an intentionalist ('mentalist') reading. In what follows, I will bolster this reading, and suggest a certain inflection to it, by a thorough reading of 3.13.

3.12 and 3.13, along with 3.11, are all corollary to 3.1 which reads 'naturally' as saying that the thought is (as Malcolm puts it) "thought into" the proposition. This by itself cannot be read as lending exclusive comfort to either the mentalist or non-mentalist. For it is in itself noncommittal on whether the thought is annulled by its expression in the proposition. With 3.11 however, one cannot maintain one's neutrality: whatever reading it is given, one must end up in either the mentalist or non-mentalist camp. So too with 3.12:

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

3.12 sums up 3.1 and the first sentence of 3.11. Only as thought is the propositional sign a proposition. And again only as a projection is the propositional sign a proposition. The thought then is required to make an inert sign *sinnvol*. Winch says as much of course but claims that the thought is not something I have in addition to asserting the proposition: through the proposition

as projection a thought is perceptibly expressed; but in this expression the thought just *is* the proposition. 3.13, however, cannot, I think, be manipulated to fit this non-mentalist interpretation:

To the proposition belongs everything which belongs to the projection;  
but not what is projected.

Therefore the possibility of what is projected, but not this itself. (3.13)

Now reading the first sentence as implying that what is projected does belong to the "projection" but not the proposition, can be immediately ruled out. For "projection" (recalling 3.11) refers to the propositional *sign*, which in itself has no *Sinn*. The difference between the propositional sign and the proposition is that the latter is the former "in its projective relation to the world" (3.12). So the propositional sign, as a picture *of* a situation, is a proposition. And this 'picture-of-ness' is then "what is projected". So too what makes for this 'picture-of-ness' is *Sinn*. "What is projected" here then must refer to the *Sinn* of a *possible* situation depicted (3.11). So 3.13 states that what is projected does not "belong" to the proposition. If "the sense" is substituted for "what is projected" in the last statement, we get 'therefore the *possibility* of the sense, but not the sense itself', belongs to the proposition.

This is indeed strange. For one would think that, if the proposition is itself just the thinking of the situation depicted, as Winch would have it, then what is projected *would* belong to the proposition, since, with the expression, there would be nothing else to which to belong. This puzzle is only augmented by the sentences that follow on:

In the proposition, therefore, its sense [*Sinn*] is not actually [*noch nicht*] contained [*enthalten*], but the possibility of expressing it is.

("The content [*Der Inhalt*] of the proposition" means the content of the significant [*des sinnvollen Satzes*] proposition).

In the proposition the form of its sense [*Sinn*] is contained, but not its content (3.13)<sup>78</sup>.

The first and second sentence here seem to confirm the rather paradoxical view that the *sinnvoller Satz* "contains" no *Sinn*. However, the final sentence shows us that a distinction is being made here: the form and content of *Sinn* are being distinguished. As such the *sinnvoller Satz* does contain the "form of *Sinn*". The form of *Sinn* can be seen here as what makes for "the possibility of what is projected" and "the possibility of expressing" the *Sinn*. The form then, which the proposition "contains", is the possibility of 'sensefulness'. But can a *sinnvol* proposition be *sinnvol* if it does not contain the "content" of *Sinn*? After all, what is projected in the proposition cannot be merely the possibility of *Sinn*. Yet this is according to this passage all that the proposition or projection "contains".

I think that this reading of 3.13 rules out Winch's interpretation of the 3.1s. For the content of *Sinn* is explicitly excluded from what is "contained" in the proposition. However, this straight forward interpretation then creates an even bigger problem than it solves. For is it not ludicrous to suggest that the proclaimed bearer of *Sinn* does not include<sup>79</sup> that of which it is the bearer? Indeed it is; but it turns out that this is not being suggested by Wittgenstein in 3.13.

What Wittgenstein is trying to describe in 3.13 is the essential relationship between thought and language. But it is a subtle relation that is reflected in the nuanced meaning of the words *enthalten* [contained] and *gehört* [belongs to]. What Wittgenstein is saying here is that the

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<sup>78</sup> The Ogden translation of these passages is sometimes awkward; hence the present translation is slightly altered. "*Noch nicht*" is rendered "not actually" after Pears-McGuinness. Also, at the end of the same sentence an "is" has been added.

<sup>79</sup> Pears and McGuinness render *gehört* as "includes" rather than "belongs to", which is the Ogden rendering. Implicit in what follows is an argument that the Ogden translation is more appropriate, since "includes" improperly curtails the meaning of *gehört*.

*Sinn* of a proposition is "contained", in one sense of the word, by the proposition and not "contained", in another sense of the word, by the proposition.

In the third sentence of 3.13 *enthalten* is used in a way that is emblematic of this equivocality. There, the proposition does not 'contain' its *Sinn*. But here the other meaning of 'contained' must be recognized. In its role of expressing the *Sinn*, the proposition must have as part of it that *Sinn*. *Enthalten* here is a strict cognate of *der Inhalt* [the content]; its meaning is similar to the meaning of 'contains' when I speak of what my garage contains (car, lawnmower, etc.). So it is in this simple usage that the proposition *must* contain the *Sinn* if it is to discharge its expressed duty. What then can "contained" mean in 3.13 if not this? I contend that, since 3.13 denies that the *Sinn* is contained in the proposition, Wittgenstein must be speaking of 'contained' in the sense of 'restricted to' (rather like the 1950s U.S. Defense Department meaning in its use of the phrase 'Policy of Containment'). In this view then, what 3.13 is meant to get across is that *Sinn* is not contained by the proposition; it is not confined to the proposition. So on the one hand, the proposition is of course the *container* of the *Sinn*; but the *Sinn* is not *contained* by the proposition. That is, the *Sinn* does "belong to" the proposition -- i.e. it can "include" the *Sinn* -- but it does not "belong to" the proposition in another important way.

This then leads to the second term embodying the ambiguity of 3.13: *gehört* [belongs to]. The first sentence of 3.13 states that what is projected (the possible situation depicted, the *Sinn*), does not belong to the proposition. Here again is the same ambiguity as with *enthalten* along the lines of 'liberty from' and 'confinement to'. I may own a dog; so the dog *belongs* to me. My dog, on the other hand, may *belong* to an obedience school; but the school does not *own* him. With respect to *Sinn* in its relation to the proposition in the *Tractatus* then, what the use of *gehört*

implies is what the latter example shows: the proposition can contain the *Sinn*, but it does not, so to speak, *own* the *Sinn*.

The proposition does contain the form of the *Sinn* (according to 3.13's last sentence), the possibility of the *Sinn* (3.13's second sentence), and the possibility of expressing the *Sinn* (3.13's third sentence). It is thus, as it were, *set up* specifically to contain the *Sinn*.

So it is that the *Sinn* of a proposition does not *belong to* the proposition but the proposition can *contain* the *Sinn*, i.e. can express the *Sinn*. Winch's view would mean that 'ownership' of the *Sinn* is transferred from the thought to the proposition in the thought's expression. But 3.13 bespeaks of no such transfer. Indeed, that the proposition contains only the form of *Sinn*, i.e. the possibility of expressing it, militates against Winch's view.<sup>80</sup> And this lends no small support to the advocates of the so-called mentalist view.

Does this then rehabilitates the two pillars of the mentalist view? Well, the *Sinn* is *not* contained by the proposition, which seems to leave the thought as the only candidate. So it seems pillar (1) is resuscitated. And given that the proposition is not simply the thought, it seems an active correlation needs take place between the thought and the proposition; hence the resurrection of pillar (2) is effected. However, what the preceding shows is that, if there are merely two candidates to which the *Sinn* can (in the strong sense) belong, and if one candidate is ruled out -- in this case, the proposition -- then the other candidate wins by default. So, in this case, thought *must* fulfil the roles given it by the mentalist view. *If*, that is, there are but two candidates.

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<sup>80</sup> This might seem a 'forced reading' in Hacker's sense of the phrase. But it is, I think, the only way to understand the seeming contradiction of *das sinnvollen Satzes* without *Sinn*; and that the *Sinn* is conveyed by the *Satz*, yet the *Satz* does not "contain" the *Sinn*, nor does the *Sinn* "belong to" the *Satz*.

This is however not the case in the *Tractatus*. For Winch does knock down the mentalist view on thought insofar as he shows the thought's incapacity for the role given it by that view. But his alternative, i.e. that there is no need of correlation between proposition and thought *because* the proposition (in its expression) *is* the thought, fails as well for the reason cited above (i.e. 3.13 makes it clear that propositions themselves can only express *Sinn* but do not contain it). What then, I contend, is needed to pull together the aforementioned passages -- those from the *Tractatus*, the *Proto-Tractatus*, the letter to Russell, etc. -- into a coherent view, is a clear differentiation between the thought [*Gedanke*] and *thinking* [*Denken*] in the *Tractatus*.

(b) Thinking and the "Extra-linguistic"

To recapitulate then, it is clear that *Sinn* in the *Tractatus* must be determinate. This means that a proposition with *Sinn* must say something definite about the world, i.e. either "yes or no" (4.023). As such all signs must clearly have an object. So the *Bedeutung* of each sign contained in the proposition must be determinate for the *Sinn* of the proposition to be determinate. This can only be the case through acquaintance with the objects.

*Sinn* however doesn't "belong to" the proposition (3.13). So too *Sinn* is not "contained" in (by) the proposition (3.13). "Thoughts" consist of inert psychical constituents and the logical relations between those constituents *only* (CL: 125; Malcolm 1986: 65). This yields two consequences: a) thoughts cannot contain *Sinn* either; and b) thoughts as well cannot *actively* correlate the possible situation and the proposition. That is, thoughts are not a 'correlator'; rather they are, so to speak, a 'correlatee'. A thought is correlated with a possible situation or with a proposition.

So that which correlates cannot "belong to" either of the correlatees (i.e. the proposition or thought). To illustrate: say that (proposition or thought) '*p*' is a *picture of* (possible situation) *p*. *p* is a fact, but so is '*p*' in its own right. The constituents and structure of '*p*' make '*p*' a fact. These elements and what I have called their *intra*-factual relations (see B.I.2. above) are thus part of '*p*'. The '*picture of*'-ness, what I have called the *inter*-factual relation (i.e. "projective relation" (3.13); "representing relation" (2.1514); "co-ordinations", "feelers" (2.1515)), is not a part of the picture; it does not "belong to" the picture; i.e. not an element of the facticity of the picture. Nonetheless, the inter-factual relation is required in the dynamic *act* of picturing. Indeed, '*p*' is not a proposition proper, i.e. not a picture of *p*, without the participation of the inter-factual relation.<sup>81</sup>

What can be concluded from the preceding then is that this "representing relation" or inter-factual relation is *thinking* [*denken*] à la 3.11. It is the active correlator, and so is distinct from the *Gedanke*. Further, it is clear that it is to thinking that *Sinn* "belongs" in the stronger sense. Thinking is the *act* through which *Sinn* is projected; it is the method of projection of *Sinn* (3.11). Thinking does not "belongs to" either situation, proposition, or thought. Thinking is itself not a picture; nor is it fact.

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<sup>81</sup> The objection might be made that Wittgenstein at one point says that the picture "reaches up to reality" (2.1511), and even more explicitly says that the representing relation *does* "belong to" [*gehört*] the picture: "According to this view the representing relation which makes it a picture, also *belongs to* the picture" (2.1513; emphasis added). What is puzzling about 2.1513 is that Wittgenstein distances himself from what this passage says by beginning with "According to this view/conception" [*Nach dieser Auffassung*]. This seems the sort of thing one would say in referring to a view not one's own (and, indeed at 6.125 he uses *Auffassung* in speaking of the "old conception of logic" (6.125), and its verb form in speaking of what is conceived by "contemporary superficial psychology" (5.5421)). On this basis I would argue that 2.1513 is a tentative view. For the 'sculpture' that is the *Tractatus* (see B.I.1. above) is taking its final form by increments. At the 2.1s thought and thinking have not yet been introduced; the only components are picture and pictured and it would seem most reasonable to see the representing relation as belonging to the former rather than the latter.

So since thinking is not a fact it is inexpressible. Thinking is shown in propositions, but not expressible in propositions. And without thinking, propositions are only the possibility of the expression of *Sinn*; they themselves contain only the *form* of *Sinn*, not its content (3.13).

In the *Tractatus* then, is what shows but is not said by the proposition a part of the proposition? This is an important question since we need to decide with Winch whether *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* require any so-called "extra-linguistic" elements. And it can be inferred from the above that what it is that shows in a proposition (or a thought for that matter) is by no means unitary. For one aspect of what shows is the intra-factual relations in the picture which mimic their counterparts in the pictured. This aspect is shown by the proposition. *And*, since these relations are (as we have seen) essential to the picture's facticity, this aspect is indeed also part of the proposition. But with regard to the inter-factual relation (i.e. thinking), though it is an aspect of what the proposition shows, it is not a part of the proposition. It is only a (necessary) participant in the proposition *qua* proposition. For a proposition is not a picture *of* anything without inter-relation.

In short, a requisite aspect of what shows in a proposition is extra-linguistic, and this extra-linguistic element is *thinking*. This is akin to Malcolm's "the sense of the thought is *thought into* the sentence" (Malcolm 1986: 66).

## 2. *Realism and Transitional Vocabulary*

Cora Diamond, in her *The Realistic Spirit*, argues persuasively that crucial to an understanding of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is the proper understanding of his view that there is no such thing as a philosophical thesis or doctrine.<sup>82</sup> "[T]here is almost nothing", she says, "in Wittgenstein which is of value and which can be grasped if it is pulled away from that view of philosophy" (Diamond 1993: 179). She has been very influential in her view that the *Tractatus* has suffered from a widespread misreading linked to a certain forgetfulness about Wittgenstein's attitude toward philosophy. This forgetfulness, she contends, is testament to a lack of understanding of the root of Wittgenstein's view in Frege's and Russell's work. This, for Diamond, has resulted in a general misreading of Wittgenstein's *saying/showing* distinction.

Diamond's main claim is that the category of *Unsinn* in the *Tractatus* is not to be thought of as 'deeply' meaningful, or as yielding further sub-categories of greater or lesser *!Unsinn*. In the essay "Throwing Away the Ladder", she defends what has been characterized as the "austere view of nonsense" (Ferreira 1994: 31); i.e. she argues that the challenge Wittgenstein puts forth in the *Tractatus* is to see what he calls *Unsinn* as "plain *Unsinn*". For her, to see the *Sinn/Unsinn* division in the *Tractatus* as implying anything other than a real division between propositions of gibberish and simple empirical propositions is to "chicken out" (Diamond 1993: 194). She "suggests" that the *Tractatus* be read as holding to a uniformity of *Unsinn* -- what she calls "plain nonsense":

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<sup>82</sup> This is a view at odds with many commentators, a prominent example of which is Wittgenstein friend and colleague F. P. Ramsey: "we must then take seriously that it [philosophy] is nonsense, and not pretend, as Wittgenstein does, that it is important nonsense" (Ramsey 1931: 263).

Here is how I am suggesting we interpret Wittgenstein. The very idea of the philosophical perspective from which we consider as sayable *or* as unsayable necessities that underlie ordinary being so, or possibilities as themselves objective features of reality, sayably *or* unsayably: that very perspective itself is the illusion, created by sentences like 'A is an object', which we do not see to be simply nonsense, plain nonsense. 'A is an object' is no more than an innocently meaningless sentence like 'Socrates is frabble' (Diamond 1993: 195).

Diamond's main claim in *Throwing Away the Ladder* is found in these last sentences. This claim is based on a reading of the *Tractatus* rooted in, again, the view that Wittgenstein is following in the footsteps of Kant and Frege, especially in regard to their view of the 'self-agreement of the understanding'<sup>43</sup>:

That idea of the understanding as, in its correct use, in agreement not with some external thing but with itself, is central in my reading of Frege and Wittgenstein... (Diamond 1993: 29).

This self-agreement thesis of Diamond's is that in the *Tractatus*, what can be said with *Sinn* is the measure of what can be thought. As we will see (1a below), only with thoughts that can be said with *Sinn* is the understanding in agreement with itself.

One cannot say anything meaningful beyond propositions of fact; such non-factual propositions may be "legitimate", i.e. well formed, but simply empty, and thus *unsinnig*. The *Tractatus* itself however is neither fish nor fowl in this regard. For Diamond, the sentences therein are exempt insofar as they are only meant to be "transitional"; and as transitional they are "useful" and so, apparently, sometimes not quite empty. And though she does not so readily dismiss the logic of the *Tractatus*, Diamond does dismiss *das Mystische* as something definitely

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<sup>43</sup> "Logic is to be considered as:... a science of the necessary laws of thinking without which no use of the understanding and of reason takes place at all, which consequently are the conditions under which alone the understanding can and shall agree with itself" (Kant 1800: 14-5). Language was taken to be the other element required for such "self-agreement" by the subsequent "language critical" followers of Kant such as Herder, Jacobi, Reinhold, Humboldt, Hermann, and Gruppe (See Cloeren 1988: 139-40).

excised in the "framing"<sup>24</sup> passages of the book. I will argue that if the framing passages are thus taken as paramount, a position I agree with, then contrary to Diamond's view, the Fregean view of the sayable as defining the thinkable, *à la* the self-agreement thesis, must be incorrect in its application to the *Tractatus*. In other words, that *Unsinn* is uniformly unsayable does not require that it is uniformly unthinkable. Near the end of the present chapter, I will point out a way in which one can understand Wittgenstein to have himself held to this distinction.

(a) Philosophical Doctrine

(i) *'The Understanding in Agreement With itself'* -- In Diamond's view, the *Tractatus* is metaphysical only insofar as "in holding that the logical relations of our thoughts to each other can be shown, completely shown, in an analysis of our propositions" (Diamond 1993: 18). That there is a certain logical order in the propositions of language (otherwise one could not explain how one is able to understand and use them) which makes for the possibility of analysis of propositions, and thus thoughts, is for Diamond a metaphysical assumption Wittgenstein shared with early analytic thinkers. This is however, for her, not the normal sort of metaphysics because "what is metaphysical there is not the content of some belief but *the laying down of a requirement*, the requirement of logical analysis" (Diamond 1993: 19). That is, since nothing worthwhile can be gathered from Wittgenstein if one takes less than seriously his notion that there are no philosophical doctrine, then one should not see Wittgenstein as laying out a metaphysical doctrine. Rather, pointers, so to speak, for avoiding doctrine of this kind are being set down in the *Tractatus*. The metaphysical according to Diamond's view of the *Tractatus* is then only to be

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<sup>24</sup> Diamond's term for the Preface and concluding passages (Diamond 1993: 19).

found in language, not in the world. The movement from the former to the latter is what she sees as the usual mistake made by most Wittgenstein commentators:

The metaphysics there is not in something other than language and requiring that it be like this or like that; *that* sort of metaphysics the *Tractatus* uses only ironically: it uses apparently metaphysical statements, but in a way which is disposed of by the sentences which frame the book, in the Preface and final remarks (Diamond 1993: 19).

The *Tractatus* itself according to Diamond says nothing about the underlying features of the world; or when it does these propositions should only be taken as provisionally useful, ironic propositions. These are the so called "transitional" propositions of the *Tractatus*. The notion of plain nonsense is that sentences of plain nonsense, when viewed correctly, are simply empty, harmless propositions. Though they may be purposefully set up to seem deeply meaningful, this according to Diamond merely serves a transitional purpose for Wittgenstein.

Diamond writes that one finds

in Kant's thought, in Frege's writings, and in the *Tractatus*, different workings out of what it is for the understanding to be 'in agreement with itself' and for logic to teach us what that is (Diamond 1993: 29).

In the movement from Kant to Frege to Wittgenstein, Diamond sees the common thread to be the view that the agreement with logic is the understanding agreeing with itself. Frege moved away from Kant's view in that he saw the latter's categories as inexpressible. However, he did see the "Laws of Logic" or axioms as expressible in *sinnvol*, and true propositions whose application was of a strictly general nature. Wittgenstein in turn moved away from Frege in seeing these axioms as also inexpressible. Hence Diamond reads Wittgenstein as expanding the view that the agreement with logic is an agreement of the understanding with itself.

The implication of Diamond's self-agreement thesis is that there is

no such thing as genuinely thinking something about a thing, and getting its logical character wrong: you may come up with nonsense, but in coming out with nonsense, or saying it to yourself, you are not *thinking* something which disagrees with how things logically are (Diamond 1993: 30-1).

It is clear then that Diamond considers Wittgenstein, as Frege before him, to have used "*Unsinn*" as a qualification of *thinking* and not, e.g., as a qualification of mere expression:

if I understand a person who utters nonsense, I enter imaginatively into the seeing of it as sense. I as it were become the person who thinks he thinks it. I treat that person's nonsense in imagination as if I took it to be an intelligible sentence of a language I understand, *something I find in myself the possibility of meaning* (Diamond 1990: 81).

For Diamond, an important lesson that Wittgenstein took away from Frege's "concept-script" was principally that ordinary language leads us to believe that we are really *thinking* about certain things that, given a lucid view provided by a perspicuous script, cannot really be thought at all. It is not then so for Diamond that, as most commentators contend, the doctrines of metaphysics are the case, and thinkable, but "unsayably *so*". Diamond states that the *Tractatus* "is not an attack on metaphysics as merely unsayable. What cannot be thought, cannot be thought, and not cheating on that means not treating 'cannot be thought' as meaning *unsayably so*" (Diamond 1993: 32).

As we have seen, Diamond states that there is no metaphysical *it* to which the *Tractatus* attempts to point. Rather, the possibility of analysis is the sole metaphysical assumption here. But the possibility of analysis is not itself thought of by Diamond as thus having an ontological status. It, the possibility of analysis, is not an *it*. Is the possibility of analysis sayable then? Take

a typical proposition of logical analysis: 'The proposition is analysable.' Does one understand this proposition apart from the truth of other propositions? Does 'analysable' have an adjectival meaning here? Does it refer to an empirical property? Obviously not. As such, the proposition 'The proposition is analysable' is *Unsinn*. If one goes further and says with Diamond that *this* proposition is *plain Unsinn*, then we are also saying (*pace* Diamond) that it is unthinkable. That is, that 'The proposition is analysable' has no possible analysis. But the proposition itself is *about* analysis; if we disallow it as unthinkable, *then there is no possible analysis*. And all that one can take from Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein which Diamond deems worthwhile, is not even possible. Diamond like most of the other commentators she is arguing against, does not take seriously the problem that, to begin a search, as we have seen with Kierkegaard's Plato, there must be a plausible hypothetical which yields an interrogative, e.g. 'Is there a way to analyse propositions to yield clearly the content of all possible thought?' And this hypothetical *must be* thinkable, *and* not sayable. To say that the content of the above proposition is really not thinkable since it yields no analysis, is to be deprived of the criterion necessary to decide what is thinkable. In other words, unless there is a distinction between thinking and language (which we have already pointed to the Preface as showing) then analysis itself is viciously circular in that it excludes itself as a possibility.

