World and Mind in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

María Asunción Tejedor-Palau

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Abstract

A significant level of controversy remains as to how exactly the *Tractatus*’ views on the world and the mind ought to be understood. This thesis offers an exegesis of Wittgenstein’s thinking. It culminates in a new, more securely based interpretation of his early writings, which shows their direct relevance to current philosophical preoccupations and emphasises the strong interdependence that exists between his early thoughts on these two areas.

The first task of the thesis is to show that the Tractarian ‘world’ should be understood as the world as it can possibly be given in experience: objects possess a distinct form and content and are able to produce, by combining with each other, ordinary reality. Having established this, the metaphysical and ontological status of objects is explored in detail, leading to the conclusions that objects can be neither phenomenal nor material, that they are not perceivable and that it is unclear that Wittgenstein had in mind a definite ontology of objects when he wrote the *Tractatus*. I then put forward a new understanding of Wittgenstein’s account of the meanings of names and of his Picture Theory, and show that there is a definite direction of determination from world to language in the *Tractatus*, a view which has recently been put into question. Wittgenstein’s distinction between sense, senselessness and nonsense is then elucidated, and his account of the connection between language and the world explored. This allows me to establish that the *Tractatus* does not posit a transcendental, representing self at the limits of the world, as some authors have suggested. No such self is required for representation to be possible, according to Wittgenstein. The issue of whether the *Tractatus* posits another kind of subject at the limits of the world is then examined in the context of Wittgenstein’s remarks on solipsism.
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Part I: Introduction

1 Overview

This thesis offers an exegesis of the Tractatus' views on the world and the mind which emphasises their plausibility, and shows their relevance to current philosophical debate. It also stresses the strong interdependence that exists between Wittgenstein's early thoughts on these two areas. I will address issues concerning meaning when to do so is relevant in order to clarify Wittgenstein's attitude to the world and the mind. Because of the word limit constraint, I have chosen not to discuss certain questions which, though interesting, were not directly relevant to securing my argument. As a result, I have, unless absolutely necessary, refrained from drawing comparisons between Wittgenstein's views and those of Frege, Russell, Moore, Kant and Schopenhauer. Similarly, although an interpretation of Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of representation is put forward in Part V, I have refrained from discussing in detail the wide range of literature generated by this topic.

Part II introduces Wittgenstein's notion of the proposition, and gives an account of his argument for the necessity of simple objects. This account will show that, according to the Tractatus, simples must be the unalterable, ultimate constituents of all possible worlds, if senseful language is to be possible.

Part III explores in more detail the nature of these simples. I will put forward conclusive evidence to the show that Wittgenstein's objects possess both a form and a content. Simple objects are not purely formal and must be taken to be the ultimate constituents of ordinary reality (i.e. the reality we experience in our everyday lives, which is made up of particulars, material properties, etc.).

Thus Parts II and III together equip us with a set of criteria for deciding whether something is a suitable candidate for being a Tractarian object: genuine Tractarian objects are simple in the sense that they are not analysable into other, simpler objects; they are unalterable; and they are the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds, including the reality we experience in our everyday lives. As a result, they must be able to produce, by combining exclusively with each other, the three features which are, according to Wittgenstein, the building blocks of reality: space, time and
material properties.

Part IV makes use of these criteria in order to clarify the metaphysical and ontological status of simples. I will argue that discussions about the metaphysical and ontological status of objects are misguided. Simple objects cannot be said to possess a metaphysical status in that neither material points not phenomenal ones are suitable candidates for objects. In turn, exegetical discussions about the ontology of objects seem misguided, since Wittgenstein does not take a clear view on the ontology of simples in the *Tractatus*. It is therefore mistaken to try to establish whether the *Tractatus* intends objects to be particulars, properties or relations. I will nevertheless put forward an ontological model for objects, a model which should not be regarded as a piece of exegesis, but which will prove useful in later Parts of the thesis, as it will help to illustrate points which would otherwise remain unnecessarily abstract. One of the key conclusions of our discussion of the metaphysical and ontological status of objects will be that neither objects nor states of affairs are perceivable, according to Wittgenstein. This will have a crucial impact on our assessment of the *Tractatus*’ account of the connection between language and the world, in Part VI.

2 The Tractarian system

Having clarified the nature of the objects posited by the *Tractatus*, it becomes possible to explain Wittgenstein’s views on the meaning of names and his Picture Theory of the proposition. These will be examined in Part V. Doing so will help us gain a deeper understanding of Wittgenstein’s conception of representation, which will then enable us to clarify, in Part VI, his account of thought and the mind. This examination of Wittgenstein’s views on language will also allow us to establish that Wittgenstein posits a definite direction of determination from objects to language (and all other forms of representation).

Part VI presents Wittgenstein’s account of the mind and of thinking, and explores his views on the mental connection between language and the world. It starts off with an exploration of Wittgenstein’s view that thought is representational or pictorial in nature and that the mind is composite. I will then examine Wittgenstein’s distinction between senseful, senseless and nonsensical statements in order to clarify his understanding of what he calls ‘experience’. Having done this, I will address the question of whether ordinary thought (the kind of thinking we carry out in our everyday lives) can be said to effect the connection between language and the world in the *Tractatus*. I will argue against the view that ordinary thinking succeeds in representing the
world only by virtue of the transcendental acts of meaning carried out by a simple metaphysical self, and will show that, in the *Tractatus*, ordinary thinking ensures on its own the connection between linguistic, mental and other pictures and reality.

Part VII will conclude our exploration of Wittgenstein's views on the mind by examining his treatment solipsism and of the metaphysical subject. I will argue that it is mistaken to say that Wittgenstein wholly rejects the notion of the subject. According to the *Tractatus*, the metaphysical subject needs to be posited in spite of the fact that it cannot be individuated because, without it, genuine first-person ascriptions of experience would not be possible. My discussion of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism will also show to what extent and in what sense Wittgenstein regards solipsism to be correct, and to what extent and in what sense he regards it as being mistaken.

Before we move on to Part II, it is useful to outline the basic features of Wittgenstein's views on the world and language. This initial overview will be inevitably cursory, since it aims to present the essential characteristics of the Tractarian system in a way which could be accepted by most authors. Note, for instance, that what is meant by the expressions 'world', 'object', 'state of affairs', 'refer', 'subsistent', etc. will vary depending on the interpretation. These notions will be examined in more detail in the body of the thesis.¹

Tractarian, simple objects concatenate to produce states of affairs (*TLP* 2.01 and *TLP* 2.0272). Possibilities are inherent in these objects: whether it is possible for a simple to combine with other Tractarian objects in order to form a given state of affairs is something which is determined by the nature of the object itself (*TLP* 2.0121 – 2.014). Tractarian objects have internal or formal properties and external ones (*TLP* 2.01231 together with *TLP* 4.122): whilst they can happen to lack the latter, they cannot possibly lack the former (*TLP* 2.01231 together with *TLP* 4.122 and *TLP* 4.123).

States of affairs are made up exclusively of Tractarian objects (*TLP* 2.03), and are the simplest possible states of the world there could be. More complex possible states of the world are the result of applying logical operations to states of affairs (*TLP* 2.04 and *TLP* 2.06). I will throughout

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¹ Throughout this thesis I will be making use of the *Tractatus* numbering system. Wittgenstein's footnote to *TLP* 1 reads: 'The decimal numbers assigned to the individual propositions indicate the logical importance of the propositions, the stress laid on them in my exposition. The propositions n.1, n.2, n.3, etc. are comments on proposition no. n.; the propositions n.m1, n.m2, etc. are comments on proposition no. n.m, and so on.' (*TLP* 1, I.)
this thesis use the expression 'states of affairs' to refer exclusively to elementary concatenations of Tractarian objects, and the expression '(possible) situations (of the world)' to refer to logical conglomerates of such states of affairs. The term '(possible) states (of the world)' will cover both states of affairs and possible situations of the world. Possible states of the world must both be capable of obtaining and be capable of failing to obtain: they are possible, and not therefore necessarily obtaining. Possible states of the world which do obtain (or 'exist' as Wittgenstein puts it) are called 'facts' (TLP 2). I will sometimes use the expression 'elementary facts' to refer to states of affairs which obtain, and the expression 'non-elementary facts' to refer to possible situations that actually obtain. The general term 'facts' will cover both elementary and non-elementary facts. States of affairs differ from more complex possible situations of the world in that the former must be logically independent from each other, whereas the latter need not be (TLP 2.061 and TLP 6.3751). To say that states of affairs are logically independent from each other is to say that the obtaining or non-obtaining of a given state of affairs cannot entail the obtaining or non-obtaining of another one (TLP 2.06).

Tractarian objects must satisfy certain constraints: they must be 'simple' in the sense of not being made up of other objects (TLP 2.02 together with TLP 2.0201), they must be 'unalterable' and 'subsistent' (TLP 2.0271), and they must meet the logical independence constraint, in the sense that they must form states of affairs which are logically independent from each other (TLP 2.01 together with TLP 2.061).

Elementary propositions represent states of affairs: they assert that a given state of affairs obtains (TLP 4.21). They consist exclusively of Tractarian names (TLP 4.22) which are simple in the sense of not being analysable into other names (TLP 3.325). Simple names designate the simple objects that make up the represented state of affairs (TLP 4.22 together with TLP 4.24 and TLP 3.22). Elementary propositions are the simplest propositional units there can be, whilst simple names are the simplest naming units there can be (TLP 4.21 and TLP 3.26). Only propositions

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1 Wittgenstein doesn't explicitly make use of this notion, but it is clearly the possible counterpart to a 'Sachervalt' or elementary fact. See the footnote below for a clarification of this term.

2 In his letter to Russell from Cassino (19.8.19), Wittgenstein explains that a 'Tatsache' is an elementary fact and that a 'Sachervalt' is a non-elementary fact. An editorial footnote explains the significance of this letter: 'Wittgenstein had sent Russell a copy of the Tractatus by the hand of Keynes, and the following letter is a reply to Russell's queries about the book'. See NB p. 128, ff. 1.

3 Wittgenstein also distinguishes between positive facts (i.e. the fact that a possible state of the world obtains) and negative facts (i.e. the fact that a possible state of the world fails to obtain) (TLP 2.06).

4 Wittgenstein thus argues that no elementary propositions are 'negative': they all assert that a state of affairs obtains. See his letter to Russell from Cassino (19.8.19), NB p. 129.
have *sense* according to Wittgenstein’s terminology (*TLP* 3.3): simple objects are the *meanings* of simple names (*TLP* 3.202).

All propositions must, in order to be senseful, represent a possible state of the world. States of affairs are the sense of elementary propositions (*TLP* 4.031). Non-elementary propositions are produced by applying logical operations to elementary propositions (*TLP* 5.3). They represent possible situations of the world, and these possible situations are their sense (*TLP* 4.031). Propositions must be both bivalent and bipolar: they must have a determinate truth value and must both be capable of being true and be capable of being false. This is shown in the fact that tautological and contradictory statements are not well formed, genuine propositions, according to Wittgenstein: they are ‘pseudo-propositions’ (*TLP* 4.464 and *TLP* 4.466). A proposition is true when the possible state of the world it represents obtains or ‘exists’, and it is false when it doesn’t (*TLP* 4.25).

Elementary propositions differ from non-elementary ones in that the former must be logically independent from each other, whereas the latter need not be (*TLP* 4.211, *TLP* 6.3751 and *TLP* 5.124 – 5.1241). Elementary propositions must be logically independent from each other in that the truth-value of one of them cannot determine the truth-value of another (*TLP* 4.211, *TLP* 2.0211). Thus, the simple names that make them up must meet the logical independence constraint: they must be capable of combining with each other to produce elementary propositions which are logically independent from each other.

This much can be accepted by most authors. As we will soon see, however, disagreements emerge as soon as one attempts to clarify what exactly is meant by these claims.

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6 Wittgenstein simply calls non-elementary propositions ‘propositions’, but I feel that using the term ‘non-elementary propositions’ can be clearer in certain contexts.
Part II: Sense and simplicity

1 Introduction

The aim of this Part is to establish that Tractarian objects are necessary, in the sense of being the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds. In order to show this, it is useful to turn to Wittgenstein's argument for simple objects. I will begin by drawing a sketch of Wittgenstein's views of senseful propositions, and will then consider his argument for simples. Note however that it isn't necessary to give here a watertight, demonstrably correct interpretation of the latter. What we do need to establish in this Part is that simples are the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds.

