

## The Subject In Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* Postscript 25 years on

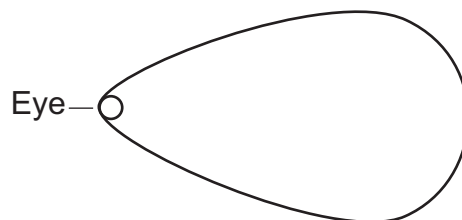
This essay was excerpted from a longer work, a graduate dissertation, which was composed in the years 1980 to '83. The essay reprinted below is substantially the same as the published version which appeared in 1988 in the "Southern Journal of Philosophy," Vol. XXXVI, No.4. [A few typographical errors have been corrected, paragraph numbers have been added, and a single paragraph has been added, No.35.]

An unfortunate typographical error crept into the table of contents of the journal (I had been offered proofs of the article itself, but not of the table of contents). From there, the error was carried over into "The Philosopher's Index," and, later, on the Internet as well. The erroneous title was "The Subject *Of* Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*," instead of "The Subject *In* Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*." The difference is not trivial. "The Subject *Of* Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*" might lead readers to expect a comprehensive examination of everything of which Wittgenstein treated in his work. A presumptuous undertaking indeed. "The Subject *In* Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*" limits the paper to a discussion of a cluster of topics including solipsism, the I, the will, the thinking-presenting subject, and so on.

Wittgenstein once said to Anscombe that he "had been stuck like a fish on a hook with the idea *only what I see now is real*." Solipsism was a recurring issue for Wittgenstein throughout his work and it is a short hop from solipsism to such topics as the will, the thinking-presenting subject, the I, and so on. These topics are also discussed in Schopenhauer's work, *The World As Will And Representation*. It has long been known that Wittgenstein read this work prior to composing the *Tractatus*. I believed in 1980, as I do now, that these topics (solipsism, the will, and so on) were not merely incidentally or coincidentally discussed by both philosophers, but that Wittgenstein was substantially influenced by Schopenhauer's work in this particular. In 1980 there was no published scholarly work on this, and I set about to broach the issue.

In the years since my article appeared, scholarly work has been done on various influences on the young Wittgenstein, including some books specifically on the influence of Schopenhauer's work on the *Tractatus*. If the conclusions of that subsequent body of work differ from my conclusions from 1988, well and good. I do not lay claim to anything definitive or comprehensive on the battlefield of Wittgenstein interpretations; anyone who does so will soon find himself overtaken by events. If Wittgenstein scholars now take it as self-evident that there *is* an influence to be traced from Schopenhauer, and merely disagree on the exact details and locus of it, then I consider my initial effort vindicated. When I wrote the article below, this was not self-evident.

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## The Subject In Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* by Flash qFiasco

1 The thesis of this essay is that the subject in the *Tractatus* is more complicated than may have been hitherto appreciated; that there are at least two sorts of subjects latent in the *Tractatus*-period work, roughly corresponding to Schopenhauer's Will and Idea; and that Wittgenstein's failure clearly to distinguish them caused him problems in exposition and is liable to cause his readers problems of interpretation.

2 The *Tractatus* and the *Notebooks* give many subjects: the thinking (re-)presenting subject, the metaphysical subject, the subject (just "the subject"), the I of solipsism, the philosophical I, the non-psychological I, I who am the world/the microcosm, the soul of which psychology treats, the will, my will, the willing subject, the will as the bearer of the ethical, the will as a phenomenon. Several *Notebooks* passages talk about the non-encounterability of the subject, while others talk about its nonexistence or illusory existence. However, it would be a mistake to take non-encounterability for nonexistence, or for Wittgenstein's argument for nonexistence. All of the subjects are non-encounterable, but not all of them are nonexistent: "The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists..." [NB 5.8.16 p.80]. We are therefore faced with the task of separating this confusing lot of subjects into at least two piles, tentatively, those which exist and those which do not (or which do so only as superstition or illusion).

3 Wittgenstein himself did not clearly make this distinction; we can see, in the *Notebooks*, the passages in which he wrestled with the problem, and, in the *Tractatus*, the corresponding ones in which the vestiges of the problem are still discernible. An example is his discussion of the will in relation to action and bodily movement: "I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will: I am completely powerless. [NB 11.6.16 p.73] "Let us imagine a man who could use none of his limbs and hence could, in the ordinary sense, not exercise his will. He could, however, think and want and communicate his thoughts to someone else. Could therefore do good or evil through the other man. It is clear that ethics would have validity for him, too, and that in the ethical sense he is the bearer of will. Now is there any difference between this will and that which sets the human body in motion?" [NB 21.7.16 p.76-7] "...it must be all one, as far as the existence of ethics, whether there is living matter in the world or not. And it is clear that a world in which there is only dead matter is in itself neither good nor evil, so even the world of living things can in itself be neither good nor evil." [NB 2.8.16 p.79]