Diamond disparages other interpreters of Wittgenstein for using propositions of plain *Unsinn*. For example, she points out that Norman Malcolm's statement "there is a fixed form of the world, but it is not a fact that there is a fixed form of the world", is plain *Unsinn* since it is of the form "there is a *b*, but there is not a *b*." But the form of Malcolm's statement is different than this. The second clause is actually a qualification of the first and this is not reflected in Diamond's

representation of it. And by way of this Malcolm means to say that Wittgenstein is creating a distinction between the 'is-ness' of something, so to speak, and that something's facticity.

At any rate, pinning such a charge on Malcolm or any other commentator is clearly reflexive. Take as an example Diamond's sentence only a few lines below (whose content will be looked at below): "Wittgenstein does not ask that his propositions be understood but that *he* be [understood]". Surely this too is a bit of *Unsinn* of the plain variety. For in the *Tractatus* we have a book that contains only propositions; on what basis do we distinguish Wittgenstein *himself* from those propositions? Diamond's sentence is itself actually of the form (given 5.542) 'Wittgenstein does not ask that *p* be understood, but that *p* be understood.' So if Malcolm's proposition is to be considered as such, Diamond's distinction between Wittgenstein himself and Wittgenstein's propositions is also *plain Unsinn*. In both cases something is being said which cannot be said.

In fact both Malcolm and Diamond are in their own way aping the nuance of the *Tractatus* itself. The *Tractatus* is replete with propositions that do not refer to corresponding facts. For example: "Reality is compared with the proposition" (4.05). Wittgenstein would deny that we could *say* anything with *Sinn* about 'reality' itself. Diamond is in fact placing an impossible demand on Malcolm and other commentators -- as well as herself. For what cannot be avoided when analysing the *Tractatus* itself is precisely yielding plain *Unsinn*. The problem is akin to the distinction made between mention and use: in the proposition "George's face is red" the word red is used; in the proposition "'Red' refers the colour of George's face" however the word red is mentioned. In the former we employ the word, i.e. we are saying something *with* the word. In the latter however we are saying something *about* the word. In an analogous way, to write a

book *about* the *Tractatus*, one cannot be expected to have written a book *with* the *Tractatus*; i.e. one cannot be expected to follow the rules laid down by the *Tractatus* in writing about the *Tractatus*. For if one did, one would only be allowed to employ the propositions of natural science which would, as a means by which to comment on the *Tractatus* itself, be rather useless.<sup>85</sup>

For Diamond, the notion that there is anything *in any way*, that is *Unsinn* but nonetheless "deep" *Unsinn* is to see the *Tractatus* as having an *implicit* metaphysical doctrine. That one cannot say this deep *Unsinn* (since, like Malcolm's "fixed form", it is not a fact), but it nonetheless refers to *something*, is according to Diamond, precisely the view that Wittgenstein was writing against. Such propositions as Malcolm's seem to say something since they are formed like factual propositions, but do not say anything factual. The wrong way to take this for Diamond is the way the *Tractatus* is most often taken: that some statements that *seem* to say something factual but actually do *not* say anything of this kind, actually do "indicate" something *deeper* than a factual level; in short, they say something about the metaphysics of facts and hence the world.

(ii) *Transitional Vocabulary and Transitional Thoughts* -- Diamond refers to Geach, for one, as *incorrectly* reading Wittgenstein's notion of showing only within a Fregean horizon, and hence seeing the shown as an unspeakable feature of reality "deep in the nature of things". This for Diamond is to carry that analogy to Frege too far. She sees the *Tractatus* as a critique of this view, and reads 6.54 accordingly: "to throw away the ladder is, among other things, to throw away in the end the attempt to take seriously the language of 'features of reality'" (Diamond

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<sup>85</sup> Malcolm in his statement could in fact be said to be attuned to Kierkegaardian nuance in the *Tractatus*. For his statement is very much like Kierkegaard's statement that the understanding keeps colliding with the unknown which does exist but, is so far as it is unknown does not exist. Here Kierkegaard too is making a distinction between being and facticity.

1993: 181). Wittgenstein, she argues, saw a way to achieve this through Russell's view of propositions as reflective of certain features of reality, rather than names thereof.

Frege treats propositions and complex names in the same way: if the definite description does not refer to a real object, and so is 'empty', then the function in which the definite description occurs as argument -- whether we call that function a proposition or complex name -- is *Unsinn*.

Russell however, treats propositions and complex names in a different way: the definite description (e.g. "Beethoven's half-sister") in a *complex name* (e.g. "the father of Beethoven's only half-sister"), if non-referential and hence empty, also renders the complex name empty. In a proposition, however, the effect is not the same. The functionality of a proposition is distinct from that of a complex name in that a proposition is *not* rendered illegitimate if it contains an empty definite description; so, e.g., "The round square does not exist" has a *Sinn* and is true.

According to Diamond, Wittgenstein followed Russell in taking the bivalence of a proposition as always prior to, and not annulled by, the truth or falsity of that proposition itself (or any other proposition). So Diamond argues, referring to 5.4733, that to give the influence of Russell its due is to see that Wittgenstein makes an important distinction between a "legitimately constructed sentence" [*rechtmässig gebildeter Satz*] with *Sinn* and similarly constructed propositions without *Sinn*.

With the above distinction between Frege's and Russell's views of propositions in hand, Diamond is ready to rebut the argument, generally seen as a "knock down" one, that posits the existence of the *Tractatus* itself as defence exhibit number one in attesting to the so-called non-realist or mentalist view. That argument says that if Wittgenstein is not arguing that there is something "unspeakably so", then the *Tractatus* itself is impossible. For if the *Tractatus* is

straight *Unsinn* rather than deep unspeakable *Unsinn*, then how could one "use" it, as Wittgenstein suggests at 6.54, to see "the world rightly". Is Wittgenstein employing sheer irony here? Diamond wishes to dispute that 6.54 should be taken ironically, but also wishes to dispute the argument that, given the *Tractatus* itself, there must be an ineffable lesson that remains even as the ladder is thrown away.

As to 6.54, she refers to the *Tractatus*, which is of course in the end *unsinnig*, as nonetheless employing a "transitional vocabulary" to say what cannot be said. This is not, however, to say that Wittgenstein's work is sheer irony. Rather the transitional language of which the *Tractatus* is comprised "may be useful or even for a time essential", though "in the end to be let go of and honestly to be taken as real nonsense" (Diamond 1993: 181).<sup>86</sup> Diamond reiterates repeatedly that "once the transition is made, the analyzed sentences must in a sense speak for themselves" (Diamond 1993: 184). The notion that something unsayably so about reality is left over after the ladder has been thrown away is seen to be hogwash "after recognizing what the *Tractatus* has aimed at getting one to recognize" (Diamond 1993: 182)

The question remains however: how does the *Tractatus* employ empty (though perhaps legitimately formed) propositions to help the reader see the world aright? If propositions are plainly, benignly empty, as "Socrates is identical" is, can they aid one in getting from A to B? Or indeed indicate that one is at A rather than B? To answer this objection, Diamond puts forth the lively notion that the *Tractatus* itself operates in much the same way as a riddle.

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<sup>86</sup> Anscombe has a similar interpretation: e.g., "Wittgenstein regards the sentences of the *Tractatus* as helpful, in spite of their being strictly *unsinnig* according to the very doctrine they propound". Anscombe is however clear, unlike Diamond, that Wittgenstein considered this sort of *Unsinn* as not leading to the same level or error and "darkness" as other sorts of *Unsinn* (Anscombe 1971: 162).

Diamond's basic position in "Riddles and Anselm's Riddle" is that one need not know what a question or a problem posed means -- nor have a formulated means of solving the puzzle -- to know a good solution if one sees it. A riddle is much the same. Hence it might be the case that a riddle posed might mean nothing at all; for a riddle's function "does not depend upon the riddle-phrase's being anything but a linguistic construction" (Diamond 1993: 35). Diamond is here seeming to set up a way in which legitimately formed propositions without *Sinn* such as those of the *Tractatus* can *provisionally* make sense.

Of course, it is the provisional, transitional part here that is problematic. Diamond uses the common riddle 'What has six legs, two heads and a tail', as an example. The answer, a horse and rider, when given reveals that the one to whom the riddle was posed did not have the right conception of the riddle question in the first place. The listener was under the impression, created by the wording of the question, that the riddle was referring to *one* thing that had all the features mentioned. In giving the answer, one gives the listener the correct reading of the riddle phrase. And indeed, as Diamond points out, to give the listener the correct reading would be tantamount to giving him or her the answer. This is very much in line with Wittgenstein's view that "the meaning of a question is the method of answering it.... Tell me *how* you are searching, and I will tell you *what* you are searching for". The point of a riddle is that it is designed to mislead; if the riddle question were readily understandable, there would *eo ipso* be no riddle. For the riddle depends upon the parameters of the search being at least unclear to the listener. Similarly, with respect to the *Tractatus* then, its propositions do not need to have *Sinn*, or be deep *Unsinn*, to lead the reader to view the world aright.

As a 'solution' to a fairly pressing interpretive problem of the *Tractatus*, Diamond is nonetheless quite tentative with her riddle hypothesis, referring to her chapter on riddles as "not so much a reply" to the "knock down" argument that the existence of the *Tractatus* itself is the best evidence for a deep *Unsinn* theory, but rather "as an indication of what sort of reply is possible" (Diamond 1993: 34).

(b) Thought as Doctrine

(i) *Thinking What Shows* -- One is tempted to demand of *all* the Wittgenstein literature an answer to the following questions: to *whom* are the features of language, the bearers of the unspeakable, imparted? If they are 'observed' by me, am I then *thinking* those features? According to the linkage between thought and language commonly alleged to hold in the *Tractatus*, I could not be thinking those features. But if the rules of the game are not *thought*, can I be conceived of as playing the game at all, not to say, correctly? Of course not. That which 'shows', must be *thought* if I consider that am able to in anyway discern a good from a bad understanding of the "logic of our language". I *am*, according to the *Tractatus*, thinking what features are shown.

For Wittgenstein however, thought must exceed knowledge proper for there to *be* knowledge proper at all. We must grasp what makes for proper knowledge however one defines proper knowledge (with whatever methodological rules regarding bivalence, propositional syntax, acquaintance, etc.). But what makes for proper knowledge *cannot* itself be a member of the class of proper knowledge. For if it was, the rule would be *eo ipso* inadequate *as a rule*; i.e., a further rule would be required to account for the propriety *qua* knowledge of the first rule, and so on.

The solution for Wittgenstein is of course not that of Russell, which in his Theory of Types, encourages the strategy of illimitable levels of discourse.<sup>87</sup>

In the 3.33s Wittgenstein questions any notion of illimitable levels. The procedure is based on Frege's function/object distinction and that a function is in itself incomplete insofar as an object is required for completion. At 3.333 Wittgenstein states that a function could not, as in Russell's paradox, be its own argument because " $F(F(fx))$ " cannot be seen as simply the function of " $F(fx)$ " since this would be to use the sign " $F$ " equivocally. The inner and outer " $F$ " in " $F(F(fx))$ " have a different form; namely, " $\theta(fx)$ " and " $\mu(\theta(fx))$ ". The function is determined by its form; it is nothing in itself. A less than adequate notation however obscures this fact. Now, take for example Diamond's rule that logic is internal to the understanding, the upshot of which is that to think something outside logic is to think nothing at all; so one cannot in fact think 'outside' of logic (Diamond 1993: 31). The problem with this proposition is of course that it is itself 'outside' of logic. It is a proposition about the limits of thought. As Wittgenstein says in the Preface, to draw a limit we have to be able to think *both sides* of it. So to draw a limit to thought we have to be able to think both sides of thought -- an absurdity. If I am able to think Diamond's rule, then it must be thinkable. If it is a proposition about thought itself, it must be outside. So if I can think it, Diamond's internality rule is *eo ipso* inadequate as a rule. If I cannot think it, it is as well obviously inadequate.

Recall that in Kierkegaard's Platonism the ability to ask a question *shows* in effect that I can find an answer. However I have to be able to think that this is what it means. And (as the reasoning goes) I can then ask a question about the meaning of question asking, and too can hope

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<sup>87</sup> Russell points out in his introduction to the *Tractatus* that this would as well require illimitable levels of logic (p23).

to find an answer. And I can then ask a question about the meaning of the meaning of question asking, etc. So it is the equation of the limits of thought and language that is the cause of the infinite metaphysical regress. For if a rule shows (e.g. that I can ask a question *means* that I can find an answer) I can think that rule. And if I am able to think it according to this linkage, surely I can say it (ask a question, get an answer).

Diamond shares in the common but incorrect view that, for Wittgenstein, thought and language share the same limit. We can grasp that A is an object, but to *say* it is when the logical problems occur. Namely, if you can say "A is an object", normal empirical propositions *will have a form that is applied to itself*. For 'object', is here used in a formal sense in an empirical proposition with the subject constituent "A". The proposition is meant as one about the form of A. That is, with the equation of thought's and language's limits, if our thought can isolate A (i.e. can ask a question about it *à la* Plato ) we can then (according to the Platonic view of knowledge) *say* what it is. However if one goes in that direction, Wittgenstein rightly saw, we have an infinite regress where, given the logic of propositions, propositions about A and propositions about propositions about A are taken on a par. Since this is inadequate, we are then forced to consider Russell's Type theory, which violates the rule that logic should take care of itself.

(ii) *'Ladder? What Ladder?': Transitional Vocabulary as Heuristic Paradox* -- An important point that Wittgenstein makes in the *Tractatus* is at 6.53 wherein he states that philosophy, properly wrought, would include only empirical propositions, and would as such not seem like philosophy at all. However, "when someone wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning [*Bedeutung*] to certain signs in his propositions." The question remains: if, as Diamond suggests, we must throw away the ladder

and recognize the propositions of the *Tractatus* as "plain" *Unsinn*, on what basis *would* one go about demonstrating to a metaphysical speaker that his sentences are *Unsinn*?

At one point Diamond gives notice to the reader that she is about "to use the 'transitional' vocabulary, the before-you-throw-away-the-ladder mode of speaking" (Diamond 1993: 185). By this she means to signal that she is fully aware that she is about to speak *Unsinn*. With this 'transitional' vocabulary, Diamond suggests an answer to the question of how we can even begin to tutor a metaphysical speaker. That is, we need merely address the speaker's problem using this transitional vocabulary. And since it is a "before-you-throw-away-the ladder" mode of communication, it seems clear that the *Tractatus* itself would qualify as an example. So one would speak (only provisionally of course) in a rather traditional logico-philosophical way. One might say 'the words *a*, *b*, and *c* in your proposition have no given *Bedeutung*.' If further elaboration is required, one might then stipulate that 'if *a* is not readily seen to stand for an object, then the sentences including *a* will not have *Sinn* ...', etc. This transitional vocabulary however creates more questions than it answers. For if, in throwing away the ladder, I really and truly give up on the idea of the propositions of the *Tractatus* being anything other than plain *Unsinn*, how do I find myself able to appeal to the lesson of these propositions (i.e. the before-you-throw-away-the-ladder lesson) to set the metaphysical speaker straight? If the ladder is really, plainly *unsinnig*, by what right do I temporarily pick it up again, when the need to school someone arises? Indeed, how *can* I make provisional appeal to thoughts which I cannot otherwise think<sup>88</sup>? By Diamond's own admission (as she points out with respect to Malcolm), the transitional vocabulary will simply not be thinkable once the ladder is thrown away.

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<sup>88</sup> Recall Kierkegaard's "ultimate paradox": "to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think" (PF: 37).

Let us then see this conclusion in its harshest light. Let us be brave; let us not "chicken out". From this hearty vantage point the throwing away of the ladder is indeed an *absolute* act. For what is unthinkable could not be something simply laid aside. Rather to throw away what is really unthinkable means that that which is thrown away *disappears without a trace*. One minute it is there, the next it is not. So if I were somehow able to mention the ladder to you the moment after it was thrown away, your dumbfounded response would be: 'Ladder? What ladder?', while your eyes would search the vicinity for a *Bedeutung* to this word.

*This* is what it truly means to throw away the ladder in Diamond's sense. Under such absolute terms then, her transitional vocabulary, the propositions of which are proffered to enlighten the metaphysical speaker, could not be appealed to in the way 6.53 suggests, unless one could somehow conjure them back from their "plainly" unthinkable depth.<sup>89</sup> But Wittgenstein is at least clear and uncontroversial in this: "What we cannot think, that we cannot think" (5.61). Even if you stoutly wish to think the unthinkable, you cannot. The corollary of this is that, if you are thinking it, it is thinkable. So in cognitively gathering up the ladder in aid of redressing the metaphysical speaker, one demonstrates that one is thinking the ladder *even after it has been thrown away*. Hence one demonstrates that before and after it's being thrown away, the ladder is thinkable. Diamond's transitional vocabulary then may well be an instance of instructively saying the unsayable. But it *cannot* be an instance of saying and thinking the unthinkable. So Diamond's appeal to a transitional vocabulary is itself an instance of chickening out: if the *Tractatus*, after throwing away the ladder, is plain *Unsinn*, then there simply is no way to speak in a "before-you-throw-away-the-ladder" vocabulary. As such we could not "demonstrate" to the

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<sup>89</sup> Indeed if there were no consistency between pre- and post- throwing away of the ladder vocabulary, would not the structure of our propositions be in flux? Might not my correction of the metaphysical speaker at time  $t_1$  be different than at time  $t_2$ ?

metaphysical speaker that he has "given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions" (6.53); for such a demonstration would *require* a, so to speak, 'pre-throw-away' vocabulary.

Here then Diamond herself demonstrates that the propositions of the *Tractatus* cannot be plain *Unsinn* after they are thrown away. Or more precisely they *are* plain *Unsinn* but what they *mean* is not. (We will elaborate this important distinction in a moment).

The question then arises naturally: are we to accord a *truth value* to such 'ineffable thoughts'? Are the propositions of the *Tractatus* true propositions? One is tempted to answer this by appealing to Wittgenstein's later view that certain propositions of the language behave as empirical propositions but are actually the 'rule' of such propositions as occur in a particular language game:

It is clear that our empirical propositions do not all have the same status, since one can lay down such a proposition and turn it from an empirical proposition into a norm of description (OC: §167).<sup>90</sup>

These norms of description cannot be contradicted without throwing the whole of the empirical itself into disarray. Are the propositions of the *Tractatus* meant to be such norms of description?

Again, in order for what we say -- all of us including Diamond -- to show anything, it must be thinkable for us. So if we can think what needs to be in place for truth or falsity to be generally discernible, i.e. what we might point out using a transitional vocabulary, we are thinking what shows in what is discernible as either true or false. But if it is thinkable, Diamond says, this just means that its opposite is also thinkable:

Even in thinking of it as true in all possible worlds, in thinking of it as something whose truth underlies ordinary being so and not being so, we think of it as itself *the case*; our thought contrasts it with as it were a different set of necessities (Diamond 1993: 195).

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. PI: §80ff, APR: 55.

And so the problem of deciding truth or falsity would intercede at a meta-level of language. Are the propositions of the *Tractatus* conceivably false?

(iii) *Formal Concepts, Properties, and Relations* -- Within the category of legitimate propositions without *Sinn*, e.g. "Socrates in frabble", to use an example of this that Diamond provides, there is a distinction to be made. Other such legitimate propositions similarly have constituents that refer to nothing and thus lack *Sinn*, but are further qualified as that which cannot be said but only shown. As Wittgenstein puts this:

That which expresses *itself* in language, we cannot express by language.  
The sentences *show* the logical form of reality.  
They exhibit it. (4.121)

Presumably, these propositions exhibit the logical form of reality to an exhibitee, as it were. So I, the exhibitee, would need to be able to think what shows, were I, e.g., obliged to recur to it in aid of correcting a metaphysical speaker (*à la* 6.53). In other words, as Wittgenstein says in the Preface, for that limit of language to be drawn, one needs to be able to think both sides of it. We can of course see certain distinctions in the *Tractatus*. As Diamond points out, there are *legitimate* propositions with *Sinn*, such as "The ball is blue" or "The table is to the left of the lamp". This sort of proposition is the only sort Wittgenstein considers admissible in the discourse of the natural sciences. There are also propositions of *Plain Gibberish*. These are simply mal-formed and so *illegitimate* propositions that are no more than a string of words in no discernible syntactical arrangement. For example, "Trumpet red boom." There are however also propositions made room for in the *Tractatus* that are *Unsinn* insofar as they are not simple empirical propositions, but are not plainly seen as gibberish. The two examples of this category

are "Socrates is identical" and "A is an object". So to start with we have the categories of plain sense, plain nonsense, and something that seems to be neither. I want to suggest in the following that there is a further distinction in the *Tractatus* within this third category. Namely, there is a distinction there between (what I will call) *Material Nonsense*, of which "Socrates is identical" is an example, and *Formal Nonsense* of which "A is an object" is an example. As we will see, the former type of propositions ends up being plain nonsense; whereas the latter type, according to certain passages in the *Tractatus*, are not plain nonsense but rather play a role in the language. They are, as Diamond ironically refers to such propositions, "deep nonsense".<sup>91</sup>

As we have seen, Diamond argues that all nonsense is indistinguishably *plain* nonsense. She does however make an exception for propositions of a "transitional vocabulary", i.e. propositions which are strictly nonsensical, but aid temporarily in a proper view of language. Clearly Diamond would include neither "Socrates is identical" nor "A is an object" as part of a transitional vocabulary. But there is then a real distinction between the two: the former can yield information only with the aid of further propositions defining "identical" adjectivally. For example if I were to add the qualification that the word "identical" is here used as a synonym of "Greek", the proposition "Socrates is identical" could then be seen as a simple empirical one. "A is an object" however is about *all* propositions. Our understanding of the utility of both propositions is as such dependent on other propositions. But the dependency is of a different type: "Socrates is identical" requires *specific* propositions to explain the meaning of an adjective it includes; "A is an object" however simply requires that there *be* propositions, i.e. it requires propositions generally for it to be understood. Once the ladder is thrown away, "A is an object" is thrown away as well.

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<sup>91</sup> In appropriating the term "deep" nonsense at this point, I mean it to refer to simply that which is not "plain" nonsense.

However "Socrates is identical" could never have been there to throw away in the first place; it could not have been part of the ladder at all.

This can be seen better if approached by a different avenue. The transitional vocabulary is for Diamond descriptive of something not there. As she puts it, there is no *it* described by the transitional propositions. It is only a reintroduction of psychologism, i.e. that which Wittgenstein was primarily writing against, that demands an *it* here. "A is an object" is for Diamond *Unsinn* not because of its formal or metaphysical meaning, but because "object" is not syntactically proper here. "Object" is put forward as a predicate when used in "A is an object", whereas in a proper English proposition object would be used as a variable, e.g. "The object is round", to denote something not (yet) given a name. This latter proposition would be legitimate and have *Sinn*, whereas "A is an object" is, for Diamond, gibberish.

Wittgenstein however makes a point of citing reasons of formalism for why "A is an object" is *unsinnig*. At 4.122, Wittgenstein states that he is equating what are referred to as formal properties, or properties of structure, with his term "internal relations". At 4.123 he states that an internal property is one of which it is unthinkable that its object does not possess it (the same definition is transferable to "internal *relations*"). So for example in "Blue is a colour", coloured-ness is an internal property of blue. That blue is not a colour is unthinkable. So

[t]he holding of such internal properties and relations cannot, however be asserted by propositions, but it shows itself in the propositions, which present the facts and treat of the objects in question (4.122).