At this stage, I will mention only those aspects of Wittgenstein's thinking which can be accepted regardless of the view one takes of the nature of Tractarian objects. For the time being, we will therefore need to keep an open mind as to the specific metaphysical and/or ontological status of the 'objects' and the 'world' mentioned in the Tractatus. This issue will then be addressed in Part IV.

2 The sense of a proposition

I will begin by outlining Wittgenstein's account of senseful propositions. Note that his Picture Theory of representation will not be examined in any detail at this stage, since, in order so to do, it is imperative to have a clearer view as to what constitutes a Tractarian object. In what follows, it is also important to remember that I use the term '(possible) states of the world' to cover both 'states of affairs' (i.e. elementary concatenations of simple objects) and 'possible situations of the world' (i.e. more complex logical conglomerates of states of affairs).

According to Wittgenstein, propositions must meet the following constraints, in order to be senseful:

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7 These will be explored in more detail in Parts III and IV.
8 We will examine the Picture Theory in Part V.
i Propositions must represent possible states of the world. These states of the world provide the sense of propositions: an elementary proposition represents and has as its sense a state of affairs; a non-elementary proposition represents and has as its sense a possible situation of the world – i.e. the existence and non-existence of various states of affairs (TLP 2.201, TLP 2.202).

ii Propositions must be articulated arrangements of names: a proposition must be made of elements which stand in a determinate relation to each other. It cannot therefore be a list of unconnected elements (TLP 3.141).

iii Propositions must be bivalent: they must have a determinate truth-value. They are determinately true when they represent a possible state of the world which obtains, and determinately false when the possible state of the world they represent does not obtain (TLP 4.466).

iv Propositions must be bipolar: they must both be capable of being true and be capable of being false (TLP 4.466).

Wittgenstein argues that all propositions are the result of applying logical operations to elementary propositions (TLP 5.3). Elementary propositions are described in the following way:

i An elementary proposition represents a state of affairs (TLP 4.21). The represented state of affairs provides the sense of the elementary proposition (TLP 4.2 and TLP 4.21).

ii An elementary proposition is made up exclusively of simple names (TLP 4.22 and TLP 4.24). These simple names designate the simple objects which combine to produce the state of affairs represented by the elementary proposition (TLP 3.203 and TLP 2.03).

iii States of affairs are made up exclusively of simple objects (TLP 2.03).  

iv Elementary propositions must be independent of each other: the truth-value of an elementary proposition cannot determine the truth-value of another elementary proposition (TLP 2.0211). Hence, the logical product of two elementary propositions

9 This idea will be explored in more detail at the end of Parts III and IV.

10 Wittgenstein tells us that: 'In a state of affairs objects fit into one another like the links in a chain.' (TLP 2.03). Just like a chain is made up exclusively of links (i.e. there is nothing other than these links holding the chain together), so a state of affairs is made up exclusively of simple objects. This view will be examined in more detail in Part III.
will never be a tautology or a contradiction. It will be bivalent and bipolar (TLP 6.3751).\(^1\)

Non-elementary propositions differ from elementary ones in two key respects:

i  Non-elementary propositions need not be logically independent of each other (TLP 6.3751).

ii  Any ordinary names that are mentioned in non-elementary propositions stand for complexes and are not therefore simple, Tractarian names. Names for complexes can be analysed into further propositions (TLP 2.0201).\(^2\) Wittgenstein indicates his agreement with Russell's Theory of Descriptions, in that he argues that a proposition which includes the name for a non-obtaining complex does not lack sense but is just false (TLP 3.24).

## 2.1 Bivalence and bipolarity

All propositions must be bivalent and bipolar: they must all have a determinate truth-value and they must both be capable of being true and be capable of being false. Both of these constraints are the consequence of the fact that, according to Wittgenstein, expressions must represent possible states of the world in order to be genuine propositions.

Propositions must be bivalent in that the possible states of the world they represent may, by definition, either obtain or fail to obtain. According to the *Tractatus*, a possible state of the world either determinately obtains, or determinately fails to obtain. For propositions to be capable of reflecting this feature of possible states of the world, they need to have a determinate truth-value. The fact that propositions represent possible states of the world also entails that they must be bipolar. Propositions must both be capable of being true and be capable of being false, for, otherwise, they would be unable to reflect the fact that possible states of the world are both capable of obtaining and capable of failing to obtain. In a nutshell, if propositions weren’t both bivalent and bipolar, they would be incapable of genuinely representing possible states of the world, and would thus fail to have a sense.

\(^1\) Wittgenstein’s account of tautologies and contradictions will be examined in more detail in Part VI.

\(^2\) This view will be examined in more detail in Part V.
2.2 The logical independence of elementary propositions

This helps to clarify an issue which has hitherto remained obscure in the literature: why does Wittgenstein impose such a stringent requirement on elementary propositions? Why does he argue that elementary propositions must be logically independent of each other (TLP 4.211 and TLP 6.3751)?

If the truth-value of one elementary proposition could determine the truth-value of another, then the logical product and the negation of these propositions would produce either a tautology or a contradiction. Consider the example of the propositions 'p is red all over at time \( t \) and 'p is green all over at time \( t' \), which are not elementary propositions since they are not logically independent of each other (cf. TLP 6.3751): if 'p is red all over at time \( t \)' is true then 'p is green all over at time \( t' \)' must be false, and then 'p is red all over at time \( t \) and p is green all over at time \( t' \)' is a logical contradiction.

If elementary propositions were logically dependent on each other, the non-elementary propositions produced by applying logical operations to them would be neither bivalent nor bipolar. They could not therefore be said to represent possible situations of the world, and would not be genuine propositions. Thus, if non-elementary propositions are to be the result of applying logical operations to elementary ones, it has to be the case that elementary propositions are logically independent of each other.

2.3 Representing arrangements and correlated elements

Although we cannot at this stage put forward an account of Wittgenstein’s Picture Theory, it is useful to introduce the idea that, according to Wittgenstein, both propositions and thoughts are pictures of the world (TLP 4.01, TLP 3) and that pictures are such that:

i The determinate arrangement of the elements of a picture represents the determinate arrangement of elements that constitute the depicted possible state of the world. (TLP 2.15)

ii The elements of a picture are correlated with the elements that constitute the represented state of the world (TLP 2.13 together with TLP 2.131 and TLP 2.1514).
3 Simple objects

Wittgenstein’s argument for simples aims to show that, for language to be possible, and given the constraints we have just outlined, simple objects must be the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds. I will begin by clarifying Wittgenstein’s notions of the possible and will then put forward an account of Wittgenstein’s argument for simples.

3.1 Wittgenstein’s notion of the possible

The notion of the possible is key to understanding Wittgenstein’s argument for simple objects, and is closely connected to his views of logic, which, he claims, ‘deals with every possibility’ (TLP 2.0121). According to Wittgenstein, a possible world is any world that can be pictured, any world that can be represented in thought or language. The logical – the logically possible – is that which can be pictured in thought and language (see TLP 3.001, TLP 3.02, TLP 3.03, TLP 3.032, and TLP 5.61). In turn, in this context, to say that a simple object belongs to a possible world is just to say that it is one of its ultimate constituents. Wittgenstein argues, however, that this should not be taken to mean that the object exists in that possible world. This view will be examined at the end of this Part.

3.2 Wittgenstein’s argument for simples

Wittgenstein argues that objects are simple in that they cannot be analysed into other objects. In other words, Tractarian objects are not themselves concatenations of other objects. His argument for the necessity of such objects states that, without them, senseful language would not be possible. Since senseful language is possible, the ultimate constituents of the world must be simples. This is therefore an a priori argument which does not rely on our being acquainted with any particular instances of simples. In fact, it is a variety of ontological argument which turns on the definition of the proposition: all propositions must, in order to be senseful, represent possible states of the world (states of affairs in the case of elementary propositions and possible situations

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16 The view that the TLP 2.0x (where Wittgenstein advances his argument for simples, and on which we will be focusing below) are concerned with possible worlds, understood in this way, is shown by the fact that TLP 2.022 refers to ‘an imagined world’ (literally: a world that is thought about and which can therefore be represented by means of thinking).

of the world in the case of non-elementary ones).

3.2.1 States of affairs are necessarily possible; objects are necessary

The argument begins with the idea that, for a state of affairs to be possible, it must be necessarily possible, that is possible in all possible worlds. As we will see below, Wittgenstein believes that a state of affairs is necessarily possible when the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that it is possible does not depend on what is the case (i.e. on the existence or obtaining of some state of the world). In contrast, a state of affairs is contingently or 'merely' possible if its possibility does depend on what is the case.

Note indeed that, for a state of affairs to be possible, it must both be capable of obtaining and be capable of failing to obtain. If a state of affairs isn't capable of obtaining, it will fail to obtain in all possible worlds. Conversely, if it isn't capable of failing to obtain, it will obtain in all possible worlds. Hence, a state of affairs which isn't both capable of obtaining and capable of failing to obtain, will either obtain in all possible worlds or fail to obtain in all possible worlds. Conversely, a state of affairs which is both capable of obtaining and capable of failing to obtain, will neither obtain in all possible worlds nor fail to obtain in all possible worlds. So, the state of affairs will be possible in all possible worlds: if a state of affairs is possible, then it automatically is necessarily possible.

In turn, states of affairs are combinations of objects (TLP 2.01). It therefore follows that, in order for states of affairs to be possible in all possible worlds, the objects that make them up must be the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds. It is in this sense that we can speak of objects being necessary, or of their belonging to all possible worlds.

That Wittgenstein holds states of affairs to be necessarily possible and objects to be necessary emerges in the TLP 2.0s. In the context of talking about the possible occurrence of objects in states of affairs, TLP 2.012 and TLP 2.0121 assert respectively that 'in logic nothing is accidental' and that 'nothing in the province of logic can be merely possible'. It would seem to follow immediately from this that a state of affairs (i.e. a possible combination of objects) is necessarily, and not 'merely' (i.e. contingently), possible: if a state of affairs is possible, it will be possible independently of any matters of fact. The following entries further reinforce this idea:
A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things). *(TLP 2.02)*

It is essential to things that they should be possible constituents of states of affairs. *(TLP 2.011)*

Objects make up the substance of the world. *(TLP 2.021)*

It is obvious that an imagined world, however different it may be from the real one, must have something—a form—in common with it. *(TLP 2.022)*

Objects are just what constitute this unalterable form. *(TLP 2.023)*

Substance is what subsists independently of what is the case. *(TLP 2.024)*

There must be objects if the world is to have an unalterable form. *(TLP 2.026)*

Objects, the unalterable, and the subsistent are one and the same thing. *(TLP 2.027)*

Objects are what is unalterable and subsistent; their configuration is what is changing and unstable. *(TLP 2.0271)*

The configuration of objects produces states of affairs. *(TLP 2.0272)*

*TLP* 2.022 asserts that there must be ‘something’—a ‘form’—which is common to all possible worlds, whether these worlds are imagined or real (where by ‘real world’ we mean the world of obtaining facts). This form, which is shared by all possible worlds, is made up of objects *(TLP 2.023)*. But ‘it is essential to things [i.e. to objects — *TLP* 2.02] that they should be possible constituents of states of affairs’ *(TLP 2.011)*. Indeed, ‘the configuration of objects produces states of affairs’ *(TLP 2.0272)*. This indicates that Wittgenstein holds states of affairs (the product of the combination of objects) to be possible in all possible worlds: states of affairs are or constitute the unalterable form shared by all possible worlds.¹⁵

Form is the possibility of structure. *(TLP 2.033)*

The structure of a fact consists of the structures of states of affairs. *(TLP 2.034)*

The totality of existing states of affairs is the world. *(TLP 2.04)*

The totality of existing states of affairs also determines which states of affairs do not exist. *(TLP 2.05)*

The view that objects are necessary is further reinforced by *TLP* 2.027 and *TLP* 2.024: *TLP* 2.027 tells us that objects and ‘the subsistent’ (i.e. substance) are one and the same thing; in turn, *TLP* 2.024 tells us ‘substance is what subsists independently of what is the case’. This suggests that objects are independent of what is the case: they subsist independently of any matters of fact, which allows them to be necessary in the sense of being the constituents of all possible worlds, regardless of any facts.