4 Later comes the strange assertion that the will is no closer to the body, to one's own body, than to the body of a wasp or even a stone [NB 12.10.16 p.84], as if the will, like god [Tr 6432], never entered into the world of facts. But on the other hand, "... we need a foothold for the will in the world... If the will has to have an object in the world, the object can be the intended action itself. And the will does have to have an object. Otherwise we should have no foothold and could not know what we willed." [NB 4.11.16 p.86-8]. In the longish section on willing in the *Notebooks* [pp.85-8] Wittgenstein tries out several ideas of the will: as a cause of action, as a mere accompaniment of action, as connected first to my arm, then to the sinews, then, presumably, to the physiological processes in the nerves.<sup>1</sup> Then he suggests that "the act of will is not the cause of the action but is the action itself." But, there follows a nagging doubt: "But: I cannot will everything--...for the consideration of willing makes it look as if one part of the world were closer to me than another (which would be intolerable)."

5 If, according to Wittgenstein's logic, no fact in the world has preeminence--all propositions being of equal valuelessness [Tr 64]--then the will as the bearer of value cannot be allowed to give preeminence to any facts (including my body) by being closer to some than to others; thus, the will floats

free, one of two "godheads: the world and my independent I." [NB 8.7.16 p.74]. But on the other hand, it is obvious that some things can be willed and others cannot--for example, some of my muscles [Tr 5631], but not a wasp or a stone. That is, the will's having a foothold in the world through action puts it closer to some facts than to others. The will equivocates: sometimes it is a disembodied limit outside the world of facts, sometimes it is at the very center near action and the body.

6 In the *Tractatus* one sees only the vestiges of this problem, for example in relation to reward and punishment. The exercise of will changes only the limit not the facts [Tr 643], but reward and punishment are for actions in the world and must lie, he says [Tr 6422], in the actions themselves (not, for example, in their consequences). So how is it with the will? Is it in the world, or not?

7 There is a similar problem with Wittgenstein's metaphor of the eye and the visual field. In the *Notebooks* this I twice appears at the center<sup>2</sup>; twice it occurs as the boundary; once it shrinks to an extensionless point; and in another passage it is drawn both ways at once: "I always find myself at a particular point of my visual space", at the center, that is, but then, "so my visual space has as it were a shape", it has structure transcendental to the details seen within the visual field, for the visual field "is constituted differently in length than in breadth."<sup>3</sup> None of the center metaphors appear in the *Tractatus*, only the boundary metaphors.

8 If one attempts to sort this out strictly on the internal evidence of the *Tractatus* and the *Notebooks*, one is liable to make an arbitrary division; I suggest instead that we seek a principle of division faithful to the roots of Wittgenstein's own thinking. Several times in the *Notebooks* he distinguishes the thinking subject from the willing subject (the one an illusion, the other a limit)--this is almost certainly borrowed from Schopenhauer's work, and Schopenhauer is even mentioned [e.g. NB 2.8.16 p.79]. It is known that Wittgenstein read Schopenhauer's *The World As Will And Representation* prior to writing the *Tractatus*, and some comparisons will be fruitful.

9 First, for both Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein, the problem of life is essentially the same, namely, one has desires but the world can in no way be obliged to gratify them.<sup>4</sup> Second, the solution to the problem of life cannot come from science or knowledge in any form. In Schopenhauer's case, knowledge (he calls it the representation of phenomena) is limited by the principle of sufficient reason to showing the order in which phenomena regularly recur, but nothing higher or deeper; in Wittgenstein's account, knowledge (that is, propositional representation of facts) is limited by logic to showing the relative positions of objects in a fact, and nothing higher or deeper. In neither case can anything pertaining to the whole be known: in Schopenhauer's metaphysical terms what is transcendental is, strictly speaking, nonrepresentable, as it is nonsensical in Wittgenstein's logic.<sup>5</sup> Still, if science cannot provide the answer, "on the other hand ... the most complete knowledge of nature possible is the corrected statement of the problem" [WWRii chap.XVII]. This is echoed in the *Tractatus*: when all factual questions have been asked and answered, when there are no more questions to formulate and the important question has not yet been formulated, then this itself is the answer [Tr 652], namely, the facts all belong to the problem, not to the solution [Tr 64321]. Schopenhauer formulates the unformulable question roughly as 'is there nothing more (than recurring phenomena)?' and notes that we are always dissatisfied with a 'no' answer; we very much want there to be something more than just recurring phenomena. Wittgenstein as much as agrees when in the *Notebooks* he says that the facts are not the end of the matter [NB 8.7.16 p.74]. Of course, logically speaking, any putative answer to the question is either a factual answer, and therefore not deep enough, or it is a nonfactual answer, and therefore nonsense. But, as "The Lecture on Ethics" makes clear, the attempt to give an answer is vitally important--in a way that logic is not--and deserves our deepest respect.<sup>6</sup>