And to reiterate the point after his discussion of objects, Wittgenstein states that:

The formal concept is already given with an object, which falls under it. One cannot therefore [*also*], introduce both the objects which fall under a formal concept *and* the formal concept itself, as primitive ideas. (4.12721)

Wittgenstein makes a distinction between formal concepts (e.g. "Blue is a *colour*") and proper concepts. The proper concept is a predicate subject with *Bedeutung* (e.g. "The ball is *blue*"). There is then a three way distinction here that is reminiscent of our above three-way split in the category of legitimate propositions. "The ball is blue" has been above described as a syntactically legitimate proposition, which too has a *Sinn*. We can now say that the term "blue" is an *external* or proper concept. This is *why* the proposition has a *Sinn*. "A is an object" is described above as too being a legitimate proposition with however no *Sinn*. We can now say that the term "object" is an *internal* or formal concept (like "colour" in the proposition "Blue is a colour", or "number" in "5 is a number"). This then is *why* the proposition has no *Sinn*. "Socrates is identical" (3) is also described above as a legitimate proposition that has no *Sinn*. We can now say that the term "identical" is a *material relational term* (as in, e.g. "my ball is *identical* to yours") *which exhibits the syntactical characteristics of a material property term* (e.g. "Socrates is *blue*"). And *this* then is *why* this proposition has no *Sinn*. In this way the *Unsinn* proposition "Socrates is identical" is distinct from the *Unsinn* proposition "A is an object". As well, "Socrates is identical" could not be considered provisionally instructive; i.e. it could not part of the "transitional vocabulary" that Diamond writes about. Indeed since identity is not a property, but a relation (5.473), Socrates *with* this property at all is unthinkable.

"A is an object", on the other hand, could be part of a transitional vocabulary. As stated, Wittgenstein refers to the external/internal division as applying in a like manner to both properties and relations. About relations in this regard he gives a parenthetical example:

This blue colour and that stand in the internal relation of brighter and darker eo ipso. It is unthinkable that *these* two objects should not stand in this relation. (4.123)

It is quite clear that such a relation *does* hold between two such objects, though that the relation holds cannot be expressed with a proposition. And if for Wittgenstein it is "unthinkable" that it should be otherwise, it *must* for him, in some way, be so; it is not sayably so, however. So that a sky blue ball and a navy blue ball have an internal relation of colour shade cannot be denied *and* cannot be asserted. And here then is the important point to make. *This relation, though unsayable and nonsensical must nonetheless be thinkable.* This is what Diamond must deny according to the position she takes, even in regard to her transitional vocabulary after the ladder is thrown away: if it is not sayable, this then *means* that it is not thinkable either; and all that is nonsense is plain gibberish. In this view, "A is an object" and "Socrates is identical" look like they say something more than "Trumpet red boom" but they do not. All three of these statements are for Diamond equally illusory. But from the above quotation, it seems clear that Wittgenstein is saying that this relation between the two shades is unsayable *and* thinkable.

"A is an object" (i.e. "*That* is an object"), like a proposition stating the relation between the two shades, must also be thinkable. The same is however not the case with "Socrates is identical". This statement represents the confusion of syntax of two material types. And this confusion does indeed lead to plain gibberish. So "Socrates is identical" is indeed not thinkable.

Such a gradation in *Unsinn*, notwithstanding that it is anathema to Diamond and her followers as it was sixty or so years previous to the *Wiener Kreis* and followers, is present in the *Tractatus*. This can be set out in the following way:

1. *Plain Gibberish* -- *Unsinnige* propositions such as "Trumpet red boom", have an obviously mal-formed syntax. Such propositions are not thinkable.

2. *Material Nonsense* -- *Unsinnige* propositions such as "Socrates is identical" that lack *Sinn* since a material concept within lacks *Bedeutung* because of improper use; i.e. a relation sign takes the place of a property sign, or vice versa.<sup>92</sup> Such propositions are not thinkable.

3. *Formal Nonsense* -- *Unsinnige* propositions such as "A is an object" that lack *Sinn* since the predicate noun "object" is not a material concept but is rather a formal concept. Nonetheless, if language is to be understood at all, according to the *Tractatus*, such propositions *must be* thinkable.

This latter category explains why Wittgenstein spends some time explaining the distinction between "formal" and "proper" (material) concepts; the lack of such a distinction is the cause of "very widespread" confusion amongst philosophers (4.122) and that "runs through the whole of the old logic" (4.126).

(iv) *The Search for An 'It'* -- If language did have the same limit as thought, then the *Tractatus* would be -- since both sides of a limit must be thinkable -- an exercise in trying to think what cannot be thought. For Diamond's Wittgenstein, if one cannot think outside language in a *complete* sense, then one cannot *think* outside at all. So, as in Meno's paradox, acquaintance without the possibility of insight, is false acquaintance. The problem for this view, as we have seen, is that the ability to draw a limit as referred to in the ("framing") Preface, relies on the ability to think, *in some sense*, outside the limit. In the *Tractatus*, a question without an answer is for Wittgenstein no real question (6.5). For it is the beginning of a search without the possibility of a resolute ending. This is what Kierkegaard refers to as the understanding's torment, which can only be eased by letting go of the notion of the possibility of a resolution. For Wittgenstein however, the questioning which begins the search must be let go of. There is no question because

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<sup>92</sup> This applies to relations or properties appearing in the place of concepts. "Socrates is identical" is a case in which relation sign is posing as a property sign. In the proposition "Socrates is an identical" however, we have a relation sign posing as a concept sign. Any permutations of this sort of confusion between concepts, properties and relations, make for *material nonsense*.

the question is the first step in misunderstanding. It is the first step in making a science, a doctrine, of the basis of all science and all doctrine.

"Wittgenstein's general account of sentencehood", Diamond states, "rules out the expression by any sentence, of the view from the philosophical perspective. What is seen from there is representable only in internal features of *the* body of sentences itself" (Diamond 1993: 196). This statement of Diamond's is accurate, but for reasons she would not herself readily agree with. Wittgenstein is not saying that *what* we seek in philosophy (Truth, Virtue, etc.) is a search caused by a misunderstanding of language. Rather, he is saying that the idea that we *can* search for what we seek in philosophy is a misunderstanding of language's limits. He is not denying that there is such an 'it' about which philosophy inquires; nor is he *affirming* there is. For neither is, it is true, possible. What he is affirming is that the human tendency to run up against the limits of language, as if the limit were something one needed to surmount, indicates *something* (WVC: 69). It indicates that humans do surmount the limit and seek quite naturally to make language follow along. But when the attempt is made to have language follow along and so (we think) validate or confirm this transcendence by expression (leading inevitably to doctrine, etc.), what is here attempted is, in effect, to make the transcendent mundane. Simply put, to *characterize* what is beyond these limits, is to place it within the limits. The discussion of ethics in the *Tractatus* points to this: "In the world there is no value -- and if there were it would be of no value" (6.41). To say what supersedes the limit of language is to simultaneously reduce that supersedent to something mundane and contingent. This is parallel to Kierkegaard's complaint that Hegel reduces existence to a cog in the System.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See Paul Ramsey's "*Existenz* and the Existence of God", for an astute, concise rendering of what Kierkegaard saw as the implications of Hegelian philosophy for human beings (Ramsey 1948: 157ff.).

Put another way, to say that there is something beyond the limits ("There is indeed the inexpressible" (6.522)) is to create a relation to a 'variable' (not in the technical sense) which has no possible substitution, but nonetheless remains. Only if we 'know', either in the sense of acquaintance or can 'think' in the sense of an incomplete thought, only if in some fractionary way we are able to think something beyond the 'world', only then are we able to draw limits to the world and to language. But -- and here is the essential point -- only if that variable (that which we vaguely and incompletely know) *remains* a variable, i.e. is unknowable in a resolute manner. If we can complete the thought about the variable, i.e. give it content, then it is thereby *inside* the limit, and the very possibility of drawing such a limit then depends on some further variable, and so on. The way to curtail this endless array, as Wittgenstein understood is to make it such that, in our expression, the first variable remains a variable, and as such is irresolvably incomplete.

Certain essays in Diamond's *The Realistic Spirit*, most prominently among them "Throwing Away the Ladder", read as though Diamond were putting forth a definitive interpretation of the *Tractatus* (e.g. anything less than her view is "chickening out"). Occasionally though, as we have seen, Diamond uses the less absolute language of "suggestion": "Here is how I am suggesting we interpret Wittgenstein..." (Diamond 1993: 195). The locution of "suggestion" here implies that her interpretation is better for some further reason, not necessarily having to do with its adherence to Wittgenstein's own view. Why would she make such suggestions? The answer is that she ultimately sees Wittgenstein himself as chickening out.

In a later essay, Diamond points disparagingly at a comment of Wittgenstein's that seems to reinforce some notion of an *it* in conversation with the Vienna Circle:

In ethics, you *cannot* say what you are trying to say. "But the tendency, the thrust, points to something." This, it seems to me obvious, is an

attempt to say it again; "points to something" is here as much (or as little) a misuse as any of those mentioned in the Lecture [on Ethics] (Diamond 1993: 226).

From such statements it is made clear to the reader that Diamond is indeed not necessarily intent on putting forth an interpretation that gibes with Wittgenstein's own, at least when he wrote the *Tractatus*. In effect she sees Wittgenstein as himself having been confused in the way she considers most commentators to have been confused. But if this is so, Diamond must admit that, since the commentators and Wittgenstein are at one in certain "misuses" of language, perhaps there is something behind this common confusion -- or perhaps it is neither of these two parties that is confused.

The broad metaphysical view visible to the reader (though one would not say it is asserted) is, as we have seen, that there is crack of light between what can be thought and what can be said. What falls out from this, given that propositions are grounded empirically and analyse down to atomic constituents, is that Wittgenstein views thinking as encompassing both atomism and holism, but views language as encompassing only the former. The holism is evidenced by formal properties and relations requiring that there be *meaning* generally, rather than specific propositions giving meaning to propositions which include formal properties. In the next chapter, I will again introduce Kierkegaard into the equation, along with a Kierkegaardian follower of Diamond, James Conant.

We have shown that Diamond's contention that "'A is an object' is no more than an innocently meaningless proposition like 'Socrates is frabble'" must be an incorrect interpretation of the *Tractatus*. We will also show that the corollary contention that *thought* can be "doctrine" of the kind Wittgenstein disparages -- collapses. And that the contention that the *Unsinn* of the

*Tractatus* is plain *Unsinn*, one which Conant adheres to, stems from holding too wide a view of what Wittgenstein took to be philosophical doctrine. That is, that contrary to Diamond's view, "doctrine" and "*Unsinn*" are for Wittgenstein categories of *expression*, but not necessarily of thought.

## Part C. Philosophy: Limits and Paradox

The age demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace  
Something for the modern age  
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace.  
— Ezra Pound

But that it takes a prophet...,  
who, aided by familiarity with  
world history... believes he  
discovers the ethical, that is,  
what the age demands  
(for this is the modern slogan  
of the demoralizing ethics).  
— Kierkegaard,  
*Fear and Trembling*

If Part A was about an existential reversal of the Platonic rationalist project, Part B has been about attempting to show the way in which this reversal has taken hold in the metaphysics of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. From Kierkegaard's reassertion of the pre-eminent importance of existence, I have put forward a model of the *Tractatus*, a 'reading' of it if you will, that focuses on accounting for certain incongruous passages that, once accounted for, shed much needed light on the relation in the *Tractatus* between thought and language.

That light is much needed to draw out the implications of the reading of the Preface for which I have argued. This reading is the crux of my account (as several reiterations have no doubt made clear); for, in the argument that a limit of language must be thinkable on both sides, we see the Kierkegaardian view that something is outside the limit of the knowable for there to be such a limit at all. Concerning the *Tractatus*, I believe that this is all that has to be shown to make it clear that, for Wittgenstein, the limit of language need not define all there *is*. That which is on the other side of the limit can only be expressed by what is in fact nonsense<sup>94</sup>, as the Preface says (p27). And, as we will see, this nonsense 'expresses' something quite different than is its intention.

Though it is quite useless to attempt define *what* lies on the other side of the limit, *that*

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<sup>94</sup> Here we are of course referring to "deep nonsense" as opposed to simple gibberish (See B.III.3. above).

something does lie on the other side, for both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, cannot be denied. So a question is formed that can yield no answer, but yet cannot simply be forgotten; and a voiced question that can yield no answer is a useless question; and a question that is useless is, in fact, not a question at all. It is a wheel that does not turn. So to voice it at all is, at best, inelegant; at worst, unethical. However, that which the question asks after, i.e. that which is on the other side of the limit, could be said to manifest itself as an *irritant*. It is something that, for Kierkegaard, the understanding cannot do away with once and for all, but it is also something that the understanding cannot satisfactorily encompass. It is, so to speak, the grain of sand between the soft tissue that yields the pearl called 'philosophy'.

## **I. Kierkegaard's "Understanding with the Reader"**

The 'pearl' of philosophy was something to which Kierkegaard had an ambivalent relationship. For his views on Socrates versus Plato (that I have only to now touched on but will deal with to a greater extent in C.I.4. below) show that he saw the lifetime of Socrates as the only fleeting moment when that gem truly shone. A prominent problem with which Kierkegaard attempted to deal throughout his writing days could be stated thus: how does one write in the spirit of someone who never himself wrote a word? The various literary strategies that Kierkegaard employs, especially in his more philosophically oriented works, reflect a rigorous grasp of the vast implications of this problem for any philosophical writing in the Socratic spirit.

To write in the Socratic spirit is no contradiction of Christianity. For, to echo Malcolm's words about Wittgenstein, Socrates embodied the possibility of Christianity, whereas Plato, as we have seen, makes it -- in Kierkegaard's conception of it at least -- quite impossible insofar as he banishes the possibility of the unknowable.

The paradoxical ending of the *Tractatus* as well points to a conception of philosophical writing as, to say the least, somewhat problematic. Indeed the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself are said to be nonsensical -- as are the propositions of philosophy generally (cf. 4.003). This chapter then is an attempt to show that philosophical *writing* ('doctrine') is indeed the main culprit for Kierkegaard, not philosophical *thought* as such; and as well I will attempt to sketch some preliminary parallels between these Socratic inspired views and the final form of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. To that end then, section 1. will show that Wittgenstein's ultimate revocation of the *Tractatus* has a prototype in Kierkegaard's Climacus works. Section 2. will deal with

Kierkegaard's critique of a certain conception of philosophy's role and how that role should properly be limited. Section 3. will deal with Kierkegaard's own strategy for philosophical/metaphysical writing that he called 'indirect communication'. Finally section 4. will address the Socratic influence and the question of whether, given this influence, philosophy *can* have any 'positive' content.

### 1. *Revocation*

In entitling his book *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard provides a prompt indication that the Climacus works are not to be taken as systematic. The title is deliberate parody given that the context of philosophy in Kierkegaard's day was essentially systematic. The term *smule* (fragment), which could also be translated as 'bits' or 'crumbs', was used to underscore the contrast with the heavy philosophical tomes which most philosophy professors were writing at the time. Tomes that tended to take the integration of all Being under one rubric as the proper philosophical project.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, for the Hegelians, against whom Kierkegaard's works were arrayed, writing an all-encompassing system was intrinsic to the definition of "Philosophy".

In his enigmatic preface to *Fragments* Kierkegaard claims no wish to have his present work seen as scholarly or scientific. The tone is sly, as is Kierkegaard's wont. His accomplishment in *Fragments*, he says, is but proportionate to his talent since he is "by inclination" a loafer. He does add however, that he is a loafer "for good reasons". For though

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<sup>95</sup> As Louis Mackey puts this point, "calling a book *Philosophical Fragments*... was a bit like calling a treatise in geometry *Reflections on Round Squares* ( Mackey 1971: 162).

the age might demand the intervention of a systematic understanding of itself, and all else for that matter, Kierkegaard asks:

...suppose someone's intervention made him guilty of a greater crime simply by giving rise to confusion -- would it not be better for him to mind his own business? (CUP: 5)

This sums up nicely the view put forward in the Climacus works: what "the age" and "the people" demand of philosophy is a world system. What the *person* requires, regardless of that proclaimed by such objective transcendental clatter, is to mind "his own business" -- his own business being self-knowledge and his own eternal happiness. In the *Postscript* Kierkegaard refers to Socrates as a loafer of the same ilk and with the same notion of his own business.<sup>96</sup> To mind one's own business, one must be able, so to speak, to 'turn off' the objectivist viewpoint. So Kierkegaard considers the notion that there really is *only* this viewpoint, as something of a twilight of human being. Such a twilight is what would be caused by the system.

Walter Lowrie makes reference, in his notes to his translation of the *Postscript*, to a journal entry in which Kierkegaard states that Hegel would have been the greatest thinker of all time if he had only begun his *Logic* with the words 'this is all just a thought experiment' (CUPb: 558).<sup>97</sup> Hegel (or at least his followers) did not, however, regard his *Logic* as a thought experiment. It was the system of the world itself that was being elucidated. The *Logic* was seen as incorporating time, becoming, and hence (for Hegel) existence into logic. For Kierkegaard however this was anathema because existence is "the very separation that prevents the purely logical flow" (CUPII: 55). It is existence that makes a purely rational systematic *life* impossible.

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<sup>96</sup> "Socrates was a loafer who cared for neither world history nor astronomy" (CUP: 83).

<sup>97</sup> cf. The *Postscript*: "Hegel certainly went further, inasmuch as he became fantastical and overcame the scepticism of idealism by means of pure thinking, which is a hypothesis and, although it does not proclaim itself as such, is fantastical (CUP: 328).

It is against the background of this critique of Hegel that the meaning of *Fragments'* Chapter One title -- "Thought Project" -- is apparent. The title is meant to make clear that *Fragments* is not a straight forward treatise on whether the eternal truth can be learned or on what it means to be a Christian. It is, in the sense Hegel's *Logic* was not, a thought experiment, an hypothesis.<sup>98</sup>

If the revocation from the outset of the Climacus books is not clear, then Kierkegaard makes it abundantly clear at the *end* of the Climacus works. The title of the concluding appendix of the *Postscript* is "An Understanding with the Reader". In this "understanding", Kierkegaard makes it explicit that "the book [the *Postscript*] is superfluous. Therefore, let no one bother to appeal to it, because one who appeals to it has *eo ipso* misunderstood it" (CUP: 618). He elaborates on this:

[W]hat I write *contains* the notice that everything is to be understood in such a way that it is revoked, that the book has not only an end but has a revocation to boot. One can ask for no more than that (CUP: 619).

As Kierkegaard says, the *Postscript* is in "Historical costume" (CUP: 10ff.). He sees it as a reiteration of *Fragments* written to conform to what the age demands, i.e. a weighty tome wherein all the answers are revealed. The revocation of this work at its conclusion is reiteration of the light-heartedness implied by the title "*Philosophical Fragments*". It is a pin stuck in the formal demands of the 'current' philosophy.

One of the tasks of the Climacus works is to find a way around a paradox that had not been addressed by Hegelians: How does one begin to talk about existence, human subjectivity,

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<sup>98</sup> Hong and Hong regard this message as embedded in the very structure of *Fragments*: "The hypothetical ('if/then') character of *Fragments* is signalled again by "Thought-Project"... in contrast to the *Postscript* which is in historical costume" (PF: 276).

"the moment", without it being merely ingested into the system *qua* concept? Direct, 'results' oriented, discourse cannot capture the existential. Indeed, speculative thought in its purity "does not permit the issue to arise at all" (CUP: 57). How does one address existence -- and as such not merely forget its importance -- if the means given to do so (direct communication) *eo ipso* mistranslates one's address? The solution is to use indirect means; i.e. make it clear that 'this is just a thought experiment' or use pretence and revocation to undermine direct discourse.

To understand the *Postscript*, Kierkegaard states plainly, is to have misunderstood it. Further, the book is "superfluous" in its content, the book is "superfluous" because it is an example -- of which philosophy is replete -- of having written about that which cannot be written about. One might well ask what benefit can be derived from a book which the author himself admits is superfluous. Perhaps as comic relief from the arch seriousness of the task of explaining the cosmos undertaken by dialecticians. Humour, such as the title *Fragments* evokes, is certainly one of the indirect means employed in the Climacus works.

Why not then, as he says in the preface, mind one's own business rather than write a superfluous book? Kierkegaard maintains that "to write a book and to revoke it is not the same as refraining from writing it" (CUP 621). Because to have written the book, and revoked it, indicates that what has been written cannot be written about.<sup>99</sup> One might say it indicates a question while making no comment on the possibility of the question being answered (see C.III.1. below). To have not written the book obviously indicates nothing -- or, more correctly, there *is* no indication.

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<sup>99</sup> As Bigalow puts it, for Kierkegaard "the numinous can only be attested to in an act of silence" (Bigalow 1987: 111).

## 2. A "System" of Existence

Hegel's *Logic* is seen by Kierkegaard as simply the most ambitious and recent example of the systematic approach to the cosmos. In the *Logic*, Hegel attempts to include such categories as movement and existence under the general logical rubric. Kierkegaard argues that this "confuses logic" (CUP: 109). It represents, he says, the error of having incorporated something

that is subject to the dialectic of existence, accordingly, anything that is, solely by existing... not something that is simply by being (CUP 109).

Here the important distinction is being made between "is" as existence, and "is" as essence. Kierkegaard considered the collapse of these two senses (whether by decision or neglect) as the fundamental error of 'modern' logic. For logic is about essence; and if it attempts to subsume existence, logic has still not thereby changed. It is still about essence and has merely abstracted an essence from existence and incorporated it into the system. And even if the system purports to begin with existence (or 'the immediate'), this beginning for Kierkegaard is "only a paraphrase of the *act* of beginning" (CUPII: 38). For the act of beginning is a leap not beholden to the understanding.

Existence then is always outside a system of logic. Indeed it is outside any system. As Kierkegaard says "a system of existence cannot be given". Kierkegaard wrote an idea in his journal that later showed up in his book entitled *Johannes Climacus*:

This could be expressed... by saying that the immediate is reality, language is ideality... when I seek to express sense perception in this way, the contradiction is present, for what I say is something different from what I want to say. I cannot express reality in language, because I use ideality to characterize it... (JPII: 6-7).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> As Hannay points out (Hannay 1982: 152ff), Kierkegaard used the term 'reality' [*Realitet*] differently than

For a system to be given, language must be used. So clearly then a system of existence cannot be given because what is said at all is the ideal not the existential.

However, in the Postscript Kierkegaard makes the crucial distinction that while saying that a system of existence cannot be given, this does not entail that there is no such system:

is there not then such a system? That is not the case at all. Neither is this implied in what has been said. Existence itself is a system -- for God, but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit (CUP: 118).