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¹⁵ We will explore the notion of form in more detail in Parts IV and V. For the time being, let us just assume that ‘form’ can be used in place of or coincides with ‘the totality of states of affairs’.
Finally, it is worth noting that, if states of affairs are necessarily possible, then so will be the possible situations of the world (i.e. the non-elementary possible facts) which result from the existence and non-existence of various states of affairs (cf. TLP 2.06). Hence, according to Wittgenstein, all possible states of the world (whether they are states of affairs or more complex possible situations of the world) are necessarily possible.

3.2.2 **If the world had no substance...**

Having established that objects are the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds, and that states of the world are possible in all possible worlds, the argument examines what would happen if there were no simple objects.

Objects are simple. (*TLP* 2.02)

Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite. (*TLP* 2.021)

If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true. (*TLP* 2.0211)

In that case we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false). (*TLP* 2.0212)

According to Wittgenstein's numbering system, *TLP* 2.0211 is a comment on *TLP* 2.021. The notion of substance therefore aims to capture the notion of what is simple. Objects make up the substance of the world, and it is because of this, according to Wittgenstein, that they cannot be composite: if they were composite, they would not make up the substance of the world, and the world would have no substance. *TLP* 2.0211 is therefore best (and is generally) understood as saying that, if there were no simple objects (i.e. 'if there world had no substance'), then 'whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true'. And, 'in that case we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false)' (*TLP* 2.0212). Note that it would have been misleading of Wittgenstein to write in *TLP* 2.0211 'If the substance of the world were complex, then...'. For the substance of the world is made up of many simple objects, and cannot, therefore, be said to be simple: the notion of substance is the notion of what is simple in that substance, that which 'subsists independently of what is the case' (*TLP* 2.024), is *made up* of simples. We will return to this issue below.

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6 See again Wittgenstein's footnote to *TLP* 1.

According to Kenny and Carruthers, the jump from *TLP* 2.021, through *TLP* 2.0211, to *TLP* 2.0212 is explained in the following way: a word (‘c’) can make a contribution to the sense of a proposition ‘P’ only if it stands for something which exists. If there were no simples, c would be a complex object. Complexes, by their very nature, may obtain or fail to obtain in reality. Since ‘c’ can only make a contribution to the sense of a proposition ‘P’ if the c exists, the sense of ‘P’ will depend on the obtaining of this complex. The sense of ‘P’ would therefore depend on the truth of the propositions describing c (*TLP* 2.0211). However, if there were no simples, the sense of *these* propositions would also depend on the obtaining of further complexes, and thus on further propositions being true, and this would continue *ad infinitum*. In such a case, determinate sense, and thus sense itself, would be impossible (*TLP* 2.0212).

One first, possible objection to this interpretation consists in saying that Wittgenstein’s argument cannot rely on the view that the name for a complex object can only contribute to the sense of a proposition if the named complex exists. For Wittgenstein tells us that a proposition which contains a name designating a complex object which does not exist is not senseless but simply false:

*A proposition that mentions a complex will not be nonsensical, if the complex does not exist, but simply false. (TLP 3.24)*

It might, however, be possible to counter this objection by arguing that, according to Wittgenstein, it is only because there are simple objects that names designating non-existing complexes can contribute to the sense of propositions: a name designating a non-existing complex object can contribute to the sense of a proposition *only* because it is ultimately analysable into Tractarian names designating simples.® Hence, if there were no simple objects, complex ones would have to exist for senseful language to be possible.

Be this as it may, it is worth noting that this interpretation also relies on the view that it would be unacceptable, according to the *Tractatus*, for analysis to continue *ad infinitum*.® And this poses a further problem, since it is highly unclear that Wittgenstein regards infinite analysis as being

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® The issue of infinite regress is also mentioned by Pears, when trying to elucidate Wittgenstein’s jump from *TLP* 2.0211 to *TLP* 2.0212. See Pears (1987), p. 126.
problematic in this way:

> Even if the world is infinitely complex, so that every fact consists of infinitely many states of affairs and every state of affairs is composed of infinitely many objects, there would still have to be objects and states of affairs. *(TLP 4.2211)*

Because of these difficulties, it is worth considering a different explanation of the jump from *TLP* 2.021, through *TLP* 2.0211, to *TLP* 2.0212. This explanation avoids referring to the notion of infinite analysis and takes into account the views that states of affairs must be necessarily possible and that the objects that make them up must be the constituents of all possible worlds. I am not maintaining that this is necessarily the line of thought underlying Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Tractatus*; however, this line of interpretation throws significant light on some of the most obscure aspects of Wittgenstein's argument for simples, and is therefore worth considering.

The assertion that 'whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true' (*TLP* 2.0211) is precisely the claim that whether a proposition represented a possible state (i.e. whether a proposition had sense) would depend on what happened to be the case (i.e. on whether some proposition was true). But this is tantamount to saying that whether a putative state was a possible state would be a contingent matter: the possibility of this state would depend on what is the case. The question, then, is why, if objects are not simple, possible states of affairs would not be — as they must be — possible in all possible worlds. The answer is as follows. If objects are not simple, the constituents of states of affairs would be complex. But a possible state of affairs must be possible in all possible worlds. This would be the case if the complex constituents of a state of affairs existed in all possible worlds. But a complex exists only if its constituents exist and are related in such a way as to compose the complex. And there is no necessity that they will be so related in every possible world. Furthermore, if there are no simples, there is no necessity that these constituents will exist in all possible worlds, for they are themselves complex. Hence, for any given complex there will be a possible world in which it does not exist, neither do its (complex) constituents, neither do their constituents, and so on. But if none of the constituents of the complex, at any level, exist in that world, it would seem that there is nothing that guarantees the possibility of the complex in that world. And this is to say that there is no guarantee of its possibility *no matter what is the case*. Hence, if there were no simples, states of affairs would not be possible in all possible worlds. States of affairs would be merely contingently possible: whether

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a Cf. *TLP* 2.0201. 'The proposition that describes the complex completely' of *TLP* 2.0201 is the proposition that is equivalent to saying that the complex exists (see NB, Appendix I, 'Notes on Logic', p. 93).
or not a state of affairs was possible would depend on whether a certain set of complex objects
obtained or existed. This can be put differently by saying that, if there were no simples, an
elementary proposition describing a state of affairs would only have a sense if certain other
propositions (i.e. those describing the complex constituents of the represented state of affairs, or
those describing the complex constituents of these complex constituents, etc.) were true – that
is, if the complexes mentioned in the elementary proposition (or their complex constituents,
etc.) existed (*TLP* 2.0211). And this would render language impossible: if there were no simples,
propositions would not represent states of the world which are necessarily possible. States of the
world would not be possible in all possible worlds if objects were complex. There would thus be
no senseful – bivalent and bipolar – propositions (‘true or false’ – *TLP* 2.0212). Perhaps something
like this argument is what Wittgenstein had in mind when he wrote, in *Philosophical Remarks*:

> What I once called ‘objects’, simples, were simply what I could refer to without
> running the risk of their possible non-existence; i.e. that for which there is neither
> existence nor non-existence, and that means: what we can speak about no matter
> what is the case. (*PR* §36)

4 Conclusions

4.1 Simple, unalterable and subsistent: necessary objects

Regardless of the exegetical validity of this interpretation of Wittgenstein’s argument for simples,
my discussion shows that simple objects must be necessary, in the sense of being the ultimate
constituents of all possible worlds. If they weren’t, the states of affairs they produce by combining
with each other would not be possible in all possible worlds and there could be no senseful
language. It isn’t therefore the case, as the Hintikkas have argued, that simple objects are ‘unalterable’
and ‘subsistent’ only in the sense that they must persist from one state of affairs to another,
where this isn’t taken to entail that they must belong to all possible worlds. Simple objects are
‘unalterable’ and ‘subsistent’ in the sense that they are necessary: they are the ultimate constituents
of all possible worlds at all possible times. The view advanced by the Hintikkas results from a
failure to take into account that states of affairs must be necessarily possible.

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2. See Hintikka and Hintikka (1986) pp. 48 – 49, 55 – 56. The Hintikkas have to interpret the unalterability and subsistence of
objects in this way, because they wish to argue that Tractarian objects are sense-data. As we will see in Part III, however, this
understanding of Tractarian objects is misguided.
Objects are necessary (i.e. belong to all possible worlds) in that they are the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds. It is crucial to establish this, since this will have a significant impact on later parts of this thesis. The claim that objects belong to all possible worlds in this sense does not mean, however, that objects can be said to exist necessarily. For Wittgenstein speaks of ‘existence’ only in relation to states of the world, never in relation to simples: simple objects subsist; states of the world may or may not exist (TLP 2.0271, TLP 2 and TLP 2.06). In Tractarian terminology, to say that something exists is to say that a possible state of the world obtains. As McGuinness argues, it is Wittgenstein’s view that only that which could fail to exist (a state of affairs, a possible situation of the world, etc.), can also be said to exist. In contrast, simple objects must be said to subsist, not to exist, since they ‘make up the substance of the world’ (TLP 2.021). To say that something exists is to say that something obtains or is the case (cf. TLP 2), and, since ‘substance is what subsists independently of what is the case’ (TLP 2.024), simple objects cannot be said to exist. PR §36 (quoted above) again corroborates this view.

4.2 Simple objects: a prerequisite for determinate sense

Simple objects are a prerequisite for both sense and the determinacy of sense. If all objects were complex, senseful (i.e. bivalent and bipolar) propositions would be impossible, because states of the world would not be necessarily possible. Similarly, meaningful simple signs would be impossible if they didn’t designate simple, unalterable, and necessary objects. And this, according to Wittgenstein, would render sense indeterminate:

The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate. (TLP 3.23)

We will explore the issue of the determinacy of sense in more detail in Part V.

Tractarian objects therefore constitute the foundation of linguistic reference and representation in the Tractatus:

The possibility of propositions is based on the principle that objects have signs as their representatives. (TLP 4.0812)

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* This is important, because it shows that Wittgenstein’s argument for simples does not involve deriving a claim as to what ‘exists’ from a tautology (i.e. the a priori true, definitional statement, ‘States of affairs are possible’). The significance of this point will emerge when we examine Wittgenstein’s discussion of solipsism in Part VII.

Part III: Objects as the ultimate constituents of reality

1 Introduction

Part II has shown that Tractarian objects are simple, in that they cannot decompose into other, even simpler objects, and that they are necessary in that they are the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds. A possible world (whether imagined or real) is one which can be represented in thought and language. The aim of Part III is to establish that Tractarian objects are able to produce, by combining exclusively with each other, the 'real world' — that is, the world as it is given to us in experience: ordinary reality. We won't, at this stage, discuss in any detail this notion of 'given to us in experience' — this will be done in Parts IV, VI, VII and VIII. Suffice it to say, for the time being, that the world as it is given to us in experience is the world we ordinarily perceive through our senses (a world characterised by time, space and material properties, according to Wittgenstein) and that this world can be represented in thought and language.

Ishiguro, McGuinness and Sullivan argue that Tractarian objects are purely formal. One of the consequences of their view is that objects are unable to form, by combining exclusively with each other, the world as it is given to us in experience. We will begin by giving an account of their interpretation, and will then put forward reasons for rejecting it.

2 Ishiguro, McGuinness and Sullivan

2.1 Purely formal objects

Ishiguro and McGuinness argue that to know the meaning of a simple name is to know the way in which the name is used in senseful propositions.\(^7\) Simple names do not have a reference which is distinct from their use: to know the reference of a name is just to know its use, or, more specifically, the set of criteria that govern its correct use.\(^8\) In other words, although Tractarian

\(^7\) In *TLP* 5.634, Wittgenstein illustrates the notion of 'experience' by referring both to sensory perception ('Whatever we see') and to representation ('Whatever we can describe at all'). That reality is a world which can be represented in this way isn't surprising, since reality is that possible world which obtains, and a world is possible when it can be represented in thought and language.


objects are the references of simple names, this doesn't mean that objects are anything other than the correct use of these names. The reference of a simple name is reducible to its correct use, to the use the name has in senseful propositions. The meaning of simple names is thus entirely exhausted by their correct uses.