10 Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein draw the limit in the same place and in the same way; only the terminology is different (metaphysical or logical). In other instances even the terminology is the same, and one of these instances is the distinction between the thinking presenting (*vorstellende*) subject and the willing subject.

11 In both Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein the thinking presenting subject is compared to the eye and the visual field; it is also in both cases bound up with the solipsism of the present experience.<sup>7</sup> In the *Notebooks* after the statement "The I makes its appearance in philosophy through the world's being my world" [NB 12.8.16 p.80] there immediately follows on the same day the metaphor of the eye and the visual field--in the *Tractatus* these are separate. Evidently there was some connection in Wittgenstein's thinking between the I in philosophy and my world, and the eye and the visual field, which was not preserved in the *Tractatus* numbering system. It is worth trying to reconstruct what that connection was, for it bears on the distinction he draws between the two kinds of subjects.

12 The metaphor of the eye and the visual field occurs four times in the *Notebooks*, three of these were incorporated into the *Tractatus*<sup>8</sup>; it is discussed again in *Philosophical Remarks*, 1929; by Moore in his notes on Wittgenstein's lectures from 1930-3, and yet again in Wittgenstein's own notes for lectures 1934-6.<sup>9</sup> It was an item of continuing concern in his thinking. In the *Notebooks* he writes, "The situation is not simply that I everywhere notice where I see anything, but I also always find myself at a particular point of my visual space, so my visual space has as it were a shape." [NB 20.10.16 p.86]. This is followed by a denial of the existence of the thinking subject. Now compare the remark "if the will did not exist, neither would there be that center of the world which we call the I--" [NB 5.8.16 p.80]: on this date too the thinking subject is denied existence. Apparently, we are to liken the thinking (experiencing) subject in relation to the world (experience), to the eye in relation to the visual field: it does not exist as a visual datum (in experience). Schopenhauer makes a similar comparison: the I is the "center of all existence" and yet is not present to consciousness or experience: the eye "sees everything but itself" [WWRii chap.XLI]. Wittgenstein has it "you do not actually see the eye" [NB 4.8.16 p.80], hence, nowhere in the world is the eye, and by analogy, the subject, to be noted.

13 However, a complication arises in that there are two subjects, a thinking and a willing subject, borrowed from Schopenhauer's metaphysics, and the metaphor applies to them in different respects with different degrees of success. On the one hand, "visual space has a shape", it has structure and a limit (though not a visible one), and this Wittgenstein likens to one kind of subject, a metaphysical subject or will, a boundary subject not a center subject, which he insists does exist. On the other hand, the eye is supposed to be analogous to the thinking presenting (experiencing) subject in so far as it is at the center of its world (of thoughts, representations and experiences): a solipsistic perceiver.<sup>10</sup> But this part of the analogy breaks down in that the eye exists (despite the fact that it never sees itself); moreover, from the fact that the eye does not see itself in the visual field, it would not follow that there is no self, at all--only that there is no self in experience.

14 When Wittgenstein makes use of the metaphor of the eye and the visual field, and in particular when he notes the invisibility of the eye, and then asserts that the thinking presenting subject does not exist, it would seem that he is thinking of the world as the world of experience, and not the world of facts (which are independent of my will). It would seem that the solipsism of the present experience has surreptitiously crept in and distracted him from the world as a totality of independent facts, for only within the framework of the solipsism of the present experience is one tempted to say that what is not experienced does not exist (at all). The solipsism of the present experience was built into the distinction between the thinking and the willing subject--on the side of the thinking subject--as that distinction appears in Schopenhauer's work.<sup>11</sup> Evidently, when Wittgenstein adopted the distinction, solipsism

came wrapped up in the same package and, as it turned out, haunted him a long time after he had discarded the distinction. But note that in the final Tractatus-version when he draws a bubble with a spot marked "eye" he says that the visual field is *not* like this; so it may be that he was only tempted by this metaphor, but ultimately dissatisfied with it.