For a system to be comprehended, one needs to have gained some vantage point outside that system. As he famously wrote in his journal:

Philosophy is perfectly right in saying that life must be understood backward. But then one forgets the other clause -- that it must be lived forward. The more one thinks through this clause, the more one concludes that life in temporality never becomes properly understandable, simply because never at any time does one get perfect repose to take a stance -- backward. (JPI: 1030)

For a system really to incorporate existence the 'systematizer' must stand *sub specie aeternitatis*, and so must stand at a remote distance from his own existence. Such a system may be possible for God but not a poor existing human.<sup>101</sup> Without incorporating existential elements then, a system of logic is possible; the subject may view such a system from the vantage point of its existence outside the system. But the subject cannot abstract from existence, as would be

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Wittgenstein who, in defining the syntax of the *Tractatus*, equates 'reality' [*Wirklichkeit*] with the already mediated. Below, however, I make the point that it is plausible to think that *Wirklichkeit* is introduced where it is in the *Tractatus* to differentiate worldly-facts from picture-facts since the former are, up to the introduction of the picture theory, simply referred to as 'facts' [*Tatsache*].

<sup>101</sup> Hegel, in the Preface to the 1820 edition of *Philosophy of Right*, does speak of listening to "an inner voice bidding them to *comprehend*... while standing not in anything particular and accidental but in what exists absolutely" (Hegel 1820: 12; emphasis added). About this Kierkegaard might with irony say, as he does in the *Postscript*: "An existing person has unquestionably found there the secure foothold outside existence where he can mediate -- on paper" (CUP: 419).

necessary for a system of existence to be given. The view that language takes one outside existence is, as we have seen, a product of viewing language as ideal (see A.I.3.b.above).

This view that existence is always beyond the reach of language, goes against the traditional philosophical view. For Kierkegaard, the transcendence of language by existence is precisely that which makes it possible to philosophize at all. But in so philosophizing one mistakenly conceives that one *transcends* oneself, when all one really does is *abstract* from oneself. The mistake here then is to see the subject as part of the system rather than part of existence, or life.

It is not Kierkegaard's ambition then, contrary to the appearance of the *Postscript*, to write a non-temporal, systematic rebut to Hegel's system. For "what actuality is cannot be rendered in the language of abstraction" (CUP: 314). That is, it cannot be rendered in direct language. It must as such be rendered in "indirect communication".

### 3. *An "Illusive" Form of Communication*

Kierkegaard makes a distinction between objective thinking and subjective thinking. Objective thinking cannot deal essentially with the subject and its existence. The subjective thinker however is

essentially interested in his own thinking, is existing in it. Therefore, his thinking has another kind of reflection, specifically that of inwardness, of possession, whereby it belongs to the subject and to no one else (CUP: 73).

The distinction between the objective and subjective thinker for Kierkegaard hinges on this "other kind of reflection" which is a "reflection of inwardness"; what he calls "double reflection". He explains that this double reflection occurs when,

in thinking, he thinks the universal, but, as existing in this thinking, as acquiring this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated (CUP: 73).

Double-reflection is to be contrasted with mere reflection that the objective thinker uses to abstract from his subjectivity and think as if *sub specie aeternitatis*. To reflect doubly then is to abstract from this position of abstraction so one's thoughts reflect one's state as an existing being. The insights gained in reflection are thus used to the end of oneself, in the "process of becoming", coming to know oneself more deeply.

A further problem then comes with *communication* of these double-reflected thoughts. This is perhaps the key to understanding Kierkegaard's 'aesthetic' works (the *Postscript* and *Fragments* included). For it is clear that communication of a direct nature demands the merely reflective as content. To speak factually about such subjects as 'virtue', 'truth', or for that matter 'inwardness' and 'thought' (as does the historically costumed *Postscript*) is to set aside the subjective element, which is central to these notions. One *speaks* about 'virtue', for example, and cannot help but regard it as a *concept*, rather than what, for Kierkegaard, it is: something undertaken by an existing human being. This he refers to as the "illusiveness of existence" (CUP: 83). Direct communication ignores the subjective. So to reflect the illusiveness of existence in communicative form "an illusive *form* is the only adequate one" (CUP: 83; emphasis added). For

Whoever is aware of this, whoever, content with being human, has enough strength and leisure not to want to be deceived in order to receive permission to *sprechen* about all of world history, admired by the

like-minded but mocked by existence -- he will avoid direct utterance (CUP: 82).

In using *direct* discursive form, "the form of communication interferes" (CUP: 82). But at the same time, it reveals:

...strange that simply by talking about a thing a person can show that he is not talking about that thing, because one would think that this could be shown only by not talking about it (CUP: 82).<sup>102</sup>

The form of communication indicates how the content is to be taken. In the direct form the words are to be taken literally. However, if the speaker is referring to that which, *qua* existing human, he is in no position to refer to, one cannot take his words literally. Thus if the author gives no sign that he is to be taken in a non-literal sense, his words are so much dross. If he is putting forth a system or theory and he mentions existence is to be emphasized, the systematic context, with no sign of irony, shows that he is *not* talking about existence, but rather the *concept* thereof.

The *Postscript* and *Fragments* are fairly directly spoken (if they were not they would not refer, as they do, to indirect versus direct communication but would rather simply engage in the former). This directness however, is revoked at the beginning and end of the *Fragments* compendium these two works make up. Kierkegaard does, however, employ many indirect means. These indirect means seem to be set up, as we have seen, as a means of further revocation, which he feels the need simply to state at the end of book. But they also serve a further purpose.

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<sup>102</sup> The pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de Silentio, makes this point in the following way: "Even though I go on talking night and day without interruption, if I cannot make myself understood when I speak, then I am not speaking" (FT: 113).

In reading the *Postscript* one is struck by the amount of repetition.<sup>103</sup> About the purpose of this repetition, Kierkegaard provides a few hints. For example, he points to Socrates as having "staked his honour and pride on one thing: continually to say the same thing and about the same thing", though this be boring to the listener. Further:

If a pastor could keep on preaching all year on the same text, continually rejuvenating himself in new fertility of expression, he would in my opinion be matchless (CUP: 285).

What Kierkegaard sees in Socrates is related to what he elsewhere calls "purity of heart"; that is, an ability to pursue *one thing* unflinchingly and to have all of one's expression reveal this one thing and, *indirectly*, reveal one's own pursuit of it.<sup>104</sup> This he contrasts with the Sophistic approach which famously varies expression to suit the particular end sought, i.e. to persuade an interlocutor or audience:

Callicles: Still the same stale old language, Socrates.

Socrates: Yes, Callicles, and on the same subjects.... Do you notice, my dear Callicles, how you and I find fault with one another for quite different reasons? You blame me for constantly using the same language, while I, on the contrary, find it a defect in you that you never keep to the same line about the same subject (Gorgias: 491).

Kierkegaard in the *Postscript* can be seen as stylistically following this ideal of variation and "fertility" of expression in reiterating this one thing to show that it remains constant no matter the framework through which it is indicated. This then is one means by which to represent subjective thought, the inwardness, in a way detectable behind the veil of a direct expression:

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<sup>103</sup> Indeed one of Wittgenstein's comments to Miles Drury was of this kind (Drury 1984a: 103).

<sup>104</sup> See A.I.3.a above.

One who is existing is continually in the process of becoming; the actually existing subjective thinker... invests all his thinking in becoming.... Only he really has style who is never finished with something but "stirs the waters of language" whenever he begins, so that to him the most extraordinary expression comes into existence with new-born originality (CUP: 86).

Hence the repetitive nature of the *Postscript* is itself another formal means of reflecting the "objective uncertainty" of a subjectively held truth (see A.I.3.e above). To say such a truth directly -- i.e. objectively -- is to make it other than it is. Indeed it is paradoxical to speak directly about (e.g.) virtue if virtue's essence is considered quite beyond any possible conceptual rendering of it. One would, in defining virtue directly, be considering two different things and thus sometimes speak of one -- the existential essence of virtue -- and sometimes speak of the other -- virtue as a concept. In other words, the danger is indeed very real that one will not say 'the same thing about the same thing' when attempting to speak or write directly of such things as virtue while maintaining its essence.

Such paradoxical machinations that flood the pages of the *Postscript* and *Fragments*, and the fact of a sustained repetition, point to Kierkegaard's awareness that he is treading a very fine line in these works between falling into sheer indirection on one side and directness on the other. This very precarious stylistic strategy reflects the precarious route of the existing human being, whose very existence, with his own inward faith in one thing, holds aloof the possibility of objective certainty:

he always keeps open the wound of negativity, which at times is a saving factor...; in his communication, he expresses the same thing. He is therefore never a teacher, but a learner (CUP: 85).

Kierkegaard saw Socrates as one who knew the worth of keeping the "wound of negativity" open. It was often said, as Kierkegaard points out, that Socrates' refusal to write showed that he lacked "the positive" . But Kierkegaard contends that Socrates did not aspire to *this* "positive" for this positive was merely the foolishness that the age demanded:

Socrates was a loafer who cared for neither world history nor astronomy.... But he had plenty of time and enough eccentricity to be concerned about the merely *human*, a concern that, strangely enough, is considered an eccentricity among *human beings*, whereas it is not at all eccentric to be busy with world history, astronomy, and other such matters (CUP: 83).

#### 4. *The Positive and the Negative*

Kierkegaard certainly modelled his thought and, after a fashion, his life, on the example set by Socrates. In *Fragments* he writes:

Socrates remained true to himself and artistically exemplified what he had understood. He was and continued to be a mid-wife, not because he "did not have "the positive", but because he perceived that this relation is the highest relation a human being can have to another. And in that he is indeed forever right... (PF: 10).

Socrates has the positive, since as we have seen, to be able to ask the question about Virtue, for example, implies this. But of course the positive demanded in Kierkegaard's day (and ours) is 'more' than this. What is demanded is an answer, a theory in which all is purportedly explained with respect to the issue at hand. Socrates, Kierkegaard asserts, *indicates* by asking the question about x (Virtue, Justice, etc.), that he has the positive, *and* that he has the positive in a further way: he knew that to have an answer to such questions, is precisely to *not* have the positive. As

we have seen in the pragmatic argument (see A.I.1.b. above), the Socrates of the *Meno* (i.e. Plato's Socrates) sees that a situation in which there was no possible answer to a question would have the effect of making man lazy. But for Kierkegaard, to have asked the question is for Socrates different than to have not asked the question. To have inquired *indicates* what the positive is, and that one has it. To have not inquired indicates nothing. To have asked and searched then is the positive.

Throughout *Fragments* Kierkegaard says that he is attempting to 'go beyond the Socratic'. However, in the *Postscript* he qualifies this:

I carried the Socratic back to the thesis that all knowing is a recollecting. It is commonly accepted as such.... The thesis certainly belongs to both of them [Socrates and Plato], but Socrates continually parts with it because he wants to exist. By holding Socrates to the thesis that all knowing is recollecting, one turns him into a speculative philosopher instead of what he was, an existing thinker who understood existing as the essential.... But precisely because Socrates is in this way beyond speculative thought, he acquires... a certain analogous likeness to what the imaginary construction [of *Fragments*] set forth as that which truly goes beyond the Socratic... (CUP: 206).

Hence the "Socratic" of the *Fragments* that is to be surpassed is really the Platonic which, according to Kierkegaard, places more emphasis on *anamnesis* than Socrates would have liked. The *truly* Socratic is "analogous" to that view which surpasses the Platonic.<sup>105</sup> In Kierkegaard's view, Plato's pursuit of "the positive" in the sense of an answer is "where the road swings off,"

and Socrates essentially emphasizes existing, whereas Plato, forgetting this, loses himself in speculative thought (CUP: 205).

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<sup>105</sup> On this distinction, see also FT: 117fn.

The great merit of the Socratic then is to emphasize that the knower is an existing person and that to exist -- something which yields no 'result', no answer -- is the essential. This is the truly positive (CUP: 207). Of the positive the age demands however, Kierkegaard writes that

it can be classed in the following categories: sensate certainty, historical knowledge, speculative result. But the positive is precisely the untrue. Sensate certainty is a delusion...; historical knowledge is an illusion...; and the speculative result is a phantom (CUP: 81).

For Kierkegaard, the positive demanded is about the end of matters for humans which cannot be achieved except on the level of fantasy:

... all of this positive fails to express the state of the knowing subject in existence; hence it pertains to a fictive objective subject, and to mistake oneself for such a subject is to be fooled and remain fooled (CUP: 81).

The end of matters proposed by speculative thought is an illusory termination. The so called negative thinkers such as Socrates do then "have something positive",

namely this, that they are aware of the negative... precisely because the negative is present in existence and present everywhere (because... existence is continually in the process of becoming), the only deliverance from it is to become continually aware of it (CUP: 81-2).

Now Socrates in the later Platonic dialogue *Phaedo* suggests that philosophy, which he defines as the move beyond mere becoming to a knowledge of being, is "the only deliverance" (*Phaedo*: 82c). Again, a moving beyond, an *aufhebung*, of existence is considered the positive here.

The *Apology* is generally considered to be an accurate rendering of the historical Socrates' views by Plato.<sup>106</sup> Socrates there gives his interpretation of the oracle at Delphi's remark that he, Socrates, is the wisest of all men:

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<sup>106</sup> This is principally because the *Apology* is the first dialogue written and because it was written fairly shortly after the trial and most of Athens, the original readers of the dialogue, were at the trial. See Grube 1981:

What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, as if he said: 'This man among you mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless' (Apology: 22a-b).

Here then is a basis for Kierkegaard's view that Socrates considered the positive grand theories with respect to *x* (Virtue, Justice, etc.) to be a sort of grand distraction. However, Socrates does also famously hold to a view which seemingly contradicts the above view:

...it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue everyday and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living (Apology: 38a).

Putting these views together, Socrates seems to hold the untenable view that the "examination", the inquiry, must proceed -- even though "human wisdom is worth little or nothing".

Kierkegaard however sees this as meaning that the answer, the acquired knowledge, may be useless; but the *question*, the inquiry, the search must still take place. Even if the search is a mere reiteration of its own futility, it is still better than to not ask at all. For the inquiry *expresses* what a lack of inquiry does not: the "knowing subject in existence" (CUP: 121-2). The answer is the end of inquiry, hence the 'overcoming' of the existent subject itself, which is henceforth a mere "fictive objective subject" in the system (See A.I.3.e above).

As the *Meno* states, the assumption that we cannot come to know such things as virtue, would make humankind "lazy" (see A.I.1.b. above). Given no attainable goal, it is asserted there that a 'why-bother' attitude would generally prevail. Kierkegaard's point is that the opposite assumption *has* made us lazy. The full focus on objectivity has let the individual set aside his own inwardness, his own knowledge about himself, in favour of the easy distraction of helping the

'experts' to build the System, to solve the objective puzzle that will in turn -- "as if it went without saying" (CV: 40) -- solve all the smaller subjective ones contained within.<sup>107</sup> Or as Wittgenstein puts it "the modern system makes it look as though *everything* were explained" (6.372).

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<sup>107</sup> "The ethical is supposed to find its concretion first in the world historical, and only then in this concretion is it a task for the living" (CUP: 144).

## II. Wittgenstein's Ladder

Kierkegaard's great familiarity with and interest in the problems of Greek scepticism are clear to anyone reading *Fragments*<sup>108</sup>. This interest can also be seen in the *Postscript*, specifically by way of the method of revocation of this latter work. He writes in the *Postscript* that Hegel would certainly have benefited from a closer reading of the sceptics as, for example Schelling undertook:

When thinking turns toward itself in order to think about itself, there emerges, as we know, a skepticism. How can there be a halt to this skepticism of which the source is that thinking selfishly wants to think itself instead of serving by thinking something?... Schelling halted self-reflection and understood intellectual intuition not as a discovery within self-reflection that is arrived at by rushing ahead but as *a new point of departure*. Hegel regards this as a mistake.... (CUP: 335; emphasis added)

For Kierkegaard, Schelling is right in seeing intellectual intuition as a "new point of departure" rather than akin to "thinking something"; i.e. treating thinking about something and thinking about thinking (speculation) as both falling under the rubric of "pure thinking". For to run these things together is for Kierkegaard nothing short of the annulment of Christianity's essence (CUP: 336fn.). For the "new point of departure" is the condition of Christianity. One simply cannot, like the sceptic, make a statement about doubt (e.g. 'everything can be doubted') and say that "the statement about doubt must not be understood as a position" (CUP: 335fn.). This was the Stoics' charge against Sextus Empiricus (as Linette Reid points out; Reid 1998: 105ff.). The problem is one of drawing limits that mark a real division between the 'old' and the new point of departure. For Kierkegaard, Hegel neglected to draw such limits. The sceptic represented an arbitrary

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<sup>108</sup>

Cf. PF: 82-86.

solution that could not hold water; roughly the gambit by which one escapes the paradox by parenthetical addendum: 'everything can be doubted (except for this statement)'. As we have seen, Kierkegaard's solution is to, by means of irony (and humour) point to what is indirectly being said by what is directly said. This often comes, as does Socratic irony ('I know that I know nothing'), perhaps too close for comfort to the sceptic's 'solution'. Kierkegaard however takes some satisfaction in this in so far as his aim is, like the sceptic's, effecting change in the reader rather than attaining logical soundness. The Climacus works are, in this sense, *acts* of metaphysics. For the purpose is not to create a coherent system so much as to create in the reader a necessity to *choose*.

The *Tractatus*, in its framing passages confronts the same problem and by means of two divisions -- 'saying' versus 'showing', and the limits of thought versus the limits of language -- effects a new and perhaps more coherent twist on Kierkegaard's 'solution'. How the *Tractatus* itself meant to effect the reader is the central exegetical problem confronting the interpreter. Section 1. in this chapter considers the conditions necessary to understand the *Tractatus* itself, and the conditions necessary for a proper 'understanding' of philosophical propositions. Section 2. deals directly with the solution to the sceptic's problem given in the *Tractatus*. Section 3. deals with the historical lineage of the distinction I am arguing is key to understanding the *Tractatus* -- namely, that between the limits of thought and the limits of language.

## 1. *Prolegomenon*

Wittgenstein begins the Preface to the *Tractatus* with the seemingly self-deprecating statement that what follows "will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it" (p27). With rather less modesty he ends the Preface with the assessment that he has solved the essential problems of philosophy; but then with genuine pathos points out that the value of the work is that it as well shows "how little has been done when these problems have been solved" (p29). The words the *Tractatus* famously ends with are "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (7). Wittgenstein considered this admonition to be the final word on philosophy; the fully ramified implication of the statement that "Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical [*unsinnig*]" (4.003); *unsinnig* because of a failure on the part of philosophers generally to "understand the logic of our language" (4.003). For Wittgenstein, philosophers pose questions from the beginning that they have no way of answering, though it may seem possible to do so:

Philosophers often behave like little children who scribble some marks on a piece of paper at random.... [T]he grown-up had drawn pictures for the child several times and said: 'this is a man', 'this is a house', etc. And then the child makes some marks too and asks: what's *this* then? (CV: 17)

This is Wittgenstein's view before, during, and after the writing of the *Tractatus*. The logic of our language, according to Wittgenstein, shows us that to understand a proposition or question is to understand the basis on which its truth or falsity can be determined; and so, to understand (precisely) that to which words in the proposition refer. So only those propositions which fit this criterion are propositions with *Sinn*; though what falls afoul of this criterion may be "legitimate":

Frege says that any legitimately constructed propositions must have a sense [*Sinn*]. And I say that any possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and if it has no sense [*Sinn*], that can only be because we have failed to give a meaning [*Bedeutung*] to some of its constituents. (5.4733)

So if one makes a scribble (*à la* the above metaphor), and seeks the scribble's referent, one has misunderstood the logic of such representation. However one might (to extend Wittgenstein's analogy) glean from the scribble something about the form of all such drawings (colour and viscosity of the ink, for example, or the variable width of the pen's mark in relation to pressure exerted, etc.), even though nothing really is *represented*. So a proposition without *Sinn* might be, for such reasons, important (See B.III.3.b above). In the *Notebooks* he writes:

My method is not to sunder the hard from the soft, but to see the hardness of the soft (NB: 44)

This can be seen as related to his statements in the *Tractatus* on the relation of analysis to ordinary language that from "[c]olloquial language... it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language" (4.002). However,

All propositions of our colloquial language are actually, just as they are, logically completely in order (5.5563).

The 'hard', need not be extracted from the 'soft' in order for the hard to be seen. That language disguises the thought (4.002) is, for Wittgenstein a function of the complexity of such language.

In the above passage (5.5563) Wittgenstein also speaks about colloquial language being as complex as the human organism. One gets a sense that replacing ordinary language with a syntactically correct version is like contemplating the replacement of eating with direct intravenous feeding. The organic nature of language, though enormously complex, is never

subjected in the *Tractatus* to the suggestion that it should be in some way made more efficient. But drawing a clear line between the hard and the soft, the 'sharp' and the 'vague' or 'fuzzy', and so making the hard visible in the soft, is clearly something that occupies Wittgenstein greatly (cf. NB: 37, 44, 63, 68-70). These passages in the *Tractatus* and the *Notebooks* clearly show that Wittgenstein indeed did not see philosophy as a science. For it is a common mantra of scientific method that simplicity is best. And such simplicity would dictate not merely separation for the purpose of distinguishing the hard from the soft, but the throwing away of the soft. The hidden assumption taken, for example by Russell and by early positivist enthusiasts, is that the clarification of language in the *Tractatus* is meant to separate the 'essence' from the 'accidental' and then do away with the accidental. However there is much to support the view that the *Tractatus*' clarification is not a commitment to the *disposal* of the 'accidental' in language and thought, but rather the simple clarification of where in language the hard ends and the soft begins.

Propositions with *Sinn*, are indicative of scientific discourse (4.11); propositions of *Unsinn* thus indicate, broadly speaking, the non-scientific. Philosophy itself, as Wittgenstein states, "is not one of the natural sciences" (4.111). And since it consists of non-scientific propositions that are *unsinnig*, philosophy is "not a body of doctrine but an activity" and has no "result" [*Resultat*] (4.112).

Here Wittgenstein is setting up an 'exemplar' of philosophy. And it is implied in the *Tractatus* that most of what has passed as philosophy in the past has fallen quite short of such a model, having mostly aspired to a different ideal. But it is also the 'real' state of philosophy for Wittgenstein because in his view it is impossible for philosophy to really pretend to anything else

than an activity. If it considers itself as a body of doctrines relating to the true nature of the world or cosmos, it is in error, because the 'true nature' of the world is untestable *in* the world.

As an activity, rather than a set of doctrines or a system, philosophy properly so conceived would seek "to say nothing except what can be said",

i.e. the propositions of natural science, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning [*Bedeutung*] to certain signs in his propositions. (6.53)

So the activity of philosophy does really consist only in this.

Wittgenstein then, brings these thoughts to bear upon the *Tractatus* itself. If philosophical propositions should really be those of natural science, and if all else is *unsinnig*, then this latter judgement applies to the *Tractatus* itself. It's penultimate section states as much:

My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as nonsensical [*unsinnig*], when he had climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.). (6.54)

The *Tractatus* is itself *Unsinn*. By 6.54 it would as well seem that we are not to understand the *Tractatus* as simply another set of doctrines, principally because at 6.54 the doctrines, the *Tractatus in toto*, are revoked. The *Tractatus*, in its mostly direct factual language, and due to the implied propositional content of discursive literature's form, ultimately contravenes its own distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown. 6.54 points out that the *Tractatus* is not a set of logical dicta, but something else. Is it, as McGuinness puts it, "an initiation" (McGuinness 1988: 303), a "true" (p29) position in which to "see the world aright" (6.54) and begin the activity of philosophy? I will argue for a view to which McGuinness'

'initiation' comes closest: the *Tractatus* is not so much an initiation as a *prolegomenon* to any future philosophical inquiry. It is as a setting up of the rules of philosophical activity. And by way of these rules, the propositions of the *Tractatus* are ultimately themselves deemed *unsinnig*. The problem then is: if those propositions are *unsinnig* at the end of the book, are they not also *unsinnig* at its beginning?