In order to illustrate the difference between saying that a name has a reference which is distinct from its use, and saying that the use and reference of a name are not distinct, let us use the word 'red' as an example. Although 'red' is obviously not a simple name, since it doesn't meet the logical independence constraint, it serves to clarify this point. The ordinary name 'red' can be used correctly or incorrectly. It is, for instance, used correctly in the proposition 'This particular is red at this time' in that this is a senseful proposition. In contrast, it is used incorrectly in the statement 'This particular is red and green all over at this time' since this statement yields a conceptual contradiction: according to Wittgenstein, it is a priori false and is not therefore a bivalent and bipolar proposition. Ishiguro and McGuinness argue that the word 'red' is not a simple name, not just because it doesn't meet the logical independence constraint, but, most importantly, because it has a reference which is separate from its use. 'Red' and 'green' indeed have the same use, according to this definition of the use of a name: the criteria for their correct use are identical. Both can combine with the name for a particular and the name for a point in time to produce propositions such as 'This particular is red at this time' and 'This particular is green at this time', but neither can combine with the name for another colour (say 'blue'), the name for a particular and the name for a point in time to produce propositions such as 'This particular is both red and blue all over at the same time' or 'This particular is both green and blue all over at the same time'. Whilst the former propositions are senseful, the latter yield conceptual contradictions: again, according to Wittgenstein, they are a priori false, and aren't, therefore, genuine propositions. Hence, the criteria for the correct use of 'red' and 'green', the formal possibilities that delimit their correct application, are identical. In spite of this, saying that something is red is different from saying that it is green. In other words, that which renders the proposition 'This particular is red at this time' true differs from that which renders the proposition 'This particular is green at this time' true. 'Redness' and 'greenness' have a reference which is distinct from their use. The nature of the complex objects (i.e. the nature of the properties of redness and greenness) to which these names refer therefore involves more than just the correct use of

\[\text{if it is true that \text{ 'This particular is red all over at a particular time'} then it will be necessarily false that \text{ 'This (i.e. the same) particular is green all over at this (i.e. the same) time'. For \text{ 'This particular is red and green all over at the same time'} is a conceptual contradiction (TLP 6.3751).}\]
the names. Redness and greenness are not purely formal objects, they possess a content which is distinct from their form. It is primarily because of this, according to this account of Wittgenstein, that redness and greenness cannot be said to be simple objects, and that 'red' and 'green' cannot be said to be simple names.

On the face of it, using the expressions 'form' and 'content' to refer to objects is somewhat unorthodox. It is useful to adopt them, however, since Ishiguro and McGuinness speak of the form of objects, and since Wittgenstein himself uses this term when speaking of objects (e.g. *TLP* 2.0141). Let us therefore take it that those objects which have a distinct content and form differ from purely formal ones in the following way: the former are such that it is possible for the names designating these objects to have the same use (i.e. the same criteria for their correct use) and thus be capable of occupying the same position in a proposition (e.g. 'This particular is red at this time' and 'This particular is green at this time'), and nevertheless be such that the truth-value of the resulting propositions may be altered if one name is used rather than the other. (In the case of 'red' and 'green', it will necessarily be altered, since these names do not meet the logical independence constraint.) This never takes place in the case of propositions making use of names for purely formal objects, since the nature of these objects is entirely exhausted by the criteria for the correct use of the simple names that designate them: if two simple names have the same criteria for their correct use, then whether one name or the other is used in a given proposition will not affect the truth-value of this proposition.

According to Ishiguro and McGuinness, all elementary propositions are made out of names designating purely formal objects, and will thus be as described above. In fact, if two simple signs are given the same criteria for their correct use, they will constitute the same Tractarian name. It is pointless and misleading to give two signs the same use.

Occam's maxim is, of course, not an arbitrary rule, nor one that is justified by its success in practice: its point is that unnecessary units in a sign-language mean nothing.

Signs that serve one purpose are logically equivalent, and signs that serve none are logically meaningless. (*TLP* 5.47321)

[In Ishiguro's translation this reads: 'Occam's maxim [...] its point is that unnecessary units in a sign language do not refer to anything. Signs that have one purpose are logically equivalent, and signs that serve none have, logically speaking, no reference.']

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If a sign is useless, it is meaningless. (*TLP* 3.328)

[In Ishiguro’s translation this reads: ‘If a sign is without use, it is without reference.’]

Ishiguro justifies her translation of these entries by pointing out that unless we carefully translate ‘Bedeutung’ by reference and ‘Sinn’ by meaning, it becomes impossible to make sense of *TLP* 3.3311, *TLP* 4.126, and *TLP* 5.02. In this, she may well be correct. I will therefore be using her translation of these entries throughout this thesis, although I will also present the translation put forward by Pears and McGuinness in the 1974 version of the *Tractatus*.

Tractarian simple names are thus like the ‘dummy names’ of geometry: when we say in geometry ‘Let *a* be the centre of a circle’, the meaning of ‘*a*’ is entirely exhausted by the geometrical rules that apply to the centre of circles. ‘*a*’ is that name which is correctly used in the proposition ‘*a* is equidistant from all the points on the circle’, but which is incorrectly used, given the rules of geometry, in the statement ‘*a* is a point on the circle’. Since the meaning of ‘*a*’ is exhausted by these rules, it doesn’t make sense to ask, for instance, ‘But is point *a* red or green?’ or ‘But is point *a* phenomenal or material?’. For *a* is purely formal, and its nature is exhausted by the geometrical rules for the correct use of ‘*a*’. To ask whether *a* is red, or material, or a particular is to ask the wrong question: it is to ask a question which cannot apply to *a* since these properties (being red, being material, being a particular, etc.) are divorced from the geometrical properties that constitute *a*.

Ishiguro and McGuinness put forward the following argument for their view: Tractarian names are simple signs which must remain meaningful whatever is the case in the reality that we experience in our everyday lives. Hence, the simple objects these names designate must persist whatever is the case in reality. Tractarian objects cannot, because of this, be the type of things that can be said to have material properties: they cannot be said to be coloured, solid, moving, etc. It makes no sense to try to ascertain whether they are properties or particulars, or whether they are phenomenal or material. The nature of these simples must be exhausted by the

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8 This idea is explicitly put forward by McGuinness, although it is clearly also part of Ishiguro’s argument. See McGuinness (1981) p. 64.
possible (i.e. the correct) use of the names that designate them. Hence to say that they ‘exist’ can only be to say that:

there are instantiations of irreducible properties which for Wittgenstein are different from any material properties. (In understanding, for example, that there is an instantiation of the property red, we also understand that there could here be instantiations of the property being square, being hard, and so on.).

The bracketed passage of this citation is extremely important, for it captures most clearly the idea that Tractarian objects are purely formal: a Tractarian object is not, for instance, an irreducible material property meeting the logical independence constraint. Rather, it is the form of all possible properties, the fact that all names for properties are used in the same way in propositions: all properties play the same role, namely that of being instantiated at particulars. It is this role, this use that all names for properties have, which constitutes, in this interpretation, the Tractarian object, and thus the meaning of a simple name. This idea emerges, in a different context, in Sullivan’s article. In this passage he is commenting on Wittgenstein’s remark that:

If objects are given, then at the same time we are given all objects. (TLP 5.524)

Sullivan argues that this could never be the case if objects were objects of perceptual acquaintance. For there is no reason why being acquainted with one object would entail that we are acquainted with all others. Rather, Wittgenstein must mean here that:

insofar as I know any object, I have the notion of an object, and to have that notion is to be able to think of all objects.

This is the very heart of the notion of a purely formal object: Tractarian objects are not instances of simple particulars or properties meeting the logical independence constraint. It is the role that all particulars have (e.g. their capacity to have properties ascribed to them), the way in which all names for such particulars are used in propositions, which is a Tractarian object. In turn, the way in which all names for properties are used in propositions makes up a different Tractarian object, since it involves a different set of criteria for the correct use of names (i.e. all properties play the role of being ascribed to particulars). Tractarian objects are thus purely formal, content-less, they are logical notions whose nature is restricted to the correct use of names in propositions. Conversely, simple names do not have a reference which is distinct from their correct use. McGuinness explains that, according to Wittgenstein, simple names do not:

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6 See Ishiguro (1969) p. 48
have both a reference and a sense. He [Wittgenstein] does indeed think that the use of a name without a reference results in saying nothing whatsoever.  

Note that McGuinness uses the term ‘sense’ to refer to the criteria for the correct use of a name. For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to follow Ishiguro’s example here, and to speak of the use (rather than of the sense) and reference of names, since in Wittgenstein’s terminology, only propositions have a ‘sense’; names only have a meaning (TLP 3.3).

One consequence of this view is that simple objects cannot be regarded as the ultimate constituents of ordinary reality. For, of course, ordinary reality, the reality we experience in our everyday lives, is made of colour, solidity, movement, tables, bodies, etc. These are not, however, ‘purely formal objects’. As we saw above, the word ‘red’ has a reference which is distinct from its use, and the same is true of the words ‘solid’, ‘moving’, ‘table’, ‘body’, etc. Since colour, solidity, movement, tables, bodies, etc. possess both a content and a form, and since Tractarian objects are, according to this view, purely formal, the former could never have been ‘built’ out of the latter. This idea is put forward by Sullivan, when commenting on TLP 5.5561:

Empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects. (TLP 5.5561)

According to Sullivan, empirical reality cannot be bounded by the totality of objects in the sense of being ‘cobbled together’ out of these objects. The idea must be, rather, that empirical, ordinary reality is bounded by the totality of objects in that there wouldn’t be an empirical reality if properties didn’t have the role of being ascribed to particulars, if particulars didn’t have the capacity to have properties ascribed to them, etc. It is this formal role that all properties, all particulars, etc. have which limits reality, rather than particular instances of simple properties or particulars meeting the logical independence constraint.

3 Assessing the view that objects are purely formal

The account of Tractarian objects advanced by Ishiguro, McGuinness and Sullivan is highly intricate, and great care needs to be taken in evaluating it. In spite of the prevalent feeling that something about it is unsound, it has proven extremely difficult to subvert. Until now, the understanding has been that no conclusive evidence could be found, within the Tractatus, against this interpretation:

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the best one could do was look for evidence against it elsewhere (in the Notebooks, in Wittgenstein's later writings, etc.). However, such an approach inevitably opens itself to the objection that the views advanced by Wittgenstein in these other texts may not have coincided with those of the *Tractatus*. In what follows, I propose to show that there is, in fact, sufficient evidence within the *Tractatus* to undermine the view that Tractarian objects are purely formal. As we will see, simples are meant to produce, by combining *exclusively* with each other, reality; that is, the world as it is given to us in experience.

3.1 **Substance is form and content**

There is strong textual evidence, within the *Tractatus*, against the view that simple objects are purely formal. In order not to beg the question, let us again, for the time being, keep an open mind as to what Wittgenstein might mean by 'world' in the remarks we are about to examine. In other words, let us, until conclusive evidence is found to the contrary, assume that by 'world' Wittgenstein may not mean the kind of world we experience in our everyday lives, a world made out of particulars and material properties (such as *redness, solidity*, etc.).

> The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object. (TLP 2.0141)

> Objects make up the substance of the world. (TLP 2.021)

> If two objects have the same logical form, the only distinction between them, apart from their external properties, is that they are different. (TLP 2.0233)

By the 'logical form' of an object in *TLP 2.0233*, Wittgenstein must be referring to 'the possibility of its occurring in states of affairs' (*TLP 2.0141*). After all, *TLP 2.0233* and *TLP 2.0141* are only separated by nine entries, and nowhere in these entries (or, indeed, anywhere else) does Wittgenstein hint at a distinction between the 'logical form' and the 'form' of objects. It is also clear that he is, in this section of the *Tractatus*, discussing the notion of *simple*, not ordinary, complex, objects:

> Objects are simple (TLP 2.02)

Given all this, one possible way of interpreting *TLP 2.0233* would be to say that, according to Wittgenstein, two simple objects can have the same form (i.e. the same 'possibility of [their] occurring in states of affairs' — *TLP 2.0141*) and yet be different objects. If that were the case, two

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objects could play the same formal role in a state of affairs (e.g. the role of a property, the role of
a particular, etc.) and nevertheless be distinct from each other. Against such an interpretation it
could be argued that *TLP* 2.0233 together with *TLP* 2.02331 may, in fact, have been intended to
show the very absurdity of such a position.

Either a thing has properties that nothing else has, in which case we can immediately
use a description to distinguish it from the others and refer to it; or, on the other
hand, there are several things that have the whole set of their properties in common,
in which case it is quite impossible to indicate one of them.