15 From their remarks on the death of the subject we may gather further clues. Schopenhauer writes, "everyone looks upon his own death as the end of the world" [WWRi §61], and this falls within a section on solipsism ("theoretical egoism" he calls it). Wittgenstein seems to have adopted this view with no compunction at all about Schopenhauer's worry that theoretical egoism is an irrefutable but mad sophism [§19]. Schopenhauer continues [§19], "... every individual, completely vanishing and reduced to nothing in a boundless world, nevertheless makes himself the center of the world, and considers his own existence and well-being before everything else." This sounds very much like the I of solipsism which shrinks to an extensionless point in Tractatus 564. In 6431(1) Wittgenstein writes that death is not an experience in life, but the end of the world; this presumably means the end of the world of experience, as far as the subject is concerned, not the end of the world of facts (which is "independent of my will" [Tr 6373]). But, of course, for a solipsist, my world is the world. For Schopenhauer, on the other hand, it is not the individual's life, experience, and personal consciousness which is life (or the life-world)--"life" means the life of the species, of the noumenal Will 'at a given grade of objectification', and this survives the deaths of its individual members.<sup>12</sup> Thus Schopenhauer can have it both ways: the point of view of the egoist at the center of his experience, from whose point of view it appears that the world ends at his death, but without cutting himself off from the common sense view that the world carries on without him. In the Tractatus, however, the experiencing subject tends to get cut off from the world as a totality of facts--it is difficult for Wittgenstein to locate a 'psychological illusion' within his logico-ethical framework--and so the experiencing subject is stuck in its solely egocentric view of death.

16 "Strictly thought through," however, the world of facts reasserts itself as a hard reality which refuses to vanish by logical sleight of hand, and so the solipsistic thinking experiencing subject becomes, as it were, a detached voyeur on the world, peeking at it through the pinhole of the present experience. It shrinks to an extensionless point, no longer even a part of the world, but somehow "coordinated with" it [Tr 564].

17 This equivocation of the subject--now as limit, now as centerpoint--is not a problem for Schopenhauer, and the reason why it isn't a problem helps cast into relief Wittgenstein's similar but modified view of the subject. In Schopenhauer's system the two apparently different subjects are ultimately one: the world, which is to say the representation of phenomena, is the will 'at a certain grade of objectification'. "Only in reflection are willing and acting [or willing and thinking, willing and knowing, willing and experiencing, etc.] different; in reality they are one" [WWRi §18]: they are noumena and phenomena. Whereas for Wittgenstein there are two "independent godheads": world and will, logic and ethics. Schopenhauer posits a spectrum within which he locates all things hierarchically, from inanimate objects to the Will, with the thinking subject falling somewhere in between; Wittgenstein posits a duality with no room for a third party--no conceptual room.

18 The genealogy of the difficulty in Wittgenstein's thinking is, I believe, his provisional adoption of Schopenhauer's distinction between Will and Idea, but his rejection of the metaphysics which made it possible to give some account of their connection (e.g. as noumenon and phenomenon). This left Wittgenstein with a loose end. The subject as the bearer of ideas becomes the odd man out, a mere superfluity. In Wittgenstein's logic the idea or thought is related to the proposition exactly as the proposition is related to the fact: "A thought ... is a logical picture of the proposition, and therefore just is a kind of proposition." [NB 12.9.16 p.82]. Meaning is all taken care of by the logic of isomorphism; the thinking subject who entertains the proposition contributes nothing and so is of no interest to philosophy

(it is relegated to psychology). For all that it does in Wittgenstein's scheme, it might as well shrink to an extensionless point.

19 I suggest that this is one of the "grave errors" he later came to find in his Tractatus-period work, for the *Investigations* is very largely about the subject who entertains ideas and his role in language and meaning. Evidently he later came to believe that logic and ethics alone were not sufficient to answer, elucidate, or dismiss, all questions, but that there was after all considerable room for 'psychology' in philosophy.

20 The subject related to the other half of Schopenhauer's distinction, the willing or metaphysical subject, is also problematic in the Tractatus, for, whereas Schopenhauer's Will is immanent, one Will throughout, all in all, Wittgenstein's is transcendental, and so, strictly speaking, it ought not to appear in the world at all, except that, traditionally speaking, the will has something to do with action and reward and punishment (the will's "foothold in the world").

## Part II

21 Let the following subjects therefore be put under the heading "nonexistent (illusory, superstitious, logically superfluous)": the subject as the bearer of ideas, the knowing subject, the experiencing subject, and the thinking presenting subject (in the first sentence of 5631), the *vorstellende Subjekt*.