This revocation as a retroactive application, is then either a *complete* revocation of the kind Diamond concludes, i.e. the *Tractatus* contains no lesson at all; or it is an attempt at revealing the *source* of any possible inquiry or criticism of a philosophical nature. Now, to state it clearly, I am pointing out that there is a philosophical precedent for this view of philosophy, and this revocation, and it is found in Kierkegaard's *Postscript*. As we have seen Kierkegaard revokes that work (as well as, I have argued, *Fragments*) as a body of knowledge about the relation of existence to knowledge. It is, he makes clear, to be seen as a "Thought Project" which is "not to be appealed to." This too is Wittgenstein's view concerning the *Tractatus*.

Both the Climacus works and the *Tractatus* are themselves set out as hypothetical. McGuinness at one point comments that the *Tractatus* is:

A strange book, half of whose value consists in showing its own unimportance! (McGuinness 1988: 302)

As is common, McGuinness, in his philosophical biography of Wittgenstein, gives one passing reference to Kierkegaard in the usual context of various other influences (Dostoyevsky, Kraus, etc.). However, when it comes to explaining the "strangeness" of the book's revocation he refers the reader to Sextus Empiricus and Plato's *Phaedrus*. When McGuinness later says that for Wittgenstein "Philosophy is a sort of knowledge that can be presented only obliquely", he refers

the reader to Heraclitus (McGuinness 1988: 303). Nowhere does he mention Kierkegaard, whose thought exerted a considerable influence on Wittgenstein at the time of his philosophical apprenticeship in Vienna (See Introduction above).

James Conant, in his review of McGuinness book rightly points out that McGuinness is clearly wanting an influence like Kierkegaard in an understanding of an issue such as Wittgenstein's revocation (Conant 1990: 331-2).<sup>109</sup> As is the case with the *Postscript*, if the final revocation is bracketed out, our understanding of the *Tractatus* is, *eo ipso*, a misunderstanding. The work of clearing up the errors wrought by the misapprehension of the logic of our language is not complete, according to Wittgenstein, unless the work itself is shown to be part of that misapprehension. In other words, the form required to write anything philosophical makes it such that the content will be outside of what, by the lights of the *Tractatus*, it is possible to say. As Wittgenstein states, what is 'outside' can only be shown in what is sayable. In the propositions of natural science and the critique of those who use words with no given *Bedeutung*, there is however the necessity of a position. For one cannot critique a metaphysical speaker if one's critique is patently baseless. When one has thrown out the ladder, if 6.54 counts as evidence, then Wittgenstein cannot be therein concluding that he is throwing away the basis of such a critique.

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<sup>109</sup> Conant also states, without reference, that Wittgenstein "once wrote to a friend that what he himself had been trying to say had already been said by Kierkegaard" (Conant 1990: 331). The letter to which Conant refers is mentioned nowhere else in the literature.

## 2. *Paradox*

Would that this were the end of the matter. However, it is rather obvious that there is an impediment to our adopting this somewhat sunny view of the *Tractatus* as *prolegomenon*. For an initiation must of course be *possible* as an initiation. But, as Michael Hodges crisply points out in what he calls the central paradox of the *Tractatus*:

If the *Tractatus* can be written it cannot accomplish its purpose (to set the limits of all possible representation); and if it accomplishes its purpose, it cannot be written (Hodges 1990: 86).

That is, by what the *Tractatus*' itself says, what one can represent is *eo ipso* within the limits of representation. To depict the limits of representation themselves then would fall outside those limits. And so there are no limits of representation that can be drawn. As such, it *cannot* be the case that one has so depicted them. Hodges derives the following terse conclusion: "the *Tractatus* is impossible" (Hodges 1990: 86). In this view then, even to see the *Tractatus* as an "initiation", as McGuinness would have it, is not conceivable. The question that needs to be dealt with here then is the divide between the *impossibility* of the *Tractatus* and its actuality. Is the *Tractatus* a miracle?

Of course there are Wittgenstein commentators who assiduously avoid the revocation and rather concentrate on the *Tractatus* as, say, a contribution to logical atomism. Studies in this category are of course attempts to delineate, clearly and concisely, the philosophical problems of language as they relate to the further study of philosophy and its cannon. It is perceived, rightly, that the *Tractatus* is one of the seminal works of philosophy in this century. As such, these commentaries attempt to weigh its various influences, potential and real on the arguments of the

philosophers. But it is also perceived, rightly, that questions about the meaning of the work's ultimate self-revocation would perhaps only serve to muddy the waters (to the point of opacity) in which philosophic arguments flow.

However, a number of commentaries do approach the final revocation of the *Tractatus*, albeit with somewhat measured steps. These works generally are an attempt to mediate between the need to account for the philosophical import of the work for the analytic tradition *and* its enigmatic final revocation. Some of these however attempt to cut all such ties. Hacker's *Insight and Illusion* is a good example:

It is common to view the *Tractatus* as a complete and wholly integrated work.... This is, I think, at best misleading, at worst erroneous (Hacker 1986: 101).

By implication then, when one is done throwing away the ladder, the mystical parts are the only casualty.

A more thorough survey of the metaphysics of the *Tractatus* and its self-revocation is to be found in Richard Brockhaus' *Pulling Up the Ladder*. Brockhaus diligently takes the reader through a history of the systematic excision of psychologism from philosophy. A history of which Frege is of course a pivotal character. Brockhaus uses this history lesson to provide a larger framework within which one can better understand the *Tractatus*.

As far as the mystical is concerned, Brockhaus places the influence of Schopenhauer front and centre. He argues that the young Wittgenstein retained a good deal of Schopenhauerian philosophy from book I of *The World as Will and Representation* (the world as representation) but rejects book II (the world as will). In book I, Schopenhauer stresses the need for rigor in

philosophy. His careful analysis of the Hegelian pseudo-concept "spirit" there provides an example of just how high he wishes to place the bar:

a thinking, willing, immaterial simple, indestructible being, occupying no space". Nothing distinct is thought in connexion with it, because the elements of these concepts cannot be verified by perceptions (Schopenhauer 1844: 65).

This empirical demand set by Schopenhauer in book I however rapidly gives way in book II to speculations about the world as will. For example:

But the word *will*, which, like a magic word, is to reveal to us the innermost essence of everything in nature... (Schopenhauer 1818: 111).

By book III, on 'aesthetic perception', he has all but posited the possibility of world transcendence in artistic contemplation:

...in such contemplation, the particular thing at one stroke becomes the *Idea* of its species, and the perceiving individual becomes the *pure subject of knowing* (Schopenhauer 1818: 179).

With this Schopenhauer has clearly violated the Kantian *dictum* -- strictly adhered to in book I -- that concepts without precepts are empty. In book II (and beyond) Wittgenstein apparently considered Schopenhauer to have exceeded the limit set in book I. The means by which the transition occurs from book I to book II is seen by Brockhaus as portrayed by the "metaphysical subject" (5.633) in the *Tractatus*. In the same way one cannot say anything about what the solipsist means, so too one cannot say anything about the metaphysical subject. And Wittgenstein parts company with Schopenhauer then in so far as the latter tries to express just such things in his book II. Brockhaus suggests that the "ladder" of 6.54 is

the claim "The world is *my* world", the pseudo-proposition which attempts to express what the solipsist wants or intends to say (Brockhaus 1991: 309).

So to throw away this ladder is to attempt to say it, and fail:

The solution thus supplied is ineffable, although in order to get clear about both its ineffability and its importance we must *try* to say it (Brockhaus 1991: 331).

This suggestion bears comparison with the view I have been putting forth ( see C.I.4. above) about the importance of inquiry in the Socratic mode. But the scope of Brockhaus' conclusion -- that the ladder refers merely to the propositions of the solipsist -- is not one that takes as seriously the notion that all propositions of philosophy (including those of the *Tractatus*) are *unsinnig* (4.003). And his view in this regard seems to arise from an undue emphasis on the influence of Frege:

Wittgenstein's monomaniacal zeal for expunging every remnant of psychology from philosophy serves as the motive for as well as the method of purification (Brockhaus 1991: 9).

Brockhaus' emphasis of a clearly Fregean project at the bottom of the *Tractatus*' method however, belies the clear intention of the *Tractatus* to purge philosophy of any doctrine and thus purge it of *philosophical* propositions (6.53), as well as psychological ones. Thus Brockhaus does not, to echo Diamond, want to fully throw away the ladder.

Brockhaus' treatment of the *Tractatus* does briefly raise the possibility that the *Tractatus* is a variant of the Socratic mode of inquiry, but this idea is left undeveloped. So too are the subjects of awe before "the unconditioned" nature of objects as the substance of the world, and of the unconditioned particularity of the subject (Brockhaus 1991: 322-3) left unpursued. Indeed we

care in the end left hanging with mere mention made of the possibility of these themes having roots in a reading of Kierkegaard.<sup>110</sup>

A somewhat scant, yet perhaps more provocative view of the *Tractatus*' revocation is to be found in David Pears *The False Prison*. Pears clearly does believe that there is a solid connection to be made between the mystical and logical aspects of the *Tractatus*. The theory of language contains its own paradoxical situation in that a limit of factual language is only possible if the drawing of that limit is not part of factual language:

...if philosophy is not just a more general abstract development of science, then its results cannot properly be expressed in factual language (Pears 1987: 7).

In effect, the impossibility of philosophy (though Pears is want to put it in such strong terms) is "deduced from the existence of factual language" (Pears 1987: 7). Of the fact that ultimately "little is achieved" when all philosophical problems are solved (as the *Tractatus*' Preface states), Pears writes that Wittgenstein is here "putting life before analytical philosophy" (Pears 1987: 191). Pears uses these remarks as a transition to what will be the subject matter of his second volume: the notion that "language games are human activities" and part of the "forms of life". Hence in bridging the mystical and the theory of meaning in the *Tractatus*, Pears is (very suggestively) simultaneously bridging the early and later views of Wittgenstein. The early is here seen as an immanent aspect of the later, rather than two adjacent, dissonant systems. But Pears does not follow up his idea that Wittgenstein was "putting life before analytical philosophy" as it specifically relates to the enigmatic *Lebensproblem* in the *Tractatus*. The question of the revocation is concisely dealt with, as one would with a text where commentary on the *Tractatus* is

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<sup>110</sup> Brockhaus mentions Kierkegaard on at least two occasions that are suggestive in this regard. (Brockhaus 1991: 332, fn. 38; 7). See Introduction above.

a mere stepping stone to the *Philosophical Investigations*. In short the problem is put in historical context. It is, for Pears, only in the *Investigations* that the repudiation of philosophy is "explicit and total" (Pears 1987: 200).

### 3. An 'Ineffable Doctrine' of 'Alien Thought'

James Conant takes up several pertinent themes in his essays "Must We Show What We Cannot Say?" (Conant 1989) and "The Search for Logically Alien Thought" (Conant 1992); as well as in his review of Brian McGuinness' book (Conant 1990). As far as the question of revocation and the influence of Kierkegaard are concerned, these are three of the most interesting essays in the literature. However, as has been sufficiently argued by Lippitt and Hutto<sup>111</sup>, they are also fatally marred by a misapprehension of Kierkegaard's view of revocation and paradox. In this section I will thus simply deal with the ramifications of this misapprehension for his interpretation of Wittgenstein strategy in the *Tractatus*.

Conant calls McGuinness' view a "relatively standard one" (Conant 1990: 338) in that it gives some positive weight to the ineffable. Conant himself seems to side with what he calls the more "modest claim" that through its failing to say anything, a piece of *Unsinn* "succeeds in showing something about the nature of language" but it cannot *show* as McGuinness variously attempts anything beyond what it shows about language (Conant 1990: 336). One cannot assign mystical meaning to the *Tractatus*' silence. This is the influence of Cora Diamond on Conant's views.

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<sup>111</sup> Lippitt and Hutto 1998: 275ff.

Conant makes it clear that he sees the *Tractatus* as an example of the "activity" of philosophy referred to in 4.112 (Conant 1990: 343). The *Tractatus* is not a doctrine then. He characterizes McGuinness' view that there is metaphysical meaning in silence as, in essence, finding "doctrine" in silence:

McGuinness is thus willing to throw away the ladder partially:.... For McGuinness even after the edifice of explicit doctrine crumbles, a hidden ghost of ineffable doctrine remains hovering above the debris (Conant 1990: 339).

Hence with this "ineffable doctrine", Conant sees McGuinness as committed to two senses of *Unsinn*: (1) *Unsinn* as gibberish, and (2) *Unsinn* as "deep" or metaphysical *Unsinn*, this latter being seen as the main message of the *Tractatus*.

The most difficult notion involved in Conant's take on McGuinness' book, namely that of an "ineffable doctrine", has already been mentioned with regard to Diamond. Conant makes several assertions about what the reader is meant to take away from the *Tractatus*. For example, with respect to the *Tractatus*' ultimate statement "Whereof one cannot speak, one must be silent" (7), Conant says that "'The idea' that we are left with nothing must also be thrown away" (Conant 1990: 337). Moreover, he adds:

The answer to the question 'What are we left with once we have thrown away the ladder?' is: our own sense of deprivation (Conant 1990: 337).

Now first, as we have seen with Diamond, Conant is placed in the precarious situation of himself attributing an "ineffable doctrine" to the *Tractatus*. For nowhere does Wittgenstein develop such ideas within the *Tractatus*. Does not Conant's "modest claim" contravene to his own prohibition against attributing ineffable doctrine? For according to this claim the *Tractatus*

succeeds in showing something about the nature of language. *What* does it show? If one cannot say what is shown, is one not asserting an "ineffable doctrine"? In fact is not any interpretation of the *Tractatus* within which the interpreter elucidates and explains a difficult passage merely an assignation of an "ineffable doctrine" to the *Tractatus*? In fact, in the case of an "ineffable doctrine" any purpose, motive, or effect attributed to the *Tractatus* is attributing to it such a doctrine. On the 'austere' view nothing is accomplished by the *Tractatus* -- not even that 'nothing is accomplished by the *Tractatus*', and so on. It seems that the view that McGuinness assigns ineffable doctrine to the *Tractatus* is unfair in the same way as has been pointed to concerning Diamond's comments on Malcolm's interpretation of the *Tractatus*. Ineffable doctrine is what every commentator must do in making any general statements at all about this or any book. The austere view trumpeted by Diamond and Conant, is to hold all comment on the *Tractatus* to so high a standard that one literally cannot say anything about it at all.

Indeed in "Must We Show What We Cannot Say?", Conant explains that he began to write a straight forward paper on the theme of revocation in Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard but was overtaken by the realization that, in doing this, he himself would be assigning an ineffable doctrine to the *Tractatus*. In order (he thinks) to avoid this fate, he writes his 'article' in the form of an "obituary" for the article he was to have written. By means of the subjunctive mood he manages to revoke all that he says while saying it as he would have said -- had he written the article.

But this elaborate and skilfully undertaken ruse only manages to highlight further the following remaining difficulty: "although there is no such thing as understanding the propositions of the book, there is such a thing as the illusion of understanding them" (Conant 1989: 344). The

question then that Conant needs to address, but does not, is this: on what basis is even our *illusion* of understanding sustained? If by couching his words in a *faux* obituary Conant means to show that they are *Unsinn*, how is it that his article does not appear before the reader's eyes with all the meaning of a very long optometrist's eye chart? The answer here seems to be that offered by Diamond. That is, Conant's article also uses a provisional before-you-throw-away-the-ladder vocabulary. And like Diamond (as we have seen), Conant is caught in his own web. Conant is forced into the awkward position of saying that 'the *Tractatus* is not thinkable, nor is any philosophical comment upon it; however my present comments are, by means of the subjunctive mood, rendered transitional: my remarks *will have been* real comment'.<sup>112</sup>

Of greater interest is Conant's more historically oriented piece called "The Search For Logically Alien Thought". Here he takes us through the evolution of what he takes to be the lesson of the *Tractatus*: that there is no deep nonsense about the world; there is no 'it'. He begins with Aquinas and travels on to Descartes, to Leibniz, through Kant, to Frege in quest of the true metaphysical (or anti-metaphysical) ground of the *Tractatus*. In this he interestingly fills in the historical gaps between Plato and Kierkegaard, and between Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein (that the present thesis makes no attempt to fill). However the conclusion Conant comes to reflects the fact that he begins his story too late in the western philosophy's historical lineage. As such though Conant wishes to show that Wittgenstein can only be understood as standing firmly within a particular presupposition of Western philosophy, Conant is in fact tracing the evolution of what Wittgenstein considered to be Western philosophy's pivotal error.

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<sup>112</sup> It is interesting to note that Kierkegaard relates the subjunctive to modern philosophy: "...one could really present the whole of modern philosophy in a theory about the indicative and the subjunctive; it is indeed purely subjunctive" (JPII: 2313). Conant himself suspects throughout "Must We Show...?" that obituaries and post-mortems of the kind his paper represent are themselves merely attempts at resurrection couched in irony.

Conant quotes Aquinas as saying that the phrase "*God can do all things*", is rightly understood to mean that God can do all things that are possible" (Conant 1992: 116). Descartes calls the Aquinian view that God is restricted by extrinsic logical limits "blasphemous". He thinks that the limits that Aquinas discerns are not shared by God but rather reflect *our* understanding's finitude, but say nothing of God's limitations as such. Hence Descartes, as Conant quite rightly points out, argues for a cleavage between God's infinite understanding and finite human understanding. Indeed this is akin to the point that Descartes makes in his fourth meditation concerning a certain disfunctionality in human being: the human will is infinite but the human understanding is *finite*. This disequilibrium causes the ever present wish in humans to transgress the "natural" limits of the understanding made evident by the "natural light of reason". Error -- and, as it turns out, *sin* -- is as such the product of our brash willing beyond what we understand. To avoid error then is for Descartes accomplished by restraining the will within the limits of our understanding.

It is important to note that the cleavage that Descartes presents between the limits of human and divine understanding could be taken two different ways. We might, on the one hand, push Descartes' remarks in the Meditations to the point where they mean that "error" and "sin" occur simply from allowing the will to reach beyond the understanding *as it is contingently constituted*. That is, there is perhaps no error or sin in attempting to know all that there is to know, so long as we do not attempt to will beyond that knowledge that we have at that point in which the willing is to occur. Here then the sin is simply acting rashly. No absolute limit has been transgressed. This reading of Descartes' fourth meditation in no way inhibits the understanding from the ultimate goal of coming to know *all there is*. The view does caution against hasty

conclusions, but leaves open the possibility that human understanding *can* attain to all that divine understanding can. This reading then would be in line with Aquinas' and (its progenitor) Plato's metaphysical doctrine that there is no *absolutely* unknown, and so God and man share the same limits (we will deal with this point directly in C.III.1. below).

But with his critique of the Thomistic view<sup>113</sup>, Descartes would see the above view of the fourth meditation as itself *sin*. For it implies that the will of God is itself limited, in that He cannot create any sort of logical cosmos he wants but must conform to the logical cosmos as it is. This, in effect, is to subjugate God to logic. And if God is said to have created the heavens and earth, then this implies that he has created them according to rules already set up. This view then, for Descartes, throws out the baby with the bath water. Hence he argues that human knowledge is not merely contingently limited (i.e. we can know all, but do not *now* know all) but also absolutely limited. That is, we are limited in what we can possibly know by way of our finite understanding. So that what seem to *us* to be absolute limits of possibility are merely absolute *human* limits. Beyond the absolute limits of human understanding there *is* something unknowable.

Conant points out the difficulty in Descartes' position insofar as one cannot demonstrate the situation one way (that God can do the "impossible") or the other (that God is constrained by possibility); yet Descartes wishes to assert that the former is the case. To do this he, as Conant says, "helps himself to a fine distinction --.... The possibility of such a world [in which the "impossible" for us is possible] is not something we can *comprehend*, but it is something we can *apprehend*" (Conant 1992: 120). In Descartes' words, we cannot "embrace" the thought of the impossible, but we can "touch" it by seeing that it could be.

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Descartes 1641: 93.

So in effect what Descartes does with this gambit is create an *absolute* cleavage between divine possibility and human possibility. Conant asks: what is it that is supposed to be left over when we subtract human from divine thought? This remainder, for Conant, would be simply logically alien thought.

I will very quickly here account for Conant's whereabouts at various junctures on the quest that inexorably leads him to "the abyss" (Conant 1992: 146) of the *Tractatus*' "framing passages." Leibniz takes the next turn at the wheel. In his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz objects to the Cartesian view as itself somewhat heretical. For, if Descartes would have it that God can will any world he wants, and what He wills is by definition the good (see C.III.1. below), then Leibniz asks "why praise him for what He has done if He would be equally praiseworthy in doing the exact contrary?" (quoted in Conant 1992: 128). In short, Leibniz is pointing out that, with the Cartesian view of God, to say that He is wise or just is tautological.

Kant (taking the wheel) concurs with Leibniz here that the Cartesian view in effect leaves room for such questions as 'Yes, but is God *really* wise and just?' The Cartesian view for Kant leaves room for a rather global sceptical claim along the lines that the limits of my understanding are such because this is how I have been constituted; how things *really* are, however, is another story (Conant 1992: 131).

From Kant, Conant turns to Frege and his own quest to root out all psychological elements from philosophy. He of course quotes the passages from the *Tractatus* that seem to bespeak of a similar quest in that book (e.g. 4.1121). For Frege as for Kant, the Cartesian logician "presumes to acknowledge and doubt a law in the same breath" (quoted in Conant 1992: 146). That is, the "law" of logic is taken to be paramount in terms of human thought but yet not

an absolute law. As Conant points out, if the Cartesian logician were to acknowledge and *disagree* with an argument that was logically alien, the Cartesian would thus be admitting a common law of logic that allows for such agreement and disagreement. However, if the Cartesian did not allow an argument that was logically alien, i.e. if he *disallowed* either agreement or disagreement in such a case by denying that any question of correctness was possible, there would be no such admission. For one to "acknowledge", especially in regard to an argument, implies that one is to 'understand' and hence implies that one is to 'embrace'. What this long line of thinkers already named seems to miss is that no such embrace need be attributed to Descartes.<sup>114</sup>

However while one may stoically disallow any judgement about purported logically alien thought, one as well cannot remove the possibility of trying judge. For it seems that we can form a question about the logically alien.<sup>115</sup> And if we can form a question, then there must be an expressible answer (à la Plato); yet the answer is not expressible, hence neither is the question. This then is roughly Kierkegaard's Absolute paradox: we run up against the limit of something which we find our words cannot get beyond. The possible solutions are that we either take the fact that our words cannot get to it as a sign that there is no 'it'; or we take the fact that our words cannot get to it as a sign that there *is* an 'it'. Such a situation, i.e. our running up against this limit that both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein refer to, seems to equally pull one in and push one away, so to speak. Both of these possible conclusions to running up against the limits can be taken as judgements -- in which case to say either "'it' *is*" or "'it' *is not*" is to attempt to use language to go

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<sup>114</sup> As Descartes himself puts it: "For example, God did not will the creation of the world in time because he saw that it would be better this way.... On the contrary, it is because he willed to create the world in time that it is better..." (Descartes 1641: 93). In other words, it simply makes no sense to say that a temporal world is better. This is not however to imply that an atemporal world would have been better. For this is again to assert a criterion of judgement over and above the fact that God made it so. This view is indeed a key element of the so-called "divine command theory" as we will see in C.III.1. below.