For if there is nothing to distinguish a thing, I cannot distinguish it, since
otherwise it would be distinguished after all. (*TLP* 2.02331)

In other words, it could be objected that Wittgenstein is in these entries trying to show that it is
impossible for two objects to have the same form and yet be different: if two objects have the
same form, then they must be the same object. This objection isn't convincing, however. For
Wittgenstein's comments on generality, together with the logical independence constraint that
he imposes on elementary propositions, entail that this cannot be his view.\(^7\)

> We can now talk about formal concepts [...]

> When something falls under a formal concept as one of its objects, this cannot
be expressed by means of a proposition. Instead, it is shown in the very sign for this
object. (A name shows that it signifies an object [...]) (*TLP* 4.126)

> The propositional variable signifies the formal concept, and its values signify the
objects that fall under the concept. (*TLP* 4.127)

> Every variable is the sign for a formal concept.

> For every variable represents a constant form that all its values possess. (*TLP*
4.1271)

> Thus the variable name 'x' is the proper sign for the pseudo-concept object.

> Wherever the word 'object' ('thing', etc) is correctly used, it is expressed in
conceptual notation by a variable name. (*TLP* 4.1272)

> We can describe the world completely by means of fully generalised propositions, i.e.
without first correlating any name with a particular object.

> Then, in order to arrive at our customary mode of expression, we simply need
to add, after an expression like 'There is one and only one x such that...', the words,
'and that x is a'. (*TLP* 5.526)

Fully generalised propositions are arrangements of variables: they are arrangements of signs
which are not genuine names (i.e. because they haven't yet been correlated to objects) but which
can be replaced by names for objects (e.g. 'and that x is a') (*TLP* 5.526). The name for a
particular object can be used as a possible value for a given variable if the object falls under the
formal concept signified by that variable (*TLP* 4.127). One and the same variable can be replaced
by more than one value — that is, by more than one genuine name (*TLP* 4.1271). Clearly, there is

\(^7\) I am grateful to Jane Heal for suggesting this line of argumentation.
no reason to suppose that this does not apply at the level of elementary propositions: indeed, nowhere does Wittgenstein suggest that this should not be possible. Hence, it should be possible for more than one simple name to replace one of the variables making up the fully generalised form of an elementary proposition. But then, if two objects could not have the same form and yet be different, this would mean that the logical independence constraint of elementary propositions would fail to hold. For if two simple names can replace one and the same variable in the fully generalised form of an elementary proposition, then these two names have to be regarded as having the same use, and thus as designating objects possessing the same form. But since two objects cannot, in this scenario, possess the same form and yet be different, the simple names designating these two objects must in fact have the same meaning. All else being equal, and ignoring the obvious difficulty that, according to Wittgenstein, two genuine Tractarian names cannot designate the same object, the two elementary propositions thus produced would entail each other and the logical independence constraint would not be satisfied.

TLP 2.0233 must therefore be taken to imply that two objects can have the same formal role — that is, occupy the same logical place in a state of affairs (e.g. that of a property, that of a particular, etc.) — and yet be different. But this can only take place if objects possess a distinct form and content, which is precisely what Wittgenstein then goes on to say:

Objects make up the substance of the world. (TLP 2.021)
Objects, the unalterable, and the subsistent are one and the same. (TLP 2.027)
Substance is what subsists independently of what is the case (TLP 2.024)
It is form and content. (TLP 2.025) [My italics.]

Since 'objects [...] and the subsistent are one and the same' (TLP 2.027), and since 'objects make up the substance of the world' (TLP 2.021), to say that substance 'is form and content', must imply that Tractarian objects possess both form and content, it cannot therefore be that objects are purely formal, as Ishiguro, McGuinness, and Sullivan hold.

Objects have both a form and a content, and these are not reducible to each other, since two objects can have the same form and yet be different (TLP 2.0233). In spite of this, the form and content of objects are not separable from each other, in that, if an object's form and content could be separated — i.e. if the object could 'lose' one of these two elements — it would no longer be a genuine Tractarian object. After all, Tractarian objects are unalterable and necessary.
Finally, it is worth noting that form on its own (or a 'content-less object') and content on its own (or a 'form-less object') cannot therefore be regarded as genuine Tractarian objects. According to Wittgenstein, for senseful language to be possible, Tractarian objects must be simple in the sense that they must not be analysable into other, even simpler, objects. If, however, 'pure forms' (i.e. 'content-less objects') and 'pure contents' (i.e. 'form-less objects') were regarded as Tractarian objects, there could be no genuine Tractarian objects possessing a distinct form and content. For such 'objects' would no longer be simple: they would be analysable into other, even simpler, objects. Hence, only those objects which possess a form and a content which are not reducible to each other but which are nevertheless inseparable can be regarded as genuine Tractarian simples. Only such objects can provide the meaning of simple names. We will return to the issue of what is meant by the inseparability of form and content when we examine the question of a definite direction of determination, in Part V.

3.2 Objects as the ultimate constituents of reality

In this section, I propose to show that Tractarian objects are regarded by Wittgenstein, not just as possessing both a form and a content, but also as being the ultimate constituents of the ordinary reality we experience in our everyday lives (i.e. a reality made of particulars and material properties such as redness, solidity, etc.). Consider again the following entry:

The substance of the world can only determine a form, and not any material properties.
For it is only by means of propositions that material properties are represented — only by the configuration of objects that they are produced. (TLP 2.0231)

The first thing to note about this entry is that, when Wittgenstein says 'the substance of the world can only determine a form' (my italics), he cannot mean by this that the substance of the world (and thus the objects that constitute it — TLP 2.021) is only form. For this would be in direct contradiction with TLP 2.0233 and TLP 2.025 which show that substance (i.e. objects) possesses a form and a content which are not reducible to each other. We will shortly return to this sentence of TLP 2.0231.

Before doing so, it is essential to note that, according to TLP 2.0231, material properties are produced by the configuration of objects — that is, by states of affairs since:

The configuration of objects produces states of affairs. (TLP 2.0272)

But we also know that states of affairs are exclusively made up of objects:
In a state of affairs objects fit into one another like the links of a chain. (TLP 2.03)

Just as a chain is exclusively made up of links (i.e. there is nothing other than these links holding the chain together), so a state of affairs is exclusively made up of simple objects. This means that Tractarian objects must be able to give rise, by combining exclusively with each other, to the material properties which are a feature of ordinary reality. Indeed, Wittgenstein explicitly stated this view, in later years, when he made the following comment on the *Tractatus*:

> Think of Russell's notion of the 'individual', or my 'objects' and their 'names' (*Tractatus*); these objects were supposed to be the primary constituents of reality, something about which one couldn't assert it exists or doesn't exist. (*Theaetetus*).

[My italics.]

This goes again to show that Tractarian objects could never be purely formal. For the material properties which are a feature of ordinary reality possess a form and a content which are not reducible to each other (as was illustrated by the example of *redness* and *greenness* discussed on p. 25). And only items which also have a distinct form and content could, by combining exclusively with each other, produce other items possessing irreducible form and content.

Having clarified this, it is now possible to explain what Wittgenstein means when he says 'the substance of the world can only determine a form' (TLP 2.0231) (my italics in the second instance). For Tractarian objects (i.e. the substance of the world) can only guarantee that certain arrangements are possible. They cannot guarantee that these arrangements will actually obtain in reality.

> A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things). (TLP 2.01)

> Objects contain the *possibility* of all situations. (TLP 2.014) [My italics.]

> The existence and non-existence of states of affairs is reality. (TLP 2.06)

Possible states of the world (states of affairs and complex possible situations) are, as the argument for simples shows, necessarily *possible*, and not therefore necessarily *obtaining* combinations of objects. The fact that objects *can* combine to produce states of the world does not therefore guarantee that these states will obtain (or 'exist', as Wittgenstein says) in reality. Similarly, the fact that objects *can* combine to produce material properties does not guarantee that such properties will actually be realised as facts in reality. (TLP 2.0231)


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Tractarian objects must nevertheless be capable of combining with each other to produce these properties, and, in particular, according to Wittgenstein, they must be capable of producing the properties of colouredness, spatiality, and temporality:

The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object. (*TLP* 2.0141)

Space, time, and colour (being coloured) are forms of objects. (*TLP* 2.0251)

Since the form of an object is the logical roles it can play in states of affairs, Wittgenstein's claim that space, time and the property of being coloured are 'forms' of objects (*TLP* 2.0251), means that Tractarian objects must be capable of combining exclusively with each other in such a way that the resulting concatenations will yield, when they obtain as facts in reality, space, time and colour properties.

As a result, when Wittgenstein says that:

The existence and non-existence of states of affairs is reality.
   (We also call the existence of states of affairs a positive fact [i.e. the fact that these states of affairs obtain], and their non existence a negative fact [i.e. the fact that these states of affairs do not obtain].) (*TLP* 2.06)

he means that the totality of obtaining combinations of simple objects (and, by the same token, the totality of non-obtaining combinations of simples) constitutes the reality we experience in our everyday lives. Existing states of affairs are positive facts, non-existing states of affairs are negative facts, and the two together constitute reality: indeed, our reality includes, for instance, the positive fact that there are horses on earth and the negative fact that there are no unicorns on earth. The upshot of this is that the remark

Empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects. (*TLP* 5.5561)

must be taken to mean that ordinary reality is restricted by the range of states of affairs that objects can produce, and thus by the objects themselves. Ordinary reality is made up of facts (*TLP* 1.1), and, in particular, of the facts that certain material properties are instantiated in particular places at particular times. Since objects are capable of producing these properties by combining exclusively with each other, this entry must mean that objects are the ultimate constituents of reality. Contrary to the view suggested by Sullivan, reality is 'cobbled together' out of Tractarian objects, according to Wittgenstein.
Since we have just mentioned the idea that reality is made up of facts, it is helpful to clarify at this point what exactly Wittgenstein means by this:

The world is the totality of facts, not of things. (TLP 1.1)

An example is useful to illustrate this point. Imagine that I wish to describe the room (i.e. the part of reality) in which I currently find myself. At present, I am sitting on a chair and the computer is on a desk in front of me. Giving the list of objects that are contained in this room (e.g. desk; me; chair; computer), without saying what relationships hold between them, would fail to produce an adequate description of this room. For these objects could be the constituents of a different possible world, for instance, a possible world where the laws of gravity don’t apply, and where all of these objects (including myself) are floating near the ceiling. A list of unconnected objects cannot help me distinguish between these two possible worlds, and cannot therefore be said to describe either of them adequately. Particular states of the world are made of objects standing in a determinate relation to each other, not of a list of unconnected objects. Hence, reality, the possible world which actually obtains, must consist of facts – that is, of obtaining arrangements of objects standing in a determinate relation to each other. It cannot consist of unconnected objects.

The world is the totality of facts, not of things. (TLP 1.1)

What is the case -- a fact -- is the existence of states of affairs. (TLP 2)

In a state of affairs objects stand in a determinate relation to one another. (TLP 2.031)

This, incidentally, helps to explain Wittgenstein’s claim that propositions are articulate.

A proposition is not a blend of words. -- (Just as a theme of music is not a blend of notes.)
A proposition is articulate. (TLP 3.141)

For, as noted above, something is only a proposition if it represents a possible state of the world. Since possible states of the world are determinate arrangements of elements, propositions must be able to reflect this: they cannot be lists of unconnected signs, they must be determinate arrangements of these signs. Wittgenstein’s view is that the essence of a fact is its being articulate, which is why he can claim that propositional signs are facts:

A propositional sign is a fact. (TLP 3.14)

*Note again that we know, from TLP 2.01, that by ‘things’ Wittgenstein means here simple objects.

*Clearly I am not trying to imply here that these are simple Tractarian objects. This does not matter, for the purpose of this example, since all possible states of the world and facts are meant to be articulate, and not just states of affairs and elementary facts.
Only facts can express a sense, a set of names cannot. (*TLP* 3.142)

We will return to this issue when we examine Wittgenstein’s Picture Theory of representation in Part V.

Note finally that the counterpart to the view that reality is ultimately made up of Tractarian objects is, of course, the view that ordinary language is ultimately made up of simple names. For Wittgenstein is explicit on this issue: simple names concatenate to form elementary propositions and all propositions result from applying logical operations to elementary ones.

All propositions are results of truth-operations on elementary propositions. (*TLP* 5.3).

An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation, of names (*TLP* 4.22)

It is also clear that by ‘all propositions’ Wittgenstein means all senseful propositions, including those used in everyday life and in the natural sciences.