22 Of course there are thoughts, experiences and representations, but no subject which has them. Why? Because 'a composite subject would not be a subject' [Tr 55421]. When 'A believes p' the meaning relation does not consist in subject A's relation to proposition p, but in proposition p's relation to the fact; the fact is composite, the proposition is composite, the thought is composite, and therefore so is any subject to whom the thought occurs; hence, "we have no coordination of a fact [believed] with an object [subject who believes], but a coordination of facts [and thoughts and propositions] by means of coordination of their objects" [and "psychic constituents" and names<sup>13</sup>][Tr 5542]. In 2021 he states that "objects form the substance of the world. Therefore they cannot be compound." The German for "compound", *zusammengesetzt*, is the same as in 55421-- what substance isn't, and what the subject must not be if it really is to be what we mean by "the subject" instead of what "superficial psychology conceives". Thus Wittgenstein's argument for the nonexistence of the thinking-presenting subject turns on simplicity and complexity, not on non-encounterability.

23 However, "the act of will is not an experience." [NB 9.11.16 p.80]. Also, good or bad willing changes the limit not the facts [Tr 643]. Thus, the subject as the bearer of the ethical, the will, need not be subsumed in the argument for the nonexistence of a composite subject, for the will as it pertains to the limit may be regarded as logically simple. If it were composite, then contra 642(1) and 6521, the solution to the problem of life could be stated in a proposition--one could, in effect, say the limit, but that is *ex hypothesi* ruled out.

24 The subject as the bearer of the ethical is as little encounterable as the subject which is the bearer of ideas, but for an entirely different reason; neither one of them exists as a fact in the world, but, again, for entirely different reasons.

25 This still leaves a doubt about the act of will in relation to bodily movement, to action and factual change in the world--a doubt not resolved in the *Notebooks* and ignored in the Tractatus. It could be argued that this act of will is not simple since it could be expressed as a command, promise, or intention

to do something, to bring about a factual change in the world, and this change could in turn be expressed in a proposition.

### Part III

26 Let us now attempt a rereading of the passage from 5631 to 5641 which contains the full range of subjects, wills, and Is, except the will as the bearer of the ethical which is introduced later in 6423.

5631 *"The thinking presenting subject, there is no such thing. If I wrote a book 'The World As I Found It' I should also have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could not be made."*

27 "The subject" is not the thinking, presenting subject denied existence in the opening sentence and dismissed in the *Notebooks* as superstition and "empty madness" [NB 5.8.16 p.80]. The subject is important and cannot be mentioned not because it does not exist (Santa Claus does not exist, yet we mention him), but because it is like the meaning of life in 652 which becomes apparent only after all that can be said has been and has been recognized to be not enough.

28 The opening sentence talks about the thinking, presenting subject, whereas *The World As I Found It* talks about the will and the subject--we should not conflate them. In the Prototractatus manuscript the first sentence, "The thinking, *vorstellende*, subject..." is a separate proposition from "The World As I Found It"; the manuscript numbering shows that he intended to connect them, for they have sequential numbers (Prototr. 53354 & 533541), but there is a physical gap of 16 pages between them, suggesting that they were separate in his thinking. The consolidation of these two propositions in the Tractatus is unfortunate for it obscures a distinction.

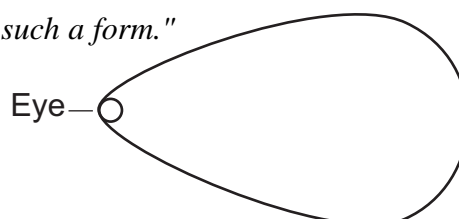
5632: *"The subject does not belong to the world but is a limit of the world."*

29 We can forget about the thinking-presenting subject, it is a subject only in the trivial in-the-world sense; the subject, the important one, concerns us now. If the thinking-presenting subject from the opening sentence of 5631 was supposed to be the same as the subject, how then could he maintain here that the subject is a limit of the world when there is no such thing? 'No such thing' would not limit anything.

5633 *"Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted? [nowhere] You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do not really see the eye. And from nothing in the field of sight can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye."*

30 Now we are introduced to (1) a metaphysical subject, and (2) the eye. Apparently, he is tempted to liken the metaphysical subject to the eye and to argue 'I see things, therefore my eye exists, similarly, I experience things, therefore my self exists'; but the eye doesn't see itself and, by analogy, the self wouldn't experience itself, so the analogy doesn't establish what one wants it to. That is to say, nothing in experience serves as a good metaphor for the metaphysical subject.

56331 *"For the field of sight has by no means such a form."*



31 That is, the world has no visible--experienced--boundary with a spot conveniently marked "eye/I". Nor does it have a shape which indubitably points to or focuses on its perceiver, for he says it does not have this form: funnelling down to an eye/I. (True, it is "constituted differently in length than breadth", but that might as well mean shoebox-shaped).