<sup>115</sup> E.g. Heidegger's question 'What is this nothing?'

beyond language -- or as *belief*. If taken in the latter way, either conclusion is equally nonsensical. Yet both are clearly nonsensical in a different way than is a judgement made to get beyond the limit.

Descartes' "fine distinction" between what can be "touched" in thought and what can be "embraced" should be familiar to us as corresponding to the distinction between knowledge as acquaintance and knowledge as insight respectively. These are also in basic correspondence to the conditions for asking the question and the condition for giving the answer. This takes us right back to the heart of Kierkegaard's critique of Platonism. Frege and Descartes are simply in agreement that the logically alien thought cannot be embraced -- for this would imply a common logic that the Cartesian view denies. But further, for Frege, the clear implication is that if something which is purportedly 'touched' in this way cannot subsequently be 'embraced', then we are mistaken in seeing that purported something as being touched, as anything at all. If there can be no embrace, then our having touched something in the first place is *eo ipso* demonstrated as illusory.

Here is the critical distinction that places Plato<sup>116</sup>, Aquinas, Leibniz, Kant and Frege on one side, and Descartes and Kierkegaard on the other side. For the former grouping, if there can be no 'embrace', then there has certainly been no 'touch'. If there can be no answer arrived at, that which is the condition of the question (i.e. what the question is in reference to) is thus illusory. This is precisely what Diamond refers to, after Kant, as "the understanding in agreement with itself" (See B.III.3.a above): what can be said denotes what can be thought and what *is*. And this is (recall) also precisely Plato's solution to Meno's paradox: the two senses of 'know' in the paradox are distinct *but* related insofar as *if* we can ask a question, we can get an answer. That is,

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<sup>116</sup> At least in his Kierkegaardian incarnation.

if it can be touched it can be embraced. On the other side are Kierkegaard and Descartes who are at one, though for different reasons, at least with respect to this: the inability to embrace something says nothing about our ability to touch 'it'. For Kierkegaard this is fundamental: *existence stands outside the influence of essence*. To say that the (ultimate) 'embrace' is required to establish the 'touch' is to get things the wrong way around. The touch is independent of the embrace. The condition of the question, in other words, is independent of the answer. *And both require thinking*. The philosophical frustration this causes, the "offence" as Kierkegaard calls it, is elicited by the expectation that there is an answer for every question. This is the legacy of Platonism. To say that unless there is an answer, there is no (real) question is one thing; to say that there also is no thing which the question is about, is a manifestation of this offence based on the assumption that (to continue with the Cartesian locution) the touch is *only* a sign of the possibility of the embrace, and so the embrace encompasses the touch as well.

We can discern from what we have seen of Conant's writings thus far that he is in league with the Plato/Aquinas/Leibniz/Kant side of the debate. As such the emphasis on there being a clear line from Kant to Frege to Wittgenstein is of great importance to his anti-metaphysical reading of the *Tractatus*. The core of the controversy about the proper reading of the *Tractatus*, as we have already seen to a certain extent, is found when one is forced to contemplate the *exact* meaning of Wittgenstein's penultimate revocation. I have been arguing for a view that is in agreement with Diamond and Conant in one respect: the framing passages -- roughly, the Preface, the discussion of *das Mystische*, the problem of scientific questions and answers, on scepticism, the proper method of philosophy, and the revocation -- *are* key to an assessment of Wittgenstein metaphysical proclivities. However I have as well argued that Diamond's and

Conant's interpretation of these framing passages as clearly taking an *anti*-metaphysical stand<sup>117</sup> is quite incorrect. Simply stitching together a lineage from Kant to Frege to Wittgenstein, as Diamond and Conant do, and avoiding the textual contra-indications within and without the *Tractatus* can make it clear that Wittgenstein was versed in this lineage, but in no way rules out that Wittgenstein was critical of its results. Indeed the result of Conant's historical sketch is that we are asked to believe that Wittgenstein would side with Frege and Kant; though we see no indication of why this need be so. For there is no lack of evidence that Wittgenstein took a very different view on metaphysics than did Frege.

In the *Tractatus* itself<sup>118</sup>, there is the conspicuous statement (which Conant fails to mention) that "[t]here is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical" (6.522). We cannot say what shows. But this does not mean what shows *is not*. It might be argued that what is being referred to here as showing is the structure of propositions which is not *unsinnig* but rather *sinnlos*. And so the mystical is simply *sinnlos*. However, it is also stated that "Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is" (6.44). Firstly, the *that* here refers us to that which is prior to logic, and thus prior to structure. It is not the particular structures but rather that there are any structures at all that is mystical (see C.III.1. below). So the mystical in 6.522 also cannot be referring to structure. Secondly, the *how* in 6.44 refers to facts in the world. That is, that which can be embraced. Clearly, the *that* then does *not* fall under the auspices of the *what*. Hence the *that* cannot itself be embraced, only, so to speak, touched. In his "Lecture on Ethics" Wittgenstein states that

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<sup>117</sup> Conant thinks this anti-metaphysical sentiment is so obvious that he quotes from the pivotal portion of the Preface in the epigram to his paper.

<sup>118</sup> No doubt the objection will be made that in referring to sections of the *Tractatus* itself I am referring to that which Wittgenstein ultimately throws away. However I consider this section to be part of the 'frame' and as such am in no way violating where Conant and Diamond do not.

Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, *natural* meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts... (LE: 40).

The important locution here is "Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural". He is saying throughout the "Lecture" that our words cannot say what thought cannot embrace. That which cannot be embraced and so cannot be said, cannot be a science. Ethics, for Wittgenstein, "can be no science" (LE: 44). With the statement "Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural", Wittgenstein is saying much the same thing. Ethics is the mystical; it *is*, independent of *how* things are; it *is*, independent of what can be embraced. Elsewhere in his later writings, we still see Wittgenstein being very careful not to place, so to speak, existence within the purview of essence. In his remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, he is critical of Frazer for precisely placing "savage" ritual and custom within the frame of science:

The very idea of wanting to explain a practice -- for example, the killing of the priest-king -- seems wrong to me. All that Frazer does is to make them plausible to people who think as he does. It is very remarkable that in the final analysis all these practices are presented as, so to speak, pieces of stupidity (GB: 119).

The rational cannot explain conviction; and the same sorts of conviction, Wittgenstein implies, are *at the basis* of our rationality: "Frazer doesn't notice that we have before us the teaching of Plato and Schopenhauer" (GB: 141). In the same vein, Wittgenstein writes in *On Certainty*:

Supposing we met people who did not regard that [i.e. that physicists tells us that water boils at 100°C] as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? -- If we call this "wrong" aren't we using our language game as a base from which to *combat* theirs? (OC: 609)

This seems to be a confrontation with logically alien thought in which Wittgenstein is precisely saying that judgement of that thought is impossible -- yet he is not dismissing the thought as such. In another place he states "I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say 'can trust something')" (OC: 509). That is, if one has no doubt about one particular thing<sup>119</sup> a language game can result; but to have no doubt means that that one thing must itself be excluded from the language game insofar as it cannot be a (normal) proposition. Such language games can exclude other language games in what seems, in the following passage, an absolute way:

Men have believed that they could make rain; why should not a king be brought up in the belief that the world began with him? And if Moore and this king were to meet and discuss, could Moore really prove his belief to be the right one? I do not say that Moore could not convert the king to his view, but it would be a conversion of a special kind; the king would be brought to look at the world in a different way (OC: 92).

Elsewhere, Wittgenstein says that he would not contradict someone who believes in Judgement Day:

If you ask me whether or not I believe in a Judgement Day, in the sense in which religious people have belief in it, I wouldn't say: "No. I don't believe there will be such a thing." It would seem to me utterly crazy to say this....

I can't say. I can't contradict that person. (APR: 55)

In short, it seems that if Wittgenstein believed that there was no *conceivable* ('touchable') alien thought, we would be hard pressed to interpret such passages as those mentioned above. One who claims that thinking is a process completely within the purview of reason, as Conant

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<sup>119</sup> One might think of Descartes' archmedian point here. Or, for that matter Kierkegaard's take on this Cartesian concept: "Faith is quite correctly 'the point outside the world' which therefore also moves the whole world. It is easy to perceive that what bursts forth through a negation of all points in the world is the point outside the world.... The negating of all concepts forces one outside the world, to the absurd -- and here is faith" (JP III: 529; see Ferreira 1994).

says is Wittgenstein's claim, would certainly be able to, e.g., contradict a person who believes in Judgement Day; one who makes such a claim, in for example convincing the king that the world existed before he was born, would *not* be changing the king's *Weltanschauung* as Wittgenstein clearly suggests in the passage above, but *would* merely be convincing the king of a plain fact -- indeed, there would be no such talk of such differing *Weltanschauung*. In the same sense we would have a clear ground to say that the person who consults an oracle about the temperature at which water boils is *wrong* in doing so. Indeed, if there were no 'logically alien thought' Frazer would be right in his judgement that the beliefs of primitive cultures are simply "pieces of stupidity". But Wittgenstein is consistently at pains to show us the fault of such judgements. What Wittgenstein is saying here is, I think, strongly reminiscent of a key passage in the *Postscript*:

*If only the how of this relation [i.e. the individual's subjective relation] is in truth, the individual is in truth, even if he in this way were to relate himself to untruth. (CUP: 199)*

He goes on to say that,

*Objectively the emphasis is on what is said; subjectively the emphasis is on how it is said.... At its maximum, this "how" is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is the very truth (CUP: 202).<sup>120</sup>*

Alastair Hannay puts it well when he says that here Kierkegaard is allowing that "the 'how' may be the 'how' of truth *even when the assertion corresponding to the 'what' is false*" (Hannay 1982: 132). So even if someone were to state a belief based on a dream that Judgement Day is near, 'how' that person says it may be reflective of the passion of the infinite, and as such 'what' they say is irrelevant.

<sup>120</sup>

This and the preceding passage use Kierkegaard own emphasis.

It might be argued that these examples are not of *logically* alien thought; i.e. my examples do not demonstrate, say, that Wittgenstein would claim that a 'primitive' person might legitimately believe that it can be both raining and not raining at the same time. But all of the examples above are some of the most easily dismissed lapses in logic that can be conceived of. This is precisely why Wittgenstein uses them as examples. As an augmentation to the Judgement Day example. Wittgenstein asks us to suppose that someone came to us and said that a dream had convinced them that Judgement Day was a reality. He specifically says that to argue that dreams are psychological constructions of reality that can have no causal relation to events that will occur in the future, or some such argument, which is in one sense obviously the case, would be to precisely miss the point of the person's words. The person's intention was not to predict a fact. This statement was of a different nature all together. To make the king see that one's scientific explanation is correct would be to *convince* him, to *persuade* him (OC: 262) that his *Weltanschauung* is impossible because it does not fall within the possible parameters of ours. In contrast to Wittgenstein's attitude, of such cases, Frege says that the "psychological logician could only acknowledge the fact and say simply: those laws hold for them, these laws hold for us. I should say: we have here a hitherto unknown type of madness" (Frege 1884: 14).<sup>121</sup>

In the first section of the next chapter we will see that Wittgenstein very clearly sides with what I have been calling after Conant (and somewhat misleadingly) the Cartesian view. We need

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<sup>121</sup> In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is asked whether he agrees with Kurtz's "methods". His response is that he sees no method at all. In this novel Conrad might be seen as playing with the notion of logically alien thought and its relation to madness. The character Kurtz is perceived by the duller characters who populate the book as having gone mad. This madness is equated with a lack of method. Marlow for his part, however, is unsure: has Kurtz simply gone mad, or has he travelled through the looking glass to a 'primitive' sort of logic? Does this 'madness' lie nascent in all humans? Frege would presumably insist on the former being the case. But we can clearly see (especially in his remarks on Frazer's observations) Wittgenstein's interests lie in precisely such questions as interest Marlow: "There are cases where I'd say he's mad, or he's making fun. Then there might be cases where I look for an entirely different interpretation altogether" (APR: 62).

merely keep in mind at this point that Wittgenstein is very far from arguing in those passages we have cited that such views as those of the king or the person who believes in the Judgement Day are *unthinkable*. At best he seems to be saying that we should withhold judgement with respect to such views. This is what -- later, as at the time of the *Tractatus* -- Wittgenstein considers the proper approach to such views. He refrains from saying that there is no 'logically alien thought'; for that would itself be a judgement. Rather that there is just nothing to be said about such views. Conant wishes to argue that Wittgenstein is showing, by way of the *Tractatus*, that there is no such thought. What I am submitting is that, at best, the *Tractatus* argues that there is a limit to what we can say -- and that that limit "*indicates* something" (WVC: 69). But only something that can be 'touched'. And to paraphrase Kierkegaard<sup>122</sup>, insofar as one takes the sufficient criterion of something *existing* to be that one is able to 'embrace' it, then that which is indicated or touched does not exist; but if one alternatively considers that our having touched it is a sufficient criterion of existence, then that something that we have touched or run up against, exists.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Cf. PF: 44. Interestingly, Kierkegaard's name is conspicuously absent from this essay of Conant's.

<sup>123</sup> We should take a moment to address Conant's particular argument to which his history lesson has been leading. His basic thesis is that "the standard reading of the *Tractatus* [i.e. the 'metaphysical' reading] has the teaching of the work inside out" (Conant 1992: 155). Here he is referring to the published conversations with Vienna Circle members in which Wittgenstein is purported to have said that "[l]anguage is after all not a cage" (WVC: 117). This passage is controversial because in the "Lecture on Ethics" Wittgenstein says the opposite: "My whole tendency... to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless" (LE: 44). Conant, in a footnote wishes to explain this in terms of an interpretation akin to Diamond's 'transitional vocabulary', in which what Wittgenstein says in the Lecture is still transitional whereas what he says to the Circle denotes a point of view after the ladder has been thrown away. See B.III.3. above for my critique of such a view. Most of what Conant sees as the method of the *Tractatus* has already been seen in the above chapter. Many of the arguments made can be made problematic by reference to contrary textual evidence that I have already employed. One example of a familiar conundrum experienced by those who adhere to the austere view of the *Tractatus* can be seen in the following: Conant uses the sentence 'a concept is distinct from an object' as an example of typical philosophical nonsense. In using this example however Conant is forced by the view that all nonsense is just *plain* nonsense, into the awkward position of saying that we cannot even think this proposition. So we cannot think whether or not there is a distinction between a concept and an object. We need merely ask whether Conant in saying such a statement is transitionally 'embracing' its sense in assessing it to be plain nonsense. Or need he merely 'touch' it with his thought in order to make such an assessment? The point is clear: nonsense, if transitionally useful at all cannot be plain "unvarnished" nonsense. For plain nonsense could not be assessed at all. It would be wholly enigmatic. Not only

It simply depends on what we accept -- what we *choose* -- as the proper criterion (as we will see in C.III.3. below).

We thus give Hodges' paradox one more spin:

If the *Tractatus* can be written it cannot accomplish its purpose (to set the limits of all possible representation); and if it accomplishes its purpose, it cannot be written (Hodges 1990: 86).

The only way to avoid this paradox is to find a foothold in one's interpretation of the *Tractatus*, i.e. to distinguish between two notions of *Unsinn*. Conant sees many scholars as led into the false belief that one must be silent *about* something; i.e., that there is some positive content withheld by this silence. He argues that Wittgenstein's book implies no such positive content. To be sure there is a sort of lovely textual symmetry to the thought that a text could be so turned in upon itself as to disappear completely<sup>124</sup> -- that is itself in turn a temptation. But it is clear that both the *Postscript* and the *Tractatus* point resolutely *beyond* the textual. They each destroy the textual outside the limits they set (i.e., doctrinaire metaphysics), and as this or any limit can only be set if there is access outside these limits (as the preface to the *Tractatus* shows), these texts themselves are houses of cards that must fall. A philosophical text is doctrine and *ergo* suffers the fate of such a house of cards. Seen from a rationalist point of view, this is perhaps nihilism's victory. But it also explains Conant's reluctance to give up the search for the meaning of, and a way to speak about, "philosophical silence" (though he is, of course, not searching for any "it"). It also explains Diamond's appeal to a transitional vocabulary. As I have put it (at the beginning of part

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could we not 'embrace' it but we could not 'touch' it either. And this is simply to say that we would not even notice 'it'.

<sup>124</sup>

As was Sextus Empiricus' stated position (see C.III.4. below).

C), the understanding's *irritant* cannot be excised *and* cannot be explained. All philosophy then, including Diamond and Conant, is a perpetual attempt to find a compromise, a 'middle position' between 'it *cannot* be' and 'it *must* be'. A remedy to an itch that cannot be scratched.

As Kierkegaard knew, and I would argue Wittgenstein as well knew, the question is not how to write properly but how to *live* properly. He saw all systems as providing a false hope about our lives: namely that in the subsuming/annuling [*im aufheben*] of existence of which every systematic rendering partakes, existence is not destroyed *but its meaninglessness is* (Forbes 1975: xi). It is this view that the revocation destroys. For only when the large clatter of reason is silenced does one see precisely where it was one was 'standing' when one rendered it so. The foothold one finds in Hodges paradox, the only one from whence a *Tractatus* and a *Postscript* can be written at all (though it be "an offence to reason"), is that of a "poor existing human being" as living, as existing. That 'stance' is the "truth" into which Kierkegaard wishes to "deceive" the reader. To see clearly that a system cannot provide 'meaning' is the condition then for the "leap of faith". In effect, the 'meaning' for which one searches, must already -- ineffably -- be there for the search to have taken place at all. We suffer from the desire to make the possibility of the answer do the work that the possibility of the question has already done.

### III. Riddles of Life

Most riddles require those who would solve them to turn, as it were, the riddle question in such a way that the solution is obvious in the question itself. Similar to what Wittgenstein later calls 'aspect seeing', a riddle demands that our attention shift within the morphological strictures of the riddle 'game', until the solution is there. For Kierkegaard, the solution to the riddle *of life* is there only if one stops expecting to find a solution. This for him is the to take the leap of faith. Socrates, according to Kierkegaard, did not know of this possible solution since this is the 'new' solution that Christ brought, many years after Socrates took the hemlock. Kierkegaard however maintains that Socrates was unique among men in remaining open to such a solution. The irritant of the paradox, however remained ever present for Socrates. Wittgenstein, too, in the *Tractatus* means to leave the possibility open (and perhaps even wished to find within himself such a solution as Kierkegaard's). For him, the solution to the riddle of life lies outside of time and space, and beyond language (6.4312). The parameters of the riddle game stretch beyond this limit; and to shift one's attention beyond the limit is to make the leap, and so give up reason as one's foremost beacon. The pathos of the 'framing passages' in the *Tractatus* (see A.I.2.b above) marks a longing to be rid of the riddle once and for all and also marks the concomitant fear of where this step might lead. There is a definite sense that this is, for Wittgenstein, an ethical boundary, where one either does or does not take seriously what one believes is *right* -- and acts accordingly. Insofar as he takes pains to throw the ladder away, and so revoke the work as doctrine, the *Tractatus* is an *act* of metaphysics. But this act is, so to speak, only Act One of a two act play. There is still the most important act of the 'play' -- the part that (as Wittgenstein

says to von Ficker) is *not* written -- to come. This is the tensile relation that the *Tractatus* has with Kierkegaard's writings that is withheld and yet "contained in" and "displayed by" (4.115) what is written in the *Tractatus*. To understand Wittgenstein *himself* is to understand what is contained in his propositions (6.54), the abstracted direct expression of which is nonsense. But it is nonsense that is ever indicative of a task left unperformed (6.4321).

This chapter will deal with the aforementioned tension inherent in the *Tractatus* and the sense of responsibility that a *clear terminus* inexorably evokes. Like an irritant, or a spur. Section 1. will then deal with the passage in which Wittgenstein brings forth the clear terminus, to contrast a 'divine command' view of knowledge with the Platonic view.<sup>124</sup> Section 2. will deal with the contrast made in the *Tractatus* (and related texts) between the notion of 'world' (*Welt*) and that of 'life' (*Leben*). In section 3. the relation between faith and knowledge is looked at, as is the role that choice plays in that relation in light of section 2. Finally, section 4. will attempt to sum up my position a final time.

### 1. *The "Clear Terminus"*

At one point in Wittgenstein's conversations with Vienna Circle members in Vienna the question of Schlick's view of ethics comes to the fore. Moritz Schlick, the Vienna Circle member largely responsible for arranging these "audiences" with Wittgenstein, held the view at the time that there were two typical ways of construing on what basis the good is the good. One conception has it that what is good is so because God decrees it such. This has been called the divine command theory. The opposing conception is that the good simply *is* the good in an

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<sup>124</sup> We have seen the historical process of this debate in C.II.3 above.

independent sense and this is why God deems it such. Schlick refers to the former as the "shallower" conception and the latter as the "more profound" conception. In the margin of his copy of Schlick's book *Fragen der Ethik*<sup>125</sup>, Wittgenstein contradicted Schlick's view by referring to the divine command theory as "the profound interpretation" (WVC: 155, fn79). In conversation with Circle members, Wittgenstein expanded on these marginalia:

I think that the first interpretation is the profounder one: what God commands, that is good. For it cuts off the way to any explanation 'why' it is good, while the second interpretation is the shallower, rationalistic one, which proceeds 'as if' you could give reasons for what is good (WVC: 115).

He goes on saying that

the first conception says clearly that the essence of the good has nothing to do with facts and hence cannot be explained by any proposition (WVC: 115).

The conversations with Vienna Circle members perhaps served several purposes for Wittgenstein -- e.g. a means to re-enter the world of philosophy, to correct certain prominent mis-apprehensions of the *Tractatus*, etc. Not least of these purposes was, as we have seen (Introduction above), to help Waismann to write a book about the *Tractatus*. Indeed at one point it was conceived that Waismann and Wittgenstein would collaborate on the book. Wittgenstein's view in the conversation on Schlick's ethics is certainly related to an important passage in the *Tractatus* on the topic of limits:

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

So people stop short at natural laws as at something unassailable, as did the ancients at God and Fate.

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Vienna, 1930.

And they both are right and wrong. But the ancients were clearer, in so far as they recognized one clear terminus [*klaren Abschluss*], whereas the modern system makes it appear as though *everything* were explained (6.371-6.372).