The totality of propositions is language. (*TLP* 4.001)

Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense [...].

Everyday language is part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it. (*TLP* 4.002)

The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences.) (*TLP* 4.11)

The propositions used in everyday life and in the natural sciences are not, however, purely formal. They are made up of words designating objects which possess a distinct content and form. These words must, as a result, possess a use and reference which are not reducible to each other. However, if elementary propositions were made up of names whose references were reducible to their uses, ordinary, non elementary propositions could never result from applying truth-operations to elementary propositions (*TLP* 5.3). Simple names must therefore have a distinct use and reference, according to Wittgenstein. In Part V we will consider what becomes of the meaning of simple names and the sense of propositions, given that Tractarian objects possess a distinct form and content. Doing so will enable us to establish that the *Tractatus* posits a definite direction of determination from objects.
Conclusion

Tractarian objects are the ultimate constituents of ordinary reality and must therefore have a form and a content which are irreducible to each other: purely formal objects cannot, by combining exclusively with each other, produce material properties which have a distinct form and content. In turn, for senseful language to be possible, these objects must be simple: a 'pure content' (i.e. a 'form-less object') or a 'pure form' (i.e. a 'content-less object') cannot be regarded as genuine Tractarian objects. Only simple objects that have a form and a content which, though irreducible to each other, cannot be separated, will be genuine Tractarian objects. These objects will be able to produce, by combining exclusively with each other, the world as it is given to us in experience.
Part IV: The metaphysics and ontology of objects

1 Introduction

In this Part, we continue our exploration of Tractarian objects, by considering two ongoing debates. The first debate focuses on the metaphysical status of objects. Participants in this debate, such as Pears, Cook, and the Hintikkas, have attempted to answer the question of whether Tractarian objects are material or phenomenal. The second debate focuses on the ontological status of simples. Participants in this debate, such as Anscombe, Hacker, Copi, and the Hintikkas, have used Copi’s classification of the traditional ontological categories in order to try to establish whether Tractarian objects are particulars, properties, or relations.

In section 2, I propose to show that the debate about the metaphysical status of Tractarian objects is misguided. The simplest material and phenomenal entities there could be (i.e. material and phenomenal points) do not satisfy the constraints laid down by Wittgenstein for simples. Furthermore, it is a mistake to think that Tractarian objects are perceivable, an assumption which lies at the very heart of this debate.

In section 3, I will argue that it is unclear that the debate about the ontological status of simples can be resolved. It doesn’t seem possible conclusively to establish whether Wittgenstein regarded Tractarian objects as being particulars, properties or relations. In fact, it is unclear that Wittgenstein had made up his mind on the ontological question when he wrote the Tractatus. Nevertheless, it is useful to examine the question of which ontological categories satisfy the criteria laid down for objects. Doing so will help us gain a deeper insight into the nature of Tractarian simples and will also help to resolve some of the questions raised by the literature. Part of the task of this section will thus be to put forward an ontological model for simples which meets Wittgenstein’s constraints. This model will not be presented as an exegesis of Wittgenstein’s thinking, but will be used, for illustrative purposes, in later Parts of the thesis.

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Before we start, let us recapitulate what Wittgenstein means by a simple object. From Part II and III we can draw the conclusion that something will be a suitable candidate for a Tractarian object if and only if it satisfies certain criteria:

i. Tractarian Objects must have a distinct form and content so that they are capable, by combining exclusively with each other, of producing the reality we experience in our everyday lives. This reality is made up of space, time and material properties such as redness, solidity, etc.

ii. For senseful language to be possible, Tractarian objects must be simple, in the sense that they must not be analysable into other, even simpler objects. Hence, their form and content, though irreducible to each other, must be an integral, inseparable part of objects.

iii. For senseful language to be possible, objects must be the ultimate constituents of all possible worlds. They must thus be necessary, unalterable and subsistent.

iv. Objects must meet the logical independence constraint, in that they must be capable of producing, by combining with each other, states of affairs which are logically independent from each other. Whether or not a state of affairs obtains cannot determine whether or not another state of affairs obtains. This is reflected in the fact that the elementary propositions representing these states of affairs must also be independent from each other: the truth-value of one elementary proposition cannot determine the truth-value of another. In other words, no elementary proposition can entail or be entailed by another.

2 Copi’s classification of ontological categories

In sections 3 and 4, I will be making use of Copi’s classification of ontological categories. According to Copi, the three main, traditional ontological categories are particulars, properties and relations. Particulars are divided into three sub-categories: absolutely bare particulars (particulars with no properties whatsoever); bare particulars (particulars possessing internal properties but no material ones); and qualified particulars (particulars possessing both internal and material properties). Internal properties are formal properties which are necessary to an object, whilst ‘material

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properties' are those properties that render particulars qualified (e.g. colour properties).^4

Particulars, properties and relations are not the only ontological types that could be considered here. It would also be possible to consider an ontology of tropes. Tropes are particular, not general, properties, such as, for instance, the greenness of this apple. In a tropes-based ontology, items belonging to other ontological categories are constructions out of tropes: a universal is a set of resembling tropes; a concrete object is a 'bundle' of tropes, etc. There is, however, good reason to focus on the traditional ontological classification presented by Copi, in a discussion of Tractarian objects. For the textual evidence suggests that, when Wittgenstein thought about the ontological status of simples, he thought about it in terms of particulars and universals. In the Notebooks, he writes, for instance:

Relations and properties, etc. are objects too. (NB 16.6.15)

In contrast, there is no evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein ever considered other ontological classifications, such as tropes-based ones. That Wittgenstein was thinking of particulars and universals (and not of tropes) when thinking about Tractarian objects is further supported by Wittgenstein's own later remarks about the Tractatus. For, in Wittgenstein's later writings, we find him criticising his earlier view that facts are combinations of objects, and, in doing so, repeatedly giving examples which involve particulars and universals:

And this is the origin of the bad expression: a fact is a complex of objects. Here the fact that a man is sick is compared with a combination of two things, one of them a man and the other the sickness.\(^5\)

To say that a circle is composed of redness and circularity, or a complex with these component parts, is a misuse of these words and is misleading. (Frege was aware of this and told me.) It is just as misleading to say that the fact that this circle is red (that I am tired) is a complex whose component parts are a circle and redness (myself and tiredness).\(^6\)

I had formerly said (in the Tractatus) the 'elementary proposition' is a concatenation [Verkettung] of names. Then names correspond to objects and the proposition corresponds to a complex of them. The proposition 'The bottle stands to the right of the glass', if it is true, corresponds to the complex consisting of the bottle, the glass and the relation right-left (or however one wants to label it).

One can speak intelligibly to others of combinations of colours with shapes (or perhaps the colours red and blue with the shapes square and circle) just as of combinations of different shapes or bodies. And this is the root of my false [schiefen] expression: the fact [Tatsache] is a complex of objects. To say that a red circle

\(^4\) See Copi (1993) pp. 184. Copi also uses the expression 'external properties' to refer to those properties which render particulars qualified. However, since this definition of 'external properties' does not coincide with Wittgenstein's, I will, for the sake of clarity, refrain from using this expression to refer to material properties. Wittgenstein's notions of external and internal properties will be examined at the end of this Part.

\(^5\) PG, Part 1, II § 20.

\(^6\) PG, Part 1, Appendix1, 'Complex and Fact'.
'consists of redness [Rote] and circular form, is a complex of these constituents, is a misuse of words and is misleading. (Related to the confusion between colour and pigment.) The fact that this circle is red, 'consists' of nothing at all. (Frege objected to my expression in that he said, 'the part is surely less than the whole'.)'

But I search, frantically search, for one system, for a uniformity [Einheit] of all propositions. — And then I become the prisoner of the specific forms of expression of my language, caught in the net [Netze, network] of language. — For if instead of 'the bottle is blue' we say, 'The bottle has the property of blueness', and instead of 'The bottle stands to the right of the glass', 'The bottle stands to the glass in the relation of rightness', and so forth, then it can of course yield the impression that every proposition is a concatenation of names. [...] And further: all words in a proposition correspond to objects. *

What a linguistic misuse of the word 'Gegenstand + Konfiguration'. A configuration can be made up by balls which are spatially related in a certain way; but not of the three balls and their spatial relations. And if I say 'I see here three Gegenstände' I do not mean: two balls + their mutual position. *

Although this is never made clear in the literature (the question is simply never raised), the fact that Wittgenstein restricts himself to particulars and universals when speaking of Tractarian objects explains why commentators have followed in Copi's footsteps, and confined themselves to the question of whether Tractarian objects are particulars, properties or relations.® (We will return to this issue below.)

3 The metaphysical debate

In this section, I propose to show that Tractarian objects cannot be said to be material or phenomenal and that discussions about the metaphysical status of objects are, when presented in these terms, ultimately misguided.

3.1 Material and phenomenal points

Participants in the debate about the metaphysical status of objects start off with the assumption that Wittgenstein adopts a particular position on the realism-phenomenalism dispute, and argue that Tractarian objects are the simplest units of the metaphysical type favoured by Wittgenstein.

So, for instance, the Hintikkas argue that Wittgenstein espouses sense-data phenomenalism.

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® This is § 108 of the pre-war version of the Investigations, as quoted in Hilmy (1987) pp. 256 – 257.
* This is § 109 of the pre-war version of the Investigations, as quoted in Hilmy (1987) pp. 256 – 257.
® This passage from a 1943 Notebook is written by Wittgenstein immediately after having quoted TLP 4.22, TLP 3.21, TLP 3.22, TLP 3.14, TLP 2.03, TLP 2.0272 and TLP 2.01. The entry as a whole is quoted by Stenius in Block (1981) p. 125.
According to this interpretation, the *Tractatus* holds that, when we perceive the world, we only ever directly perceive our own, strongly private sense-impressions. These sense-impressions form an impenetrable veil of sense-data accessible only to the person doing the experiencing. Tractarian objects are therefore the simplest units of strongly private sense-impressions there can be, such as sense-data points in the visual field.⁴⁰

In turn, Cook argues that Wittgenstein is a neutral monist who holds that it makes no sense to speak of there being two distinct substances in the world, one mental and one physical: only one substance exists, namely 'pure experience'. According to Cook, this should not be taken to mean that everything in the world is 'mental': the dualist distinction according to which mental substance is to be contrasted with physical substance is mistaken and should abandoned, according to this interpretation of the *Tractatus*. Hence, everything in the world is experience, and thus phenomenal in nature, but this is true only in the sense that everything, including other people's mental events, is directly perceivable. The traditional distinction between so-called mental events and physical ones is only a manifestation of the way in which we conceptually organise our experience: it is just a sorting out of our experience into two different conceptual categories. It is a difference in modes of experience, not a difference in substance. Consequently, Cook argues that Tractarian objects are the simplest possible units of 'pure experience' there could be, such as weakly phenomenal points in the visual field.⁴⁰ These points are phenomenal, but in a weaker sense than the sense-data posited by the Hintikkas: they are not strongly private and the substance of which they are the simplest elements is not to be contrasted with material substance.

Finally, a realist interpretation of Tractarian objects would claim that, according to Wittgenstein, material things exist and are directly perceivable. According to this view, Tractarian objects would be the simplest type of material particulars there could be, such as material points or points of mass.⁴⁰

On the face of it, the textual evidence on this issue is extraordinarily ambiguous, since both the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* contain various apparently contradictory remarks on the metaphysical status of objects. On the one hand, Wittgenstein tells us in the *Notebooks* that:

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⁴⁰ See Hintikka and Hintikka (1986), especially ch. 3.
⁴⁰ See Cook (1994).
⁴ This list of possible interpretations of the metaphysical status of Tractarian objects is not meant to be exhaustive.
As examples of the simple I always think of points of the visual field (NB 6.5.15)

This could be taken to suggest that he thinks of objects in terms of phenomenal qualified particulars. However, he also tells us that:

The division of the body into material points, as we have it in physics, is nothing more than analysis into simple components (NB 20.6.15)

which would appear to suggest that he thinks of objects in terms of physical points of mass. In the Tractatus too he speaks both of phenomenal points and of physical points of mass:

A speck in the visual field, though it need not be red, must have some colour: it is, so to speak, surrounded by colour space. (TLP 2.0131)

The laws of physics, with all their logical apparatus, still speak, however indirectly, about the objects of the world. (TLP 6.3431)

We ought not to forget that any description of the world by means of mechanics will be of the completely general kind. For example, it will never mention particular point-masses: it will only talk about any point-masses whatsoever. (TLP 6.3432)

The possibility of describing the world by means of Newtonian mechanics tells us nothing about the world. (TLP 6.342)

The first entry would appear to suggest that Wittgenstein thinks of objects in terms of simple phenomenal points, whilst the latter three could be taken to mean that he thinks of objects in terms of particular mass-points: the fact that Newtonian mechanics does not speak of particular points of mass (but just of points of mass in general) means that it cannot say anything about the world. Hence, it could be argued, Tractarian objects must be particular points of mass.