5634 *"This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is also a priori. Everything we see could also be otherwise. Everything we can describe at all could also be otherwise. There is no a priori order of things."*

32 *What* is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is a priori? The previous remark at the same level, 5633: from nothing in the field of sight can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye. If there were an a priori order of things, it might include, a priori (as in Spinoza's *Ethics*), the existence of a subject, but there is no a priori order of things, each thing is accidental. So how can you conclude that one thing must exist when every other thing might not? All things are independent of each other and of the subject, therefore, from no thing can the existence of any other thing--including the existence of the subject--be concluded [Tr 121, 2061, 2062].

564 *"Here we see that solipsism strictly carried through coincides with pure realism. The I of solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point, and there remains reality coordinated with it."*

33 This "I" and this "solipsism" are problematical. If it means the solipsism of the present experience, and therefore the experiencing (trivial) subject which egoistically imagines itself to be the center of the world (my world of experience), then the I's shrinking to an extensionless point, to virtual nonexistence, leaves all of the facts intact, just as they are; that is, it leaves us with pure realism. The question is, what is this remark doing here, interrupting the discussion of the metaphysical-limiting subject? But if, on the other hand, this "I of solipsism" is supposed to be the metaphysical subject from 5633, the subject which is a limit from 5632, then there is a problem with the image, for an extensionless point is poorly suited to limit the world. A point can limit a line, but it can hardly limit the world which 561 says is "filled" (by logic)--i.e. filled out. The spot could be said to limit the bubble in 56331, but the world is not like that, he says. Moreover, the phrase "coordinated with" reality does not suggest limiting or bounding reality, and so does not square with the subject from 5632. "Coordinated with" reality sounds more like a spurious adjunct to reality than its limit.

34 In the *Notebooks* he writes that he found his way through idealism (which singles out humanity from the world), to solipsism (which singles out myself alone), to pure realism (the world reasserts itself as the major reality) [NB 15.10.16]. I suspect that this idealism was the idealism of Schopenhauer, i.e. the world as representation, and that therefore this solipsism is the solipsism of the present experience (Schopenhauer's "theoretical egoism"). Life as a totality of experiences (or my experiences) is no more significant than the world as a totality of facts; solipsism, in the sense in which all my experiences are my experiences, stands on the same level as "the world is all that is the case": 'life is all that happens to me', nothing, so far, but a meaningless series of episodes. 562 states that there is something about solipsism which is entirely correct, and therefore presumably nontrivial. That is, there is some other sense of "solipsism" which is not the solipsism of the present experience, which is not the platitude "all my experiences are my experiences", which does not reduce to pure realism when the subject vanishes.

35 There are two senses in which solipsism is not trivial. One pertains to ethics and the will (introduced later in the *Tractatus*). The other is a logical sense, introduced at 56, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." 561 adds that we cannot say what we cannot say, because, to do so, we should have to be able to stand outside language. And this is the key to the sense in which solipsism is correct [Tr 562]: namely, one cannot step outside language, as in solipsism, one cannot step outside



one's experience; we are stuck in the inside, linguistic, solipsistic, perspective. That a confusion is latent here is evident from the *Notebooks*: there, the statement which became 56 ("the limits of my language...") is immediately followed by a statement which does not appear in the *Tractatus*, namely, "There is really only one world-soul, which I, in the first instance, call my soul, and as which alone I understand what I call other's souls." [NB 23.5.15]. *That* is the remark which, in the *Notebooks*, but deleted from the *Tractatus*, is supposed to give the key to the sense in which solipsism is correct, and it is straight out of Schopenhauer. We may therefore suppose that two senses of "solipsism" are confused here: Schopenhauer's "theoretical egoism" and Wittgenstein's logical limit.

36     Apparently the trivial, epistemological, in-the-world sense of "solipsism" inadvertently crept in at 564--a loose end from Schopenhauer's metaphysics--and got confused with the nontrivial, peculiarly Wittgensteinian limit-sense of "solipsism" from 562.