There are two points in all the forgoing that are important for our present purposes. First, the inherent linguistic limitations of philosophy. What I have called Plato's pragmatic argument, along with the theory of *anamnesis*, provides a warrant to proceed as if one could explain anything which for humans can be raised as a question. Plato's justification of this warrant (a deeply held assumption that arises in even those philosophies claiming autonomy from any metaphysics) amounts to the wish to allay mankind's natural tendency to laziness, prompted by puzzles of the sort raised by Meno's paradox. Kierkegaard, as we have seen, argues that a metaphysics based on the view that everything can be explained is not a source of human freedom but rather of human servitude to the oppressive regime of the System. Reason will, as Kierkegaard notes with sarcasm, one day finally understand everything when the System is complete. What, he concludes, one really understands by way of reason is an abstraction masquerading as the provider of 'reality' and 'truth'. Kierkegaard's criticism is precisely that this machine is what makes man's spirit lazily drift off to sleep. The postulate that everything can be known, everything can be explained is the postponement of real freedom for real poor existing human beings until some possibly imagined point wherein the full picture is known. That philosophy can provide this full picture, a picture of all that is, is what for Kierkegaard one must turn away from. For Wittgenstein, the modest role of philosophy as the clarification of language, not the creation of a doctrinal system wherein "it looks as though *everything* were explained" (6.372), is not just put forth to show the limits of science and clear the way for scientific

investigation. It is also put forth as a challenge, in the way the title *Philosophical Fragments* is a challenge, to the "shallow" hubris of modern metaphysics which excludes the reality of anything excluded by science.

Secondly, Wittgenstein refers to the "essence of the good" as that which "has nothing to do with facts" (WVC: 115) and yet cannot be viewed as illusory (WVC: 116-7). Schlick's view that God chooses the good because it is, objectively, the good has of course a classical precedent in Plato. Specifically, it is Plato's dialogue entitled *Euthyphro*, wherein the concept of piety is at issue:

Socrates: ... Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods? (*Euthyphro*: 10a)

The sense here is that the ultimate reality is something apart from the gods, i.e. that reality is something sanctioned but *not* dictated or created by the gods. This is then a direct parallel to Schlick's duality. Plato considered that the gods had no choice but to sanction the ultimate reality. Schlick refers to the view in line with Plato's (i.e. that the gods love the pious because it is pious) as more profound. Wittgenstein refers to this view as the "shallower, rationalistic one" since it implies explanation of the ultimate reality is possible, for the ultimate reality is unexplainable and yet, it is. It is, as we see from the "Lecture on Ethics", something which for Wittgenstein is only encountered by the subject:

At the end of my Lecture on ethics I spoke in the first person.... Here there is nothing to be stated any more (WVC: 117).

What concerns Wittgenstein here is the Platonic conjoining of epistemology's and ontology's limits. What concerns him is the view that if it *is*, one can *know* it. If one can know it, it is. His

comments are not a rejection of some ultimate reality but rather in accordance with a pre-Platonic rejection of any possible human insight into such a reality. So, contrary to the view that there is no 'it', as Diamond puts it, for Wittgenstein there is simply no *sayable* 'it'. That it is not 'sayable' is not to say that it *is* not.<sup>126</sup> This Platonic conjunction is, for Kierkegaard, a basic assumption of metaphysics: if it is there, we can (eventually) come to know it, and as such come to speak of it with *Sinn*. Conversely, if we cannot come to say it, it is not there. However, it is clear that in Wittgenstein's remarks divine knowledge is being distinguished from human knowledge; the former being unknowable for humans and not merely, as in Schlick's Platonic view, partaking of the same ultimate reality of which humans partake. There is, for we poor existing human beings, the unexplainable, the unknown, the mystical; in short, Fate. And this is, for Wittgenstein, the more profound view of life. The Platonic assumption is that of the scientist par excellence. As Wittgenstein later put it,

What a curious attitude scientists have --: 'We still don't know that; but it is knowable and it is only a matter of time before we get to know it!' As if that went without saying. -- (CV: 40)

Wittgenstein's remarks on questioning and answering in the 6.5s of the *Tractatus* are generally read as a denial of an ultimate reality. There is no "riddle of life" because there is nothing about which to be puzzled. There are only facts. So if there are no further scientific questions, there is nothing else; and our thinking that there is merely marks our 'chickening out' at the implications of this realization. If we look at the *Notebooks*, however, it is apparent that Wittgenstein would not concur with this view; and that in referring to the problem [*Problem*] of life or the riddle [*Rätse*] of life, he was referring to something more specific:

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<sup>126</sup> Recall: "The paradoxical passion of the understanding is, then, continually colliding with this unknown, which certainly does exist but is also unknown and to that extent does not exist" (PF, p. 44).

What do I know about God and the purpose [Zweck] of life?  
I know that this world exists.  
That something about it is problematic, which we call its sense [Sinn].  
(NB: 72-3)

The problem of life is that we know nothing about its purpose, its *Sinn*. We know *that* it is, but do not know why or to what end. That it should be at all is *das Mystische* (6.44). We certainly do know that there are identifiable relations in the world. But these relations could very well be otherwise (5.634); there are no necessary relations in the world, just as there are no occurrences that necessarily follow from those which precede them (6.37). That these facts are as they are when they could be otherwise leads one naturally to consider what purpose there is in the facts being as they are. But the greater puzzle for Wittgenstein is that anything is at all. The *That*, not the *How*, is the mystery (6.44).<sup>127</sup>

The connection between God, fate and the world made in 6.371-2 is made somewhat more explicitly in the *Notebooks*. There we see "[t]hat this sense [Sinn] [of the world] does not lie in it but outside it" (cf. 6.41). Further "[t]hat life is the world" (cf. 5.61)<sup>128</sup> and that "[t]he sense [Sinn]

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<sup>127</sup> "The How' we have seen before in conjunction with 'the What' (see B.I.3. above). The How refers to the arrangement of objects in facts; and so is *a posteriori* to logic. The What there refers to the substance of the world -- i.e. objects -- that are required to make facts and thus are *a priori* to logic. With the introduction of 'the That' in 6.44, Wittgenstein seems to be appealing to the ground question of metaphysics which Leibniz articulated: "*Pourquoi il y a plutôt quelque chose que rien?*". Indeed Heidegger later makes much of this question in his widely read essay "What is Metaphysics?" (Heidegger 1929: 242-57). What Wittgenstein has to say about Heidegger's use of this question is documented by Waismann in *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* under the heading "Apropos of Heidegger". It is interesting to note that "What is Metaphysics?" antedates this conversation (of December 30th 1929) by mere months. "To be sure", Wittgenstein says there, "I can imagine what Heidegger means by being and anxiety... Think for example of the astonishment that anything at all exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is also no answer whatsoever. Anything we might say is *a priori* bound to be mere nonsense" (WVC: 68). This "astonishment" is also used as an example of "Absolute or Ethical value" in his Lecture on Ethics delivered the month before this conversation (LE: 41). So, the *That* of 6.44, i.e. that 'there is anything at all', refers to the Absolute or the Mystical insofar as all we know is *that* the world is; but the question *why* the world is marks (as Kierkegaard would say) "where the road swings off" beyond the clear terminus. For we are posing a question for which there is no (expressible) answer. As we have seen, this is encouraged by Platonic doctrine wherein to ask a question implies in itself that the answer is available to the questioner. Wittgenstein is clearly opposing this doctrine by saying that the question is invalid if there is no possible answer.

of life, i.e. the sense [*Sinn*] of the world, we can call God" (NB: 73). There follows from these statements several more terse factual statements about the *Sinn* of life:

To pray is to think about the sense [*Sinn*] of life.  
That my will penetrates the world.  
That my will is good or evil.  
Therefore that good and evil are somehow connected with the sense [*Sinn*] of the world.  
I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will: I am completely powerless.  
...we could say that the man is fulfilling the purpose of existence who no longer needs to have any purpose except to live. That is to say, who is content. (NB: 73)

When one is content, Wittgenstein states, one is "happy" (NB: 75). The problems of life must disappear for one to be happy. This happiness can only occur if one "lives in the present" as in 6.4311 (NB: 75). That is, lives eternally. What living in the present entails seems to be central to what Wittgenstein is trying to work out in these passages in the *Notebooks* (pp.73-5). The connections with Schopenhauer are easily seen in these passages. He even mentions Schopenhauer's solution to unhappiness in the world: "I can only make myself independent of the world -- and so in a certain sense master it -- by renouncing any influence on happenings" (NB: 73). And though he reiterates this Schopenhauerian solution in the next few pages ("I can make myself independent of fate" (NB: 74)), he also questions whether the solution is possible:

But is it possible for one so to live that life stops being problematic? That one is *living* in eternity and not in time? (NB: 74)

Indeed a certain tension is apparent in these passages between two disparate views of happiness and living in the present. For on the one hand it is clear that Wittgenstein does have in mind Schopenhauer's solution of detachment from the world. However, at the conclusion of these

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<sup>128</sup> See also C.III.3. below on this connection.

ruminations on God and Fate he refers to a need to find "*agreement*" with the world rather than independence from it:

In order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And that is what "being happy" *means*. (NB: 75)

In an earlier passage Wittgenstein writes that

...we are in a certain sense dependent, and what we are dependent on we can call God.

In this sense God would simply be fate, or what is the same thing: The world -- which is independent of our will. (NB: 74)

So being happy means in turn living "in agreement with that alien will on which I appear dependent. That is to say: 'I am doing the will of God'" (NB: 75).

So the clear terminus referred to in 6.372 to which the ancients adhered is ultimately the submission to God's will, the acceptance of Fate and the world as it is. Happiness is only acquired by letting go of the questions about the *Sinn* of life such as 'Why is there anything rather than nothing?' That is, accepting or believing that there is a *Sinn* to life which simply is to believe in God (NB: 74) and end one's futile questioning of the *Sinn* of the way things are. For about this there can be, for we poor existing humans, no answer. What this entails is perhaps explained by a letter to his friend Paul Engelmann in which he refers to himself as being in a "pitiable state" because he cannot "get over a particular fact". He suggests that he knows that the remedy to this unhappiness is to bring himself to accept facts as they are. He there equates this acceptance with having faith: "Of course it all boils down to the fact that I have no faith!" (ENG: 33)

This is as well the approach of Kierkegaard to God and Fate: one must simply stop trying to understand the *unknown* -- which is for Kierkegaard just another way of saying the *god* (PF:

39) -- and have faith in Him. And as we have seen (A.I.3.e above), such faith is a presupposition of understanding anything. So even if this presupposition could be known, this would be to subvert knowledge (since the presupposition would no longer be a presupposition but a part of knowledge). This becomes quite paradoxical for Kierkegaard when one attempts to prove the existence of God. For any demonstration presupposes that there is an existent. So by beginning a proof of the existence of God, one demonstrates a belief in that existence; one demonstrates that it is presupposed:

By beginning, then, I ... have presupposed that I will succeed in accomplishing it, but what else is that but presupposing that the god exists and actually beginning with trust in him. (PF: 42)

And in this, as opposed to the Platonic process of knowledge wherein the question implies that the answer can be known, Kierkegaard is saying that the question *is* the answer. And so, very much in concordance with the "framing passages" (as Diamond calls them) at the end of the *Tractatus*, if there were no answer ('God exists') there could be no question (6.5). That is, if one does not have the answer, one could not ask the question. This contracts the Platonic 'movement' from question to answer to an extensionless point. The question of Fate, God, the world as a whole, etc., is beyond which we cannot venture. It is a clear terminus between what is mundane -- contingent facts -- and what is "higher" [*das Höhere*], i.e. God (6.432). Questions about facts are completely acceptable since, demonstrably, these have answers. But with respect to what is higher, if one does not have the answer at the start, one simply *cannot* ask the question. And if one does have the answer at the start, then one *need not* ask the question.

Here, of course, we come full circle to the query that begins *Philosophical Fragments* and is a bone of contention in Plato's *Meno* that Plato resolves by positing the theory of *anamnesis* which gives rise in turn to the process of knowledge:

a person cannot possibly seek what he knows, and just as impossibly, he cannot seek what he does not know, for what he knows he cannot seek, since he knows it, and what he does not know he cannot seek, because, after all, he does not even know what he is supposed to seek. (PF: 9)

We can now see that Kierkegaard's reference to this as a 'paradox' is accurate taken in the proper context of that which is "higher". If one does not have faith that God exists and that (on the basis of revelation, not knowledge) life has a meaning, then one could not begin to demonstrate these things. On the other hand if one does have faith in God and the meaning (or *Sinn*) of life, the demonstration of this faith or meaning is utterly superfluous.<sup>129</sup>

It is as well very interesting to note that in his final work, *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein's conclusion is strikingly similar to that of Kierkegaard's posthumously published *Johannes Climacus*. Namely, that doubt can only be based on an underlying certainty. Only when one sees this can one also see that the closing remarks on scepticism in the *Tractatus* are of this kind<sup>130</sup>:

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<sup>129</sup> One of the clear distinction that Kierkegaard makes between Socrates and Plato is that the former was content that no demonstration was required to back up one's faith in the god and immortality. For Socrates, all reason could do was rigorously leave the question open: "Let us consider Socrates.... He poses the question objectively, problematically: if there is an immortality. So, compared with one of the modern thinkers with the three demonstrations, was he a doubter? Not at all. He stakes his whole life on this 'if'; he dares to die, and with the passion of the infinite he has so ordered his whole life that it might be acceptable -- if there is an immortality" (CUP: 201). Robert Herbert is essentially right in saying that Socrates was Kierkegaard's exemplar of both "objective uncertainty" and "subjective certainty" (Herbert 1961: 43-4). Louis Mackey's notion that Kierkegaard's definition of truth as "*an objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness*" (CUP: 203) is a "satire on definition" meant to bring the reader "to the awareness that every belief and every truth claim has no surer warrant than the freedom and the fervour of him who asserts it" (Mackey 1971: 192), is to throw the net too wide. The objective uncertainty referred to there has Socrates ultimate hypothetical approach to such questions as the soul's immortality, the meaning of life, etc., in mind (cf. Evans 1983: 116.).

<sup>130</sup> That is, they are of this kind though the approach has changed somewhat from the *Tractatus* to *On Certainty* in that in the former as for Kierkegaard, the certainty is of a global sort, whereas in *On Certainty* it is dealt with in regard doubt within particular language games being based on something which is not doubted. As he points out there, this is not to say that it *cannot* be doubted but only that such doubt would have consequences for

Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but palpably nonsensical [*unsinnig*], if it would doubt where a question cannot be asked.

For doubt can only exist where there is a question; a question only where there is an answer, and this only where something *can* be said.  
(6.51)

The question that scepticism asks, e.g. 'is this a hand?' or 'does the world exist?', contains its own answer. The answer *shows* in the question, but cannot itself be said. Mentioning 'hand' or 'world' implies the answer that the question would not be possible if we did not *believe* that they exist. This belief, this faith, then is the answer. The sceptic does not undermine physical reality, nor his own understanding of physical reality. He simply undermines his own basis for doubt.

## 2. *Leben and Welt*

With the "modern" equation of the world and the knowable, it is considered that the unknowable would then be the metaphysical, i.e. Plato's realm of Being, etc. To stop short at physical Laws then is the means by which we avoid metaphysics. But the Laws are based on existent matter which is 'embraceable'<sup>131</sup> by science as facts. The assumption is that facts capture existents. As Kierkegaard would say, *pace* Hegel, they are subsumed/annuled within the System. But both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein are contending that the What is not annulled within the How<sup>132</sup>, and indeed cannot be. As such the What -- existence -- falls outside knowledge and

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the entire language game (OC: 509). This is clearly Kierkegaard's position in the *Postscript* as well: "The basic certainty that sustains doubt can at no moment hypostatize itself as long as I am doubting, because doubt continually leaves it in order to doubt. If I want to keep on doubting, I shall never in all eternity advance any further, because doubt consists precisely in and by passing off that certainty as something else. If I hold on to the certainty as certainty for one single moment, I must also stop doubting for that moment (CUP: 335fn.).

<sup>131</sup> To recur to Descartes' "fine distinction" (C.II.3. above).

<sup>132</sup> The distinction between 'the What' and 'the How' is discussed in B.I.3. above.

outside language; but not strictly in the metaphysical sense of a Platonic heaven. Rather the *immediate*, what Wittgenstein calls life, is the unknowable, the mystical.

In this view the Real is the unknowable, not some realm, essence, true fact, definition or Law apart from our immediate encounter with existence. For modern philosophy, world is encountered; and *life*, again in Wittgenstein's sense, is simply the world prior to meaning, definition, etc. As Wittgenstein puts it in the *Tractatus*, "the world and life are one" (5.621). This statement is most often seen as an equation of *Welt* and *Leben* and this can, to a limited degree, be warranted given the context of solipsism in which this remark occurs. However, Wittgenstein is here placing together 'my world', 'life', and the 'subject' as closely related notions. So the world and 'my world', the world and 'life', and the world and the 'subjective' world, can be seen as equivalent statements. He then goes on to say that the subject does not appear in the world. As such, on the one hand, "in an important sense" (5.631), the subject does not exist. On the other hand, the metaphysical subject, "does not belong to the world but is a limit of the world" (5.632). So the metaphysical subject does not exist for all scientific intents and purposes. What then, one might ask, is the sense in which it does exist *qua* limit? This shows that the simple equation of *Welt* and *Leben* will not do.

That there is a distinction to be made between two types of subjects<sup>133</sup>, the metaphysical and the scientific, in the *Tractatus* becomes clearer near the book's end -- what Wittgenstein refers to as its "conclusion" (LVF: 97) -- when the term 'life' is again used. Starting at 6.4311, Wittgenstein starts to shift the ground of traditional metaphysics. In the solipsism section, the 'equation' of life and world becomes the occasion to highlight the mechanism of this shift. The analytic sense and a more holistic sense of world and life collide with no more resolution than that

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<sup>133</sup> Paul Holmer is of the same view in his essay "Wittgenstein and the Self" (Bell & Hustwit 1978: 18-19).

the one can be 'seen' as the other, and vice versa. This dual category and the shifting ground implied is seen in Kierkegaard's statement that the collision of the understanding with the unknown means that the unknown exists, but that it cannot be known means that, "in an important sense" (we might add), it does not exist. The parallel with Wittgenstein's statements on the subject is obvious. Furthermore at 6.4311, the temporal spin is put on this question:

Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through.

If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present (6.4311).

Death is a juncture wherein the world is stripped away. The world is temporal; "the next world" is not merely an analogy to this one where time is illimitably extended. Rather it is here, in the immediate, that one encounters the eternal. Living in the present, according to the above quotation, is simply living in the immediate. And in the immediate life is 'stripped' of time.<sup>134</sup> 'Life' then encompasses both time and timelessness; both what is world and what is not world. However, at 6.4312, the further problem of the *explanation* of the "riddle of life", is broached by Wittgenstein:

The temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say, its eternal survival after death, is not only in no way guaranteed, but this assumption in the first place will not do for us what we always tried to make it do. Is a riddle solved by the fact that I survive for ever? Is this eternal life not as enigmatic as our present one? The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time (6.4312).

Here again is the distinction between the What and the That (See B.I.3. above). There are only answers to the What. The notion of *eternal* life explains nothing about the riddle of life, for an

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<sup>134</sup> And though often Schopenhauer is seen as behind these remarks, it should be remembered that Schopenhauer envisaged the eternal present as precisely another place, not merely another "sense" of *this* place. (cf. Schopenhauer 1818: 167-268).

eternal life is still *life*; it is merely the supposed explanation of a limited life by it having been placed in the larger context of a life of endless duration. But even such a life of endless duration still *is*. Existence itself, the '*is*-ness', the *that*-ness, is still what is enigmatic.<sup>135</sup> As Wittgenstein goes on to say, "[n]ot how the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is" (6.44). *Lebensprobleme* are a category distinct from the problems of natural science in the *Tractatus*, as the parenthetical ending of 6.4312 suggests: "It is not the problems of natural science which have to be solved." For in that "important sense", "the riddle [of life] does not exist" (6.5). There are only answers to the What, not the That. Hence there are, too, no questions about the That, for questioning and answering take place within the purview of the natural sciences. We do however run up against questions like the riddle. We encounter the unknown even though, in that important sense, it does not exist. So,

[w]e feel that even if *all possible* scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all. Of course there is then no question left, and just this is the answer. (6.52)

This statement can and has been interpreted to mean that there simply are no problems of life; i.e. that there is nothing beyond what the questions of natural science deal in. But this interpretation should immediately become strained if we take into account the comment on this section that follows:

The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem.

(Is not this the reason why men to whom after long doubting the sense [*Sinn*] of life became clear, could not then say wherein this sense [*Sinn*] consisted?) (6.521)

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<sup>135</sup> Eckstein points out that there is an epistemological version of this problem in Plato's theory of *anamnesis* if it purports to be an explanation of the acquisition of knowledge in this life, i.e. through remembrance of our immortal soul's latent knowledge, but does not explain how this original knowledge is acquired (Eckstein 1968: 32).

The important aspect of 6.521 is the emphasis placed on one not being able to *say* after having become *clear* [*klar*] about the *Sinn* of life. How could Diamond, for example, square that with her interpretation? Does not clarity necessarily imply possible insight and thus sayability? But the *Sinn* of life could not be said because, in that important sense, there *is* no *Sinn* of life. But seen in the other holistic sense, it is understood by those men after long doubting that this scientific approach is to look at things the wrong way round. For life has no *Sinn* because it is itself the basis of all *Sinn*. But this cannot be seen by one looking for *Sinn* through knowledge. It is only seen by one who has ("after long doubting") found the *Sinn* of life through *revelation*. Since only what can be known can be said with *Sinn*, the "*Sinn*" of life is inexpressible:

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

Science and metaphysics, in attempting, as we have seen it described,<sup>136</sup> to dispel the seeming meaninglessness of life have failed to see, being for Kierkegaard under the influence of Platonism (whether they believe themselves to be or not), that this is to get things the wrong way around. They have but to no longer apply scientific criteria to life, and they become clear -- though perhaps not satisfied. As Kierkegaard puts it in a passage from the *Postscript* quite reminiscent of 6.4312:

If someone objectively inquires into immortality, and someone else stakes the passion of the infinite on the uncertainty -- where, then, is there more truth, and who has more certainty? The one has once and for all entered upon an approximation that never ends, because the certainty of immortality is rooted in subjectivity; the other is immortal and therefore struggles by contending with the uncertainty. (CUP: 201)<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Sec. C III above.

<sup>137</sup> See also Kierkegaard's Cartesian doll analogy in this connection: "...so long as I am holding on to the

The duality of sense can also be seen as the source of dissatisfaction that Wittgenstein writes about at 6.53. The correct method of philosophy would be unsatisfying to the pupil because only natural scientific propositions can be said and philosophy is generally thought of as an inquiry into the basis of such propositions -- but such an inquiry cannot, "strictly", be *said*. It is clear that this avoidance is not a disavowal of that basis but, in a sense, an attempt to secure or protect it from becoming something other than it is, as is constantly occurring in philosophical circles. To science, it is perhaps best that life, existence, the mystical, the unknown is thought of as, "in an important sense", illusory. For, as Wittgenstein wrote to his friend Paul Engelmann:

... if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then *nothing* gets lost. But the unutterable will be -- unutterably -- *contained* in what has been uttered! (ENG: 7)

### 3. *"A Supreme Drawing of Breath"*

In the *Postscript* Kierkegaard writes:

To explain the unutterable joy -- what does that mean? Does it mean to explain that it is this and that? In that case, the predicate "unutterable" becomes just a rhetorical predicate, a strong expression, and the like. The explaining jack-of-all-trades has everything in readiness.... he calls the joy unutterable, and then a new surprise... he utters it. Suppose that the unutterable joy is based upon the contradiction that an existing human being is composed of the infinite and the finite, is situated in time, so that the joy of the eternal in him becomes unutterable because he is existing; it becomes a supreme drawing of breath that cannot take shape, because the existing person is existing. In that case, the explanation would be that it is unutterable; it cannot be anything else -- no nonsense. (CUP: 221)<sup>138</sup>

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demonstration ... the existence does not emerge, if for no other reason than that I am in the process of demonstrating it, but when I let go of the demonstration, the existence is there" (PF: 42-3).