Given the ambiguity of the textual evidence, Pears holds that Wittgenstein may have believed both physical and phenomenal particulars to be plausible candidates for Tractarian objects.8 I propose to show that this cannot be the case.

3.2 The constraints on Tractarian objects

Neither phenomenal points (whether understood in their stronger or weaker senses) nor points of mass meet the constraints laid down by Wittgenstein for simples.

Physical points of mass fail to meet the necessity constraint. Indeed, even if it was the case that all

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8 See Pears (1967) p. 98.
possible worlds contain some matter (i.e. even if it was the case that the property of being material is instantiated in all possible worlds) there is no reason why this particular mass-point, located in this place at this particular time, should be the constituent of all possible worlds. After all, there could, in a different possible world, be a vacuum in this location of space and time. As a result, particular mass-points cannot be said to be necessary.

Mass-points also fail to meet the unalterability constraint: any given point of mass can conceivably be destroyed and replaced by a vacuum. The reason for this is that mass-points are not simple objects, but complex ones, consisting in the fact that a particular property (i.e. that of having a mass or that of being material) is instantiated at a specific location in space, at a specific time. Hence, even if the property itself, and the spatial and temporal locations, belonged to all possible worlds, there is no reason why this property should be instantiated at precisely this spatial location, at this particular time, in all possible worlds.

The same is true of phenomenal qualitied particulars (whether understood in the stronger or in the weaker sense of phenomenal). Even if the property of redness belonged to all possible worlds, there is no reason why this particular red point, located in this place of the visual field at this particular time, should belong to all possible worlds. Wittgenstein himself points this out for us in the following entry:

A speck in the visual field, though it need not be red, must have some colour: it is, so to speak, surrounded by colour space. (*TLP* 2.0131) [My italics.]

Phenomenal points fail, moreover, to meet the logical independence constraint: if it is the case that there is a red point at this location of space and time, then it cannot be the case that there is a green point at this location of space at this time. If coloured phenomenal points were Tractarian objects, they would not be able to produce logically independent states of affairs. Wittgenstein was well aware of this when he wrote the *Tractatus*:

For example, the simultaneous presence of two colours at the same place in the visual field is impossible, in fact logically impossible, since it is ruled out by the logical structure of colour. [...] (It is clear that the logical product of two elementary propositions can neither be a tautology nor a contradiction. The statement that a point in the visual field has two different colours at the same time is a contradiction.) (*TLP* 6.3751)

As a result, neither points of mass nor phenomenal points can be regarded as Tractarian objects.
3.3 Simple objects are not perceivable

In fact, discussions aiming to ascertain whether Tractarian objects are material or phenomenal are misguided from the start, because they begin with the assumption that Tractarian objects are perceivable.® Realists about Tractarian objects argue that, according to Wittgenstein, we perceive material things directly and that Tractarian objects are therefore directly perceivable material points. In turn, sense-data phenomenalists about simples hold that only directly perceivable, strongly private sense-impressions exist and that Tractarian objects are simple units of sense-data. Finally, Neutral Monists about objects argue that the mental and the physical do not constitute two separate substances but are instead two different modes of perceiving or experiencing. Tractarian objects are then presented as directly perceivable units of this ‘pure experience’.

There is, however, no good reason to accept the view that objects are meant to be perceivable in the Tractatus. There is indeed no conclusive textual evidence to suggest that, according to Wittgenstein, we become acquainted with or gain knowledge of objects by perceiving them. Consider what Wittgenstein says on this issue in the following entry:

If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties. (TLP 2.01231)

It is clear that there is no obvious reason why we should take this remark to imply that we gain knowledge of objects via perceptual acquaintance. (We will begin examining the issue of how we gain knowledge of objects, and the notions of the internal and external properties of objects at the end of this Part.) Note also how uncomfortably the view that objects are perceivable (i.e. can be given to us in perception) sits with Wittgenstein’s claim that:

If objects are given, then at the same time we are given all objects. (TLP 5.524)

As Sullivan argues, it is hard to see how this could be the case if objects were given to us in perception.® For there is no obvious reason why being perceptually acquainted with one object should entail that we are acquainted (let alone perceptually acquainted) with all other objects.

® This assumption is also made by Hacker, and will play a crucial role in his account of the Tractarian connection between language and reality. See Hacker (1986) pp. 73 – 80. We will consider Hacker’s interpretation of this connection in Part VI.

Admittedly, these points do not provide irrefutable evidence against the view that Tractarian objects can be perceived. It may indeed be possible to put forward arguments which render these entries compatible with such a view. However, the claim that Tractarian simples are perceivable becomes increasingly untenable when we consider the issue of the logical independence constraint. As noted above, according to the *Tractatus*, objects must be capable of producing, by combining exclusively with each other, states of affairs which are logically independent of each other (*TLP* 2.061 and *TLP* 2.062). In the case of language, this means that Tractarian names must be able to produce elementary propositions which are also logically independent of each other (*TLP* 4.211, *TLP* 6.3751, *TLP* 5.134).

In order to show that the logical independence constraint entails that objects are not perceivable, let us consider again the notion of a material property. Material properties are mentioned once in the *Tractatus*, in *TLP* 2.0231. There is no reason to suppose that Wittgenstein understood by this expression anything other than is traditionally understood by it: material properties are those properties which render particulars qualified, such as the property of *being red*, the property of *being solid*, etc. Indeed, *TLP* 2.0231 is immediately followed by *TLP* 2.0232, which refers to the issue of colour. Now, a feature of at least some material properties, which wasn't noted above, is that these are also the properties which enable us to perceive the world. When we perceive an apple, for instance, we perceive (via the sense of sight) that it is *this* particular colour, we perceive (via the sense of smell) that it has *this* particular smell, we perceive (via the sense of touch) that it is solid, etc. These material properties are the ones which enable us to perceive the apple: without them, there would be no perceiving the apple. For the sake of clarity, let us call those material properties which render perception possible 'perceptual properties'.

Perceptual properties do not satisfy the logical independence constraint: if something is *this* colour all over, then it cannot be *that* other colour all over; if something has *this* smell all over, then it cannot have *that* other smell all over; if something is solid throughout, then it cannot be liquid or gaseous throughout, etc.

As a result, Tractarian objects can neither possess nor be perceptual properties. If they did or were, their combinations would not yield logically independent states of affairs. And perceptual properties cannot arise in states of affairs either: a state of affairs cannot consist of the instantiation of a perceptual property, since, if it did, it would no longer be logically independent of other states of affairs (*TLP* 2.06, *TLP* 2.062, *TLP* 4.211, *TLP* 6.3751 and *TLP* 5.134). This point is red all
over cannot be a state of affairs, any more than redness can be a Tractarian object.

Since perceptual properties are those properties which render perception possible, and since they arise neither in objects nor in states of affairs, neither objects nor states of affairs can be said to be perceivable. We do not perceive Tractarian objects directly, nor do we perceive them ‘indirectly’, by means of a perceptual acquaintance with states of affairs. The states of the world which are perceivable (i.e. those which do consist of the instantiation of some perceptual properties), must therefore be located at a higher level of complexity: only possible situations of the world, non-elementary facts and complex objects which do not consist in the obtaining of one and only one state of affairs can possibly be perceived, given the logical independence constraint.

The view that simple objects are not perceivable is indeed supported by Wittgenstein’s claim that:

Whatever we see could be other than it is. (TLP 5.634)

In order for something to be perceivable, it must be capable of altering, of being ‘other’ than it is. In other words, it must be composite, since simple objects are unalterable and subsistent (TLP 2.0271). This is further supported by the following entry:

It is only by means of propositions that material properties are represented – only by the configuration of objects that they are produced. (TLP 2.0231)

Material properties arise only in configurations of objects (i.e. in possible states of the world): they are not properties of Tractarian objects, since Tractarian objects are simple and not therefore, themselves, configurations of objects. Note that TLP 2.0231 is not incompatible with the view that those material properties which render perception possible (namely perceptual properties) can only be represented in non-elementary propositions. Indeed, saying that everything perceivable is composite (TLP 5.634) is not the same as saying that everything composite is perceivable: a single state of affairs, though composite, is not perceivable, since, if it were, it would violate the logical independence constraint (TLP 2.06, TLP 2.062, TLP 4.211, TLP 6.3751 and TLP 5.134).

Perceptual properties must arise only at the level of possible situations of the world, which, of course, are also, ultimately, configurations of objects.

The view that objects cannot be known by perceptual acquaintance emerges also in the Notebooks:
Even though we have no acquaintance with simple objects we do know complex objects by acquaintance, we know by acquaintance that they are complex. (NB 24.5.15) [My italics in the first instance.]

Indeed, this partly explains a Tractatus' entry which has hitherto been poorly explained in the literature:

In a manner of speaking, objects are colourless. (TLP 2.0232)

Tractarian objects are colourless because they subsist at a level in which perceptual properties (such as colour ones) cannot arise. If perceptual properties did feature at this level, the logical independence constraint could not be satisfied.

3.4 What remains of the metaphysical debate

The view that this metaphysical debate about Tractarian objects is misguided does not necessarily entail that Wittgenstein holds no metaphysical views whatsoever. For whilst it is mistaken to discuss whether simple objects are material or phenomenal, it may not be mistaken to discuss whether possible situations of the world (which are perceivable) are material or phenomenal. Whether they are material or phenomenal, and whether it even makes sense to ask this question in the Tractarian context, is not, however, something that can be settled at this stage. All we know, at this stage, is that both material and phenomenal points (which, as shown above, are not simples) are mentioned in the Tractatus and the Notebooks. If the question of the metaphysical status of possible situations of the world and complexes can be settled, it will only be possible to do so once we have considered Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism, in Part VII. In the meantime, and in order not to beg the question, we will take 'the world', 'perception' and 'experience' to be metaphysically neutral terms.

4 The ontological status of Tractarian objects

Participants in the debate about the ontological status of Tractarian objects have focused on the question of whether objects are particulars or universals. As noted above, the main reason for considering only these two ontological categories is that Wittgenstein restricts himself to them when discussing the issue. This doesn't mean that Wittgenstein was right to consider only particulars, properties and relations when thinking about the ontological status of simples, nor that the
objects of the *Tractatus* must be assigned to these categories. Nevertheless, since there is no textual evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein ever considered anything other than particulars and universals, it is understandable that authors have confined themselves to these categories, when attempting to draw an exegesis of the *Tractatus*.

The problem is, however, that it is highly unclear that exegeses of Wittgenstein's views on this subject are justified. For it isn't certain that Wittgenstein had, when he wrote the *Tractatus*, a clear view of the ontology of objects. He certainly considered the issue in the *Notebooks*. But the *Notebooks* are a preliminary work, in which Wittgenstein sometimes sketches thoughts which he abandons in the final drafting of the *Tractatus*. The fact that no references are made, in the *Tractatus*, to the ontological status of objects shows, at the very least, that Wittgenstein did not consider clarifying their status as essential to his Tractarian project.

Indeed, Wittgenstein gives no genuine examples of objects in the *Tractatus*. He doesn't need to give any, since his interest, as a logician, is to show what must be the case, *a priori*, in order for senseful language to be possible. The constraints imposed on objects (simplicity, unalterability, etc.), which are the focus of the *Tractatus*’ discussion of objects, are established *a priori* and can be spelt out without the need for examples of genuine simples. But the reason why the *Tractatus* fails to provide examples of objects isn't just that Wittgenstein doesn't need these in order to carry out his project. There is also strong textual evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein didn't actually *know* any instances of objects when he wrote the *Tractatus*. The view that Wittgenstein knew no instances of objects, and didn't regard this as a problem, is, for instance, corroborated by Norman Malcolm. When Norman Malcolm asked Wittgenstein, many years after writing the *Tractatus*, what he would have, at the time, regarded as an example of a Tractarian object, Wittgenstein replied to him that, at the time, he thought:

> that he was a logician; and that it was not his business, as a logician, to try to decide whether this thing or that was a simple thing or a complex thing, that being a purely empirical matter.