37     The *Tractatus* now continues with the subject in the limit-sense from 5632 and 5633, introducing new names for it:

*5641 "There is therefore really a sense in which the I can be talked of in philosophy non-psychologically. The I occurs in philosophy through this, that 'the world is my world'. The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit--not a part of the world."*

38     The second sentence, "the world is my world", connects with 562, "That the world is my world shows itself in that the limits of language ... mean the limits of my world"--my world, as in 56, too. One might have expected 'the limits of language mean the limits of *the* world' (instead of *my* world). The first sentence tells us that he is not talking about the psychological, perceiving I. He is therefore not talking about "my world" in the trivial sense in which all my experiences are my experiences. This must mean "my world" in some nontrivial sense, not the solipsism of the present experience from the egoistic (vanishing) point at the center, but "my world" as viewed from the boundary, some unsayable sense which does not reduce to the world of valueless facts (to pure realism). This must mean "my world" viewed not from the pinhole of the present experience, but *sub specie aeterni*.

39     This leaves us to puzzle out the difference between the world and my world. The two are presumably fact-for-fact identical; the difference is not a difference of fact, but of limit. And the limit is the subject, according to 5632 and 5641; therefore, we may identify the subject, the metaphysical subject, the non-psychological I, the philosophical I, and, from 6423 and 643, the will as the bearer of the ethical (that is, the will as the possibility of an alteration of the limit). The subject in this sense is the ethical posit of the locus of value--as the atomic proposition is the logical posit of the locus of truth. My world--in the ethical, not the experiential, sense--differs from the world (as a totality of facts) in the same way in which the world of the happy differs from that of the unhappy [Tr 643]: that is, by being a wholly different one. *The* world is limited logically; *my* world is the world limited ethically, and the subject is that limit.

40     The ethical, rather than logical, limit of the world consists in the world's having a sense, or in life's having a sense (it comes to the same thing, in 5621). In the *Notebooks* the remark at 5.7.16 p.73 which became 643, "the act of will must make the world a wholly different one. The world must so to speak wax or wane as a whole" is completed by another thought which for no apparent reason is excluded from the *Tractatus*. In the *Notebooks* it runs: "the world must ... wax or wane as a whole. As if by accession or loss of sense." Compare 8.7.16 p.74: "To believe in god means to see that life has a sense." This is obviously "sense" in the sense of "the sense of life" which sometimes becomes unspeakably clear to those who have long doubted [Tr 6521], not the sense of a proposition. This is what

makes the world into my world in a nontrivial sense--when, like Dostoevski's character [NB 6.7.16 p.73], one fulfills the purpose of existence simply by existing; when one has found one's place in life, the world is no longer a senseless totality of disjointed facts or experienced episodes, but is considered *sub specie aeterni* as a limited whole. When one is no longer 'a little sack of complaints' one can be said to have limited the world ethically, turned it into my world.

41 One finds this in Schopenhauer as well, this waxing and waning of the world, or the world's acquiring a shape or value through the moral character of the will: "... goodness of heart is a transcendental quality; it belongs to an order of things beyond this life and is incommensurable with any other perfection; where it is present in a high degree, it makes the heart so large that it embraces the whole world, so everything now lies within it, no longer outside." [WWRii chap.XIX]. In another passage the heart is "enlarged" through sympathy with all that lives, "contracted" by egoism [WWRi §66]. Wittgenstein's "waxing and waning" may have been suggested by these passages.

42 But note, there is no thing which does this, no act which transforms a senseless heap of facts into my world, no transcendental eye which takes a *sub specie aeterni* view--it is rather that the world becomes my world by being limited evaluatively, by being made sense of, in a certain way, e.g. as happy or sad, damned or forgiven, or whatever. This is the gist of "I am my world" [Tr 563]: the I is not something else apart, no sort of separate, transcendental mind. In the *Notebooks* Wittgenstein toyed with the idea of the will as "an attitude toward the world" [see pp.86-9], but this formulation was no doubt excluded from the *Tractatus* because of its psychological overtones. The world of the happy is not the world plus an owner (in a happy state of mind); it is rather that the world is made sense of happily, as a limited whole. It is perfect integration with the world, having discovered and accepted one's place in life. "The egoist feels himself surrounded by strange and hostile phenomena; all his hopes rest on his own well-being. The good person lives in a world of friendly phenomena; the well-being of any one of those is his own well-being." [WWRi §66]. Happy is not he whose mind is in a happy state (for the time being), but he who lives in a friendly world (*sub specie aeterni*).

43 It is solipsistic in the sense that no one else is living my life for me, no one else can solve the problem of life for me, and no one else can be happy for me. It is ineffable because I cannot use language about the world, about facts, to express the difference between the world of the happy and the world of the unhappy (those who are 'little sacks of complaints'), for the difference is not a factual one. It is presaged by the acknowledgement of the world's existence, and by the appreciation of its existence as utterly inexplicable in logical or scientific terms and utterly without need of an explanation ("the riddle does not exist"); it is completed by the 'mystical' realization that, whatever the facts are, "I can make myself independent of fate" [NB 8.7.16 p.74, 11.6.16 p.73]: happiness need not be contingent on getting what you want (on certain facts corresponding to certain other facts).<sup>14</sup>

44 If anyone should ask how such a thing is possible, Wittgenstein could plausibly have replied that the phenomenology of the process (of becoming happy) was not his concern--that would be a matter for empirical psychology (e.g. Wm. James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*). He was rather concerned with its logical and ethical nature as a *fait accompli*.