<sup>138</sup> Cf. JPII: 2332.

Was Sextus Empiricus contradicting himself in arguing for the cessation of argument, as the Stoics claimed? Or was his suggestion that one can throw away the ladder after it has been used an accurate analogy? One is left to decide.

This is not a mere dismissive suggestion. For there are no rules for deciding the rules of decision. One has to choose. Or, as Kierkegaard would say, to *leap*. The decision one makes seems to be about the world; something ultimate. The paradoxical passion of the understanding wants to find a solution to the paradox. Given the possibilities, it wants to find just one answer -- the *correct* one. For Plato, if one can articulate the question, then its answer is determinable. But in fact there is no correct answer or solution for 'we poor existing human beings' to the paradox. Rather, one is being asked to *choose* what is correct, the understanding realizes it must leap and so end the search -- or, keep searching. For to end the search could only be accomplished by a leap, and all the reasoning might follow would be based upon a leap. For the understanding then, to end the search is to will its own downfall. But now to continue searching for the correct answer to the paradox, to continue thrusting up against the paradox, would involve itself a kind of faith. A faith that there is an end to the search wherein all the elements required for a completely clear view are possibly obtained. Wittgenstein only later realized that the *Tractatus* embodied such a hope, a faith:

In this context, in fact, keeping magic out has itself the character of magic.

For when I began in my earlier book [the *Tractatus*] to talk about the 'world'... was I trying to do anything except conjure up something of a higher order by my words? (GB: vi)

The keeping out of metaphysics is itself a metaphysics based on the belief that there is a solution to the paradox. For example, the paradox of the *Tractatus*. One finds a solution and is happy for

a time. Then another solution suddenly seems more palatable; and then again another comes along. Perhaps one again reverts to one's original solution. The problem is that one is looking in the wrong place. One is looking for the correct answer to the question of criterion correctness -- the large answer. One is looking (employing the understanding) in the way that one looks for knowledge when what one needs is *resolution*.

One must notice that as soon as one starts looking in the right place, lets go of the demonstration, as Kierkegaard would say, one realizes that not only the way one was looking was wrong; what one was expecting to find is now shown to be wrong. When one substitutes resolution for knowledge, the search, the analysis, the 'result' of one's philosophizing is an elaborate and as yet incomplete description of one's own soul. It is a discursive telling of one's own story, not the world's. Unless perhaps I were to consider that "I am my world" (5.63) and the world *is* my world (5.62).

In a discussion with members of the Vienna Circle, Wittgenstein mentions the necessity of ending his Lecture on Ethics in the first person (WVC: 93;117). He ends the Lecture by saying that Ethics

can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it (LE: 44).

As Malcolm points out Wittgenstein often used the term 'human being' as a term of praise for a person he deemed of extraordinary character or spiritual courage.<sup>139</sup> He was also fond of freely translating a passage from Augustine "And woe to those who say nothing concerning thee just

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<sup>139</sup> See Malcolm 1984: 52. In a letter to Russell Wittgenstein wrote: "Perhaps you regard this thinking about myself as a waste of time -- but how can I be a logician before I'm a human being! *For* the most important thing is to settle accounts with myself!" (CL: 66).

because the chatterboxes talk a lot of nonsense" (Drury 1984a: 104).<sup>140</sup> As well he was quick to dismiss any attempt to treat Ethics theoretically or as a science (Moore et al.) as a lot of "claptrap" (WVC: 69). Ethics, and metaphysics generally, are as such for Wittgenstein a document of personal human resolution. That is, looked at from one angle a work of metaphysics purportedly contains *knowledge* of the cosmos. But from another, more correct angle, a work of metaphysics is a document of one human's (Plato's, Hegel's, Wittgenstein's) deepest passion, deepest joy -- turned inside-out. This was, according to Kierkegaard, what Socrates knew, but Plato and Hegel (seemingly) failed to see. Knowledge is passion turned inside out. The world is to life what drawing one's breath is to letting it go.

#### 4. *Outside Plato's Prism: A Summation*

As I have argued, an analogue of Kierkegaard's absolute paradox is of central importance to a proper understanding of the *Tractatus*; and that this implies an important (namely, Kierkegaardian) critique of Plato's theory of *anamnesis*. The most general claim of my thesis is, thus, that the metaphysics of the *Tractatus* is to be understood only outside the prism of Plato's *anamnesis* as is suggested by Kierkegaard's Climacus works. That interpretations of the *Tractatus*, even up to the present day, are hobbled by a lack of account given to the influence of Kierkegaard's anti-Platonic critique, affords us a sense of the pervasiveness of Platonist

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<sup>140</sup> Another 'free' translation of this passage ("What, you swine, you want not to talk nonsense! Go ahead and talk nonsense, it does not matter!") can be found in Wittgenstein's conversations with the Vienna Circle (WVC: 69), though it is by no means clear that this is Wittgenstein's translation. As the editor points out, "Waismann [who recorded these conversations] seems to have added the quotation later" (WVC: 69fn.). This latter translation obviously gives the sense that Wittgenstein was, contrary to what he writes in his lecture on Ethics, anxious to ridicule those who would speak of the ethical or of God. This latter 'translation' then seems to reflect Waismann's reading of Wittgenstein's remarks.

assumptions. The notion that these assumptions are inappropriate to the interpretation of the *Tractatus* requires justification. I have argued that Wittgenstein was very likely exposed to a thinker who put forth a critique of *anamnesis*, since it is far from clear that the young Wittgenstein was familiar with the *Meno* or *Phaedo*, those dialogues in which the theory of *anamnesis* receives its most robust presentation. Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*, and its *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, are a source of such a critique that we can be relatively confident Wittgenstein read as a young man in Vienna. What is common to both the Kierkegaard of *Fragments* and the Wittgenstein the *Tractatus* is that both insist on the necessity of what flies in the face of Platonic metaphysics: there is a necessary transcendence of the knowable; an unknown that is not merely contingent but absolute. The theory of *anamnesis* asserts that everything that is, is always already known; thus what is unknown is only unknown prior to our recollection of it. Kierkegaard refers (in a way similar to Wittgenstein) to our running up against this unknown as the *absolute paradox* of the understanding:

[t]he paradoxical passion of the understanding is ... continually colliding with this unknown, which certainly does exist but is also unknown and to that extent does not exist (PF: 44).

This passage implies that the existence of the unknown is somewhat in flux: in one way of looking at it, its facticity cannot be denied in inquiry's collision with it; while, looked at another way, its existence is dependent on our knowledge of it (or lack of). This unknown is however, something which eludes further inquiry. What is this unknown? For Platonists, being able to ask this question is enough to begin an inquiry. For Kierkegaard, however, this question merely denotes that something has been named. A "distinguishing mark" is too required to inquire

further; and this is missing in the case of the unknown, which remains unified in its opacity. This is an implication of Kierkegaard's treatment of the heuristic paradox, as set out in Plato's *Meno*:

We cannot seek what we know, because we know it. And we cannot seek what we do not know, since we would not know where to begin the search.

On Plato's analysis, 'know' in the first part of the paradox means *insight*, whereas in the second part it means *acquaintance*. Hence Socrates sees this paradox as an equivocal sophistry. Inquiry begins with acquaintance and ends with insight; it begins with the question and ends with the answer. If one can ask a question, then one can get an answer. As Kierkegaard's treatment of this paradox in *Philosophical Fragments* develops, one sees that one is 'acquainted' with this unknown since, one is continually colliding with it. But still one does not know where to begin an inquiry because there is no "distinguishing mark". So one is left with the sense that one knows it -- but also that one does not know it.

The equivocal nature in which 'know' is used in the paradox is reflected in what we consider to *be*. The Platonist considers that anything one can ask a question about, one can in turn, get an answer to. Hence anything one can ask a question about is *real*. And on such an assumption a metaphysical system is built. The anti-Platonist on the other hand says that if there is no *answer*, there is no *question*. Wittgenstein of course states as much in the *Tractatus* (6.5). For if we have no way of knowing *what* something is, the argument goes, and so no way of answering the question posed, the question is not a valid one. However, the *ardent* anti-Platonist/anti-metaphysician goes one step further than Wittgenstein and says that this inability to *say what* something is, is adequate grounds for doubting *that* that something is at all. This then is the case with the unknown. The metaphysician says that we must be able to learn

what is unknown because all learning is mere recollection. The ardent anti-metaphysician says that there simply is no unknown. Both views have in common the assumption that *the limit of thought and the limit of knowledge* (or of what can be said) -- *is the same limit*. There is no thought beyond what we can know, and hence no 'it' beyond what we can know. Both Platonists and *ardent* anti-Platonists (Carnap, Winch, Diamond, etc.) are in error because they either miss or ignore the fact that the means by which we come to say/know -- i.e. what allows for acquaintance -- cannot itself be known. That which allows for the meaningful inquiry, and for language (verbal, written, etc.) imbued with meaning, is the 'it' beyond discourse.

What philosophical inquiry runs up against then is precisely that which makes such inquiry possible in the first place. This is, for Kierkegaard, only seen when we quit applying inquiry to it:

... so long as I am holding on to the demonstration ..., the existence does not emerge, if for no other reason than that I am in the process of demonstrating it, but when I let go of the demonstration, the existence is there (PF: 42-3).

We find this same dialectical thought in the Preface to the *Tractatus*:

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking or rather -- not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense (p27).

As I have shown, this passage is universally incorrectly interpreted as saying that the limits of expression and of thought are one. But the key to this paragraph and to the correct reading of the *Tractatus* is the necessary inference derived from it. If to draw a limit to *thinking* we should have to be able to think "both sides" of this limit, then we can conclude from this that *any* limit must be

possibly thought on both sides. This rule would then apply to the *Tractatus* itself which is an attempt to limit expression. So expression, to be limited, must to be thought from both sides -- from outside as well as inside what is expressible. This being the case, *thinking* (contrary to the received universal interpretation) must extend, so to speak, beyond the defined limits of expression *if there are to be such defined limits at all*, and this thinking must remain uncapturable, unknowable.

The interpretations of Winch and Diamond provide worthwhile examples of the view which stresses logical syntax as the paramount arbiter of what can be said *and* what can be thought in the *Tractatus*. I have shown (I believe) that in the *Tractatus*, sense [*Sinn*] and meaning [*Bedeutung*] are not determinable simply on the basis of logical syntax (as Winch asserts) but require as well "extra-linguistic reference" in the form of acquaintance (where *Bedeutung* is concerned) and in the form of *thinking* (where *Sinn* is concerned). In this I am largely in agreement with Hacker's most recent view (Hacker 1999). I have also shown that language in the *Tractatus* can only be viewed as a sort of self-correcting mechanism of thought by which the understanding is shown to be either in agreement or disagreement with itself (Diamond 1993: 29) if the "framing passages" (Diamond 1993: 19) are incorrectly read as asserting that the limits of thought *are* simply the limits of language. Also I have shown that 'nonsense' [*Unsinn*] in the *Tractatus* cannot be uniformly *plain* nonsense as Diamond and company would have it. What I have identified as *Formal Nonsense* must be *thinkable* in a way that the notion of plain nonsense makes no room for. (If I am to be called 'chicken hearted' in this claim, so be it; for Diamond practically accuses Wittgenstein himself of "chickening out" (Diamond 1993: 226). As such I am in good company.).

As Reid points out, all of these interpretive errors are not hard to understand given Wittgenstein's penchant for the terse statement and for a style that (perhaps owing strictly to what is required by the subject matter) employs sudden shifts in meaning and self-consciously paradoxical phrases to get the point across (e.g., "*In* it [the world] there is no value -- and if there were, it would be of no value" (6.41)). Wittgenstein indeed does not spare the reader the "trouble of thinking" (PI: viii). And, as we have seen, once various knots in our thinking caused by a particular view of the framing passages -- especially the Preface -- are untied, the above view attributed to Winch and Diamond, but to a certain extent found very widely in the literature is, I think, shown to be incorrect. The Preface (according to this view) equates the limits of thought and language, and 6.53-6.54 ultimately "throw away" anything extraneous to this limit that may have been 'transitionally' useful. If we break the equation set up in this interpretation between the limits of language and thought however, then it is clearly only the attempt to *say* what is beyond the limit that 6.53-6.54 curtail. The limit that we run up against (LE: 44; WVC: 69, 117) is a limit of language. It would be puzzling that Wittgenstein speaks about the limits in this way if one holds to the view that thought and language share the same limit. For what, one might ask, would motivate one to run up against a limit, as though it were a cage (LE: 44), if one were not clear that there was something on the other side, as it were? Indeed, if there were nothing on the other side, how could such a limit even be recognized *qua* limit? For the common view advocated by Diamond and most other commentators, this running up against the limit is attributable to language leading us to believe that there is something on the other side when in fact there is not. I am suggesting that this cannot be the conclusion of the *Tractatus*. Rather the conclusion is that we bring to our study of language a false expectation that everything that *is* in any way can be

said. I have followed Kierkegaard in arguing that this false expectation is traceable to a Platonic metaphysics. For Wittgenstein shows that an implicit rule governing a proposition's sayability is that it must have sense. And in having sense, he asserts, it is limited to saying something either true or false about the world. However, certain propositions said (e.g. the propositions of Logic) and so governed by these rules, thereby bring into doubt the independent sense of another class of propositions -- i.e. empirical propositions. So this false Platonic expectation leads us to try and say things which cannot be said without dire consequences for sense in general.

However, as I have been suggesting, if one sees the limit being run up against in the *Tractatus* as a *paradox*, the problem gains in clarity (though it perhaps loses in terms of philosophical satisfaction): The inexpressible *is*, insofar as I run up against it in inquiry; but the inexpressible is *not* insofar as I cannot express it. In seeing the limit this way, i.e. the Kierkegaardian way, it is obvious that the paradox is caused by one being trapped within expression (or knowledge) by the false Platonic expectation that all that is in any way is expressible, and all that can be thought can be said. So we are led to a misapprehension, as Wittgenstein says, of the logic of our language; we cannot see that that logic *requires* the inexpressible. Logic is flouted by trying to say what cannot be *said* (for if it were said, the truth value of the most concrete expressions would be thereby undermined), not (as is the common view) by trying to say what *is not*. The former creates great big problems that are irresolvable by the usual philosophical means; the latter creates propositions that are in fact eminently dismissable, unthinkable, rubbish ("Socrates is identical" comes to mind here).

In general, to *say* a proposition is, according to the *Tractatus*, to imply that what one is saying has sense; and so it too has truth value. If a formal proposition (see B.III.3.b above) had

*Sinn*, then many simple empirical propositions to which that formal proposition was pertinent would be dependent on the resultant truth value of that formal proposition. So such empirical propositions would be dependent on other propositions for their own truth value. Thus they would no longer be simple independent, 'atomic' propositions.

The saying/showing distinction in the *Tractatus* is thus crucial to maintaining proper empirical propositions. This then supports my reading of the Preface as saying that, contrary to the consensus in the literature, in order for clear language to be possible, we *must* be able to think beyond the limits of language.

As such (and this is perhaps the most interesting interpretive point to be gathered from the present thesis) the framing passages do *not* show that Wittgenstein's own interpretation of the *Tractatus* is resolutely anti-metaphysical.<sup>141</sup> On the contrary they make the very metaphysical point that to realize that the *Tractatus* is itself unsayable *Unsinn*, one must, first, be able to *think* it through its various stages to that realization. And, second, 6.53 makes it clear that, given the need to tutor the metaphysical speaker when the need arises, we must only throw away the text but not the "thoughts" therein "expressed" (p.27).

Now Diamond argues (Diamond 1993: 19-20, 181, 182) and Reid concurs (Reid 1998: 113) that there is an "exiguous" metaphysics of language to which Wittgenstein is "unselfconsciously committed" along with the (merely "transitional") metaphysics about the world in the *Tractatus*. So one might say that my thesis has perhaps put forward a worthy argument that the former must be seen as preserved (in unexpressed form) even after the ladder is thrown away. But what of the metaphysics of the world? Does my view of the Preface only preserve the

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<sup>141</sup> See Diamond 1993: 19; and Reid: "...the *Tractatus* takes a strong anti-metaphysical stand, one that is most explicit in Wittgenstein's statements in the book's preface and concluding remarks, that the apparently metaphysical sentences that compose the book are nonsense" (Reid 1998: 97).

language metaphysics? Is the reader in anyway obliged by this reading to adhere to any metaphysical 'it' beyond the world?

What I have attempted to show as well in this thesis is that, in a sense, language creates the 'it'; language defines the means by which any 'it' can be identified as an 'it'. Hence to argue that there *is* (for example) an absolute Good or to assert anything such as a form of virtue, is to assert (read 'say') nonsense. This surely is Wittgenstein's point in the *Tractatus*. But the important corollary here is that to say there is *not* an absolute Good or form of virtue is *also* nonsense. One cannot *say*, either way, concerning 'the metaphysical'. Malcolm, in his memoir of Wittgenstein, records a parable told by Wittgenstein to G. F. Stout in 1947:

Imagine that there is a town in which the policemen are required to obtain information from each inhabitant, e.g. his age, where he came from, and what work he does. A record is kept of this information and some use is made of it. Occasionally when a policeman questions an inhabitant he discovers that the latter does not do *any* work. The policeman enters this fact on the record because *this too* is a useful piece of information about the man! (Malcolm 1984: 55)

The policeman does not leave the space under 'occupation' blank in his record of this inhabitant. Rather he fills in blank -- e.g. he writes 'none' -- for leaving the spot blank conveys something different than does writing 'none'. This parable is illustrative of the metaphysics of the *Tractatus*. That we cannot say either way with respect to the metaphysical 'it' is itself an important piece of information. This limit itself "indicates something" (WVC: 69). We can only say that of which we can think both sides. So too we can only "discard" (as Reid says) that of which we can think both sides. We cannot then discard the metaphysical 'it', any more than we can assert it or say it.

This 'piece of information' then is the disturbance in reason which Kierkegaard accounts for as the Absolute Paradox.

The shared metaphysical picture in the Climacus works and in the *Tractatus* is then the following: If there is to be a limit to knowledge, and hence what we can say, there must be something on the 'other side' of that limit. This 'something' is then the unknown. The unknown acts as a spur to the understanding, which is 'offended' by the enforced exclusion of something significant from what is known. The understanding can now do one of three things: Either (1) run again and again up against the limit in the attempt to include the unknown in the known (Platonic metaphysics); this is futile *and* self-destructive since, even if the unknown could be known, the means by which *Sinn* is established would itself thereby be eradicated; (2) Conclude that, since it has no access to *what* the unknown is, the unknown is a chimera (positivism); this is reductionist and simply cannot account for how *Sinn* itself is possible; as well, in its very denial this approach sets up a relation to something the existence of which can neither be affirmed nor denied; or (3) Accept the unknown *qua* unknown; the mystical *qua* mystical; i.e. accept that there is an 'it' which is thinkable but unsayable. This is to recognize the limit as the "clear terminus" of a necessarily incomplete system. It is to recognize that the human understanding has absolute limits.

The idea of *anamnesis*, that all is always already known, and so *sayable*, clearly leads directly to the tradition of discursive metaphysics. But perhaps what is not so clear is that it also leads to the analytic assumption that the limits of what can be said reflect the limits of what can be thought. Both Kierkegaard, and Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, put forth a view that the latter cannot be limited if the former is to be.

Socrates generally found no one that could give a correct answer to the ethical questions he posed. While this did not inhibit the conception of the learning process as *anamnesis*, the fact that no one could give an answer as to, for example, what virtue is, though many Athenian citizens were acknowledged as being of virtuous character, seems to cause a tension between the end and the beginning of this process. For if one were able to articulate what virtue is then one would presumably be able to say this to another and thereby teach them directly without that other having to learn internally through *anamnesis*. *Anamnesis* would seem as such to be incompatible with the notion that one who knows is able to *say*. So perhaps the end of learning about such things as virtue is not when one can say what something is, but when one realizes that what one knows one *cannot* say. So one can only be the 'hand-maiden' for others in their quest by indirect communication:

Is not this the reason why men to whom, after long doubting, the sense of life became clear, could not then *say* wherein this sense consisted? (6.521; emphasis added).

What Wittgenstein gives every indication of, in the *Tractatus* and elsewhere, is that the limits of the possible (i.e. the limits of logic) are the limits of the possible for (as Kierkegaard often puts it) us 'poor existing humans'. But they are *not* the limits of *what possibly is*. Our misapprehension of language leads us to conclude that the limits of possible human knowledge and the limits of what is are two different ways of saying the same thing. For Kierkegaard, Plato was misled by this misapprehension, and so it continues to be a persistent misapprehension in philosophy generally. Among other things, a correct apprehension would (to allude once again to Malcolm's phrase) preserve the "possibility of religion". Or as Kierkegaard might put it, it would preserve the *opportunity* for the leap of faith.

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### **Abbreviations**

#### **Wittgenstein:**

- Internal citation of the C. K. Ogden translation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922) will follow the numbering system of the work itself, e.g., "(6.54)". When using the Pears-McGuinness translation the following convention will be employed:
- PM** *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961) the passage will be cited as, e.g., (PM: 5.423). Any variations or divergent translations will be footnoted.  
**Note:** Reference to passages from Wittgenstein's Preface or Russell's introductory essay in either translation will be internally cited in the following way: e.g. (p27), or using the latter translation, (PM: p27). Also:
- PTLP** *Prototractatus: An Early Version of Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, ed. B. F. McGuinness, T. Nyberg and G. H. von Wright. New York: Routledge, 1971. Passages will be cited as, e.g., (PTLP: 5.423).
- APR** *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- CL** *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters*, eds. B. McGuinness and G. H. von Wright. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- CV** *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright, trans. P. Winch. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.
- ENG** Engelmann, P. *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, ed. B. F. McGuinness and trans. L. Furtmüller. Oxford: Blackwell, 1967.
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- LE** "Lecture on Ethics" in *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951*, ed. J. C. Klagge and A. Nordmann. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993, pp. 37-44.
- LVF** "Letters to Ludwig von Ficker", trans. A. Janik, in *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*, Luckhardt, C. G. (ed.). Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979, pp. 82-98.
- NB** *Notebooks 1914-1916*, ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979.
- OC** *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

- PI**      *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1958.
- WVC**      *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, from the notes of F. Waismann, ed. B. F. McGuinness and J. Schulte. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979.
- Kierkegaard:**
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- CUP**      *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* (1843), vol. I, ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- CUPII**      *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* (1843), vol. II, ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
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- JP**      *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vols. I-IV, ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1967.
- PF**      *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- PH**      *Purity of Heart is To Will One Thing* (1847), trans. D. V. Steere. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1948.
- POV**      *The Point of View for My Work as An Author* (1848), trans. W. Lowrie. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

- REP**      *Repetition*, (1843), ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- TA**      *Two Ages* (1846), ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

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