## In Sum

I discern two sorts of solipsism and two and a half sorts of subjects in the Tractatus-period work:

1 The thinking, presenting, experiencing, *vorstellende*, subject: logically superfluous (since all thoughts, propositions and facts get on without it), it is a subject only for psychological inquiry; it is almost certainly this which shrinks to an extensionless point "coordinated with" reality, a sort of voyeur on the world through the epistemological pinhole of the solipsism of the present experience.

2 The metaphysical, philosophical, non-psychological, transcendental (as opposed to Schopenhauer's immanent) subject, equivalent to the will as the bearer of the ethical/mystical; it has nothing to do with individual facts in the world, but rather with how factuality in total is apprehended and assessed; also solipsistic, not in the (epistemological) sense of the present experience, but in the sense that the onus is on me, not on the world, to live at peace and discover the meaning of life.

2-1/2 The will as a phenomenon (whatever is of interest to psychology: motivation, intention, desire, volition etc.--which got interesting again in Wittgenstein's later philosophy), and the will whose actions in the world are their own reward and punishment--occupying no clear place between the two above. There would seem to be an echo of this will at Philosophical Investigations §620, that 'doing seems to have no volume of experience', but 'shrinks to an extensionless needle point'; perhaps he was thinking then of how he had once thought of the willing subject (i.e., as closer to the thinking subject than the metaphysical subject). Though the will's problematic relation to action is never resolved in the Tractatus, it is in a way obviated, at least for the purpose of the so-called mystical conclusion, for nothing one could do (have or acquire) in the world (much less think about the world) could have ethical significance in the sense of establishing the limit or transforming an unhappy world into a happy one. Just as there is nothing to be said, after a certain point, so also there is nothing to be done.

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## Notes

1 This is perhaps what is meant in Tr 6374: there is no logical connection between the will and the world, and neither could we will "the supposed physical connection".

2 And again, in virtually the same words, in "Notes for Lectures on 'Private Experience' & 'Sense Data'" (1934-6), it appears "... at the source of the visual field ... in a favored position. I am the center of the world", in *Philos. Rev.* vol.77, 1968.

3 *Notebooks*:

center: 11.6.16 p.73 & 5.8.16 p.80;

boundary: 5.7.16 p.73 & 2.8.16 p.79;

extensionless point: 2.9.16 p.82;

both at once: 20.10.16 p.85-6.

4 *The World As Will & Representation*, vol.i §§37, 56, 57, 67; NB 29.7.16 p.77; *Tractatus* 6374.

5 WWRi §§15, 17; Tr 4121(2), 642.

6 At any rate, it had his deepest respect; see, for example, Drury's notes on conversations: "Don't think I despise metaphysics," Wittgenstein said, "I regard some of the great philosophical writings of the past as among the noblest works of the human mind." L.W. *Personal Recollections*, ed. R. Rhees, Basil Blackwell, 1981, p.93.

7 Wittgenstein: "The phenomenon of staring is bound up with the whole puzzle of solipsism." in "Notes on 'Private Experience' ...", *Philos. Rev.* *ibid.*, p.309.

8 NB 11.6.16 p.73, 4.8.16 p.80, 12.8.16 p.80, 20.10.16 p.85-6.

9 Moore's notes appear in *Mind* as "Wittgenstein's Lectures 1930-3", vol.LXIV no.253 Jan.1955; Wittgenstein's in *Philos. Rev.*, *ibid.*

10 "It's no use saying that [an]other person knows what he sees and not what I see and that therefore all is symmetrical, because there just is nothing else corresponding to my visual image; my visual image is unique." *Philos. Rev.*, *ibid.*, p.310-311; see also pp.281, 283, 308.

11 WWRi §§14, 19, 54, 57. "The present alone is the form of all life ...", §54, past and future are abstract reflections.

12 WWRi §51. On the Will's different grades of objectification in different species, see §§26, 27.

13 Letter to Russell, NB p.129-30.

14 In this Wittgenstein differs significantly from Schopenhauer, who maintained that the solution to the problem of life, of ungratified desire, was to extinguish the will, extinguish desire, by contemplation of beauty (or perhaps, *The Beautiful*).

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