We must consider also the following entries from the *Tractatus*:

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As was shown above the phenomenal and material points mentioned by Wittgenstein cannot be regarded as examples of genuine simples. Wittgenstein must have been using them as explanatory crutches, in the absence of any genuine instances of objects.

Elementary propositions consist of names. Since, however, we are unable to give the number of names with different meanings, we are also unable to give the composition of elementary propositions. (TLP 5.55)

Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is – just as people speak without knowing how the individual sounds are produced. (TLP 4.002) [My italics]

These entries suggest that neither Wittgenstein nor ordinary language users know instances of Tractarian names or of objects (the meanings of names). Indeed, Wittgenstein admits in the Notebooks that he has never carried out a full analysis of language, and that he cannot, therefore, be said to know any instances of elementary propositions or of Tractarian names:

My difficulty surely consists in this: In all the propositions that occur to me there occur names, which, however, must disappear on further analysis. I know that such a further analysis is possible, but I am unable to carry it out completely. In spite of this, I certainly seem to know that if the analysis were completely carried out, its result would have to be a proposition which once more contained names, relations, etc. In brief it looks as if in this way I knew a form without being acquainted with any single example of it. (NB 16.6.15)

(This corroborates further the view that objects cannot be perceived. For, if objects were accessible to us via perceptual acquaintance, it is unclear why a complete analysis of language should be necessary in order to give instances of objects or gain knowledge of simples.) Note also that, whenever Wittgenstein speaks of knowing objects, he uses the conditional:

If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs. (Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object.)
A new possibility cannot be discovered later. (TLP 2.0123)

If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties. (TLP 2.01231)

These entries are therefore fully compatible with the idea that Wittgenstein didn’t know any instances of objects when he wrote the Tractatus. In such a case, Wittgenstein would be providing us here, not with the method which has actually enabled him to gain knowledge of objects, but with the method one would need to use in order to gain such knowledge, were one in the position to gain it (i.e. had a full analysis of language been completed).

The fact that Wittgenstein didn’t know any instances of Tractarian objects and the fact that he gives no examples of simples in the Tractatus do not, per se, show that he was agnostic on the ontological issue. It certainly doesn’t show that he had no views whatsoever as to which ontological types (i.e. particulars and universals; tropes; etc.) he would consider, were he in the position to
draw such an ontology of objects. He may well have felt, however, that the ontological status of
objects could not be resolved until a full analysis of language was completed. Be this as it may,
the fact that he refrains from discussing this issue in the *Tractatus* shows, at the very least, that
he didn't regard it as essential to his Tractarian project.

### 4.1 An ontological model for Tractarian objects

If it were true (as it certainly could be) that Wittgenstein didn't have a clear view of the ontology
of objects when he wrote the *Tractatus*, then any exegeses concerning the ontological status of
simples would be unjustified. In the absence of conclusive evidence on this issue, it is impossible
to resolve this doubt. Nevertheless, it is useful to consider the question of what ontological
categories would fit the constraints laid down for simples in the *Tractatus*. I will therefore put
forward a model which provides answers to some of the questions raised in the literature, and
which helps us gain a more comprehensive insight into the possible nature of simples. This
model will also serve to illustrate, in later parts of the thesis, points which would otherwise
remain unnecessarily abstract. However, it is important to remember that this model isn't presented
as an exegesis of Wittgenstein's thinking. It may well never have been contemplated by Wittgenstein.
For the sake of clarity, let us call this the Ontological Model.

Anscombe and Copi, amongst others, argue that, according to Wittgenstein, only bare particulars
(i.e. particulars with internal or formal properties, but no material ones) can be objects. In
contrast, Hacker and the Hintikkas claim that properties and relations too are Tractarian objects.
Given the word limit constraint and the difficulties sketched above, I will forgo a discussion of
these exegetical pieces. However, like other commentators, I will confine myself to the ontological
categories (particulars, properties and relations) mentioned by Wittgenstein in the *Notebooks*
and in his later remarks about Tractarian objects.

#### 4.1.1 Qualified and absolutely bare particulars

Tractarian objects cannot be qualified particulars. A qualified particular is a particular possessing
both internal and material properties. The simplest type of qualified particulars there can be are

---

therefore points possessing a material property at a particular time. Such particulars fail however to meet the necessity and unalterability constraints. They fail to meet the necessity constraint because there is no reason why any given material property should be instantiated at a particular point, at a particular time, in all possible worlds. And they fail to meet the unalterability constraint because qualified particulars possess material properties, and that such properties arise in configurations of objects \((TLP \ 2.0231)\), which are, by their very nature, capable of altering. Finally, those qualified particulars which consist in the instantiation of a perceptual property will also fail to meet the logical independence constraint.

Tractarian objects cannot be absolutely bare particulars either. Absolutely bare particulars possess no properties whatsoever, whereas Wittgenstein tells us explicitly that simples possess at the very least internal properties:

\[
\text{If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties. (TLP 2.0231)}
\]

\[
\text{In a certain sense we can talk about formal properties of objects (TLP 4.122)}
\]

\[
\text{A property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object should not possess it. (TLP 4.123)}
\]

(As was noted above, we will explore the notions of the external and internal properties of objects at the end of this Part.)

### 4.1.2 Bare particulars

Bare particulars possess internal or formal properties but no material ones. As examples of bare particulars we can think of the simple spatial locations which are in geometry denoted by coordinates on axes, and which help to specify points in three-dimensional space. These simple spatial locations are best understood as theoretical planes in space: consider three mutually perpendicular axes, one being vertical \((y)\), and the two others horizontal and at right angles to each other \((x \text{ and } z)\). The three planes defined, respectively, by \(y\) and \(x\), \(y\) and \(z\), and \(x\) and \(z\) will specify the point of origin \((0 \ 0 \ 0)\). In turn, there is an infinite number of planes parallel to each of these three planes. Any set of three planes parallel to those described above will specify a new point in three-dimensional space.\(^2\)

\[^2\] Note, however, that there is a difficulty with this idea, for the choice of the set of three planes which specify the point of origin \((0 \ 0 \ 0)\) is arbitrary.
If simple locations were Tractarian objects, the simple names designating these objects would be coordinates on the $x$, $y$ and $z$ axes. Three simple spatial locations would thus combine together to produce a particular point in three-dimensional space, a point which should then be considered to be complex, since it would be analysable into three simple objects (i.e. the three simple locations which pinpoint it).

![3D coordinate system with point A at (1,1,1)](image)

In this example, the coordinates $1_x$, $1_y$, and $1_z$ would be three Tractarian names, combining together to produce the complex name ‘A’, that is the point on the graphic whose coordinates are (1; 1; 1). ‘A’ would thus designate a complex object, point A in three-dimensional space, specified by the concatenation of three simple spatial locations, designated respectively by $1_x$, $1_y$, and $1_z$.

These simple spatial locations would thus be the Tractarian objects whose form is ‘space’ (*TLP* 2.0251): they would be those simples capable of producing three-dimensional space by combining with each other. In turn, simple points in time, designated by temporal coordinates, would be the objects whose form is ‘time’ (*TLP* 2.0251): they would be those objects capable of yielding, by combining with other objects, the temporal aspect of reality.

Both of these types of bare particulars (simple locations in space and simple points in time) meet the constraints laid down by Wittgenstein for simples. They belong to all possible worlds, since,
according to Wittgenstein, all such worlds must include the possibility of space and time, space and time being forms of objects \(TLP\ 2.0251\). They are unalterable, since they do not consist in the fact that a material property is instantiated at a particular point in space at a particular time. They also possess internal properties which, by definition, they could not possibly lack. The internal properties of a simple spatial location consist in its ability to combine with two other such locations to specify a point in three-dimensional space, whilst the internal properties of a simple temporal point consist in its capacity to mark the passing of time by standing in a particular relation to other simple temporal points on a time axis. Bare particulars are suited to forming logically independent states of affairs, since this point in three-dimensional space (i.e. the point specified by three simple spatial locations), and this point in time do not entail or render anything else impossible.

Finally, bare particulars are not purely formal. Whether one of these particulars or the other is mentioned in a proposition may affect the truth value of the proposition. For instance, whilst it might be true that ‘The glass of wine is full at time \(t_1\)’, it might be false that ‘The glass of wine is full at time \(t_2\)’. Thus, even though \(t_1\) and \(t_2\) have the same form (i.e. they are both used in propositions to specify a point in time), they differ in content. Similarly, whilst it might be true that ‘at \(t_1\), the point specified by \((1, 1, 1)\) is red’, it might be false that ‘at \(t_2\), the point specified by \((2, 7, 4)\) is red’: the latter point may, for instance, happen to be green. (Note, however, that neither of these propositions would be elementary, since ‘red’ does not meet the logical independence constraint.)

### 4.1.3 Properties

Although bare particulars are suitable candidates for objects, not all objects could be bare particulars. For objects are meant to be capable of producing, by combining exclusively with each other, the reality we experience in our everyday lives.

Ordinary reality features material properties: the property of being red, the property of being solid, etc. And, as noted above, Wittgenstein tells us that objects are capable of producing these properties by combining exclusively with each other (‘like the links of a chain’ – \(TLP\ 2.0272\):

> For it is only by means of propositions that material properties are represented – only by the configuration of objects that they are produced. \(TLP\ 2.0231\)
Spatial and temporal bare particulars couldn't, however, give rise to material properties by combining exclusively with each other. A material property does not 'magically' arise from the combination of three simple spatial locations and a simple point in time.\(^\text{9}\) It must be produced by the combination of other, simpler properties. Simple properties capable of combining with each other to produce material properties would therefore have to be included in the 'list' of Tractarian objects. Some of them would be the objects whose 'form' is 'colour (being coloured)' (\(TLP\) 2.0251).

Hence, assuming that simple properties meet the logical independence constraint and are capable of producing, by combining with each other, material properties, simple properties would have to be regarded as candidates for objects, alongside bare particulars. Indeed, according to Wittgenstein, all properties (even material ones) meet the unalterability and necessity constraints:

> Something red can be destroyed, but red cannot be destroyed, and this is why the meaning of the word 'red' is independent of the existence of a red thing. (\(PI\) \(\S57, \S58\)),

Redness itself cannot be destroyed (even if the fact that it is instantiated at a specific point at a particular time can), and there is no reason to suppose that it shouldn't belong to all possible worlds as a possibility. Finally, the simple properties which combine with each other to produce material properties, would have a distinct form and content, just like the material ones they would help to produce.

4.1.4 Relations

It is unclear that it would be necessary to include relations in our Ontological Model. Bare particulars and properties are certainly capable of producing, by combining exclusively with each other, the spatial and temporal relations which feature in ordinary reality. The possibility of spatial and temporal relations is inherent in the objects designated by spatial and temporal coordinates. If I know, for instance, that the coordinates of A are (1; 1; 1) and that the coordinates of B are (2; 2; 2), then I automatically know that B is to the right of A, above A, and behind A.

---

\(^9\) This seems to be the assumption behind the coordinates model presented by Carruthers. I cannot see, however, how such an assumption could be justified. See Carruthers (1990) ch. 14.
These spatial relations are already built into the simple spatial locations which fix points \(A\) and \(B\). That this is the case is shown by the coordinates designating them: the fact that \(A_x\) (i.e. '1') is smaller than \(B_x\) (i.e. '2') shows that \(A\) is to the left of \(B\), the fact that \(A_y\) is smaller than \(B_y\) shows that \(B\) is above \(A\), etc. And the same is the case for simple points in time: the fact that the coordinate on the time axis for a simple point in time is smaller than the coordinate on the time axis for another simple point in time shows that the former point in time comes earlier than the latter, etc. These bare particulars therefore have inherent in them the possibility of yielding spatial and temporal relations.

Our Model would only need to posit that certain objects are relations if reality featured other relations (i.e. not spatial and temporal ones) which couldn't be accounted for by referring exclusively to bare particulars and simple properties. It is, however, impossible to settle this issue without carrying out a full analysis of language. This indeed explains why Wittgenstein didn't feel that he could be more precise on the issue of the ontological status of simples in the Tractatus. For the sake of simplicity, our Model will assume that no Tractarian objects are relations.

4.2 The analysis of possible states of the world

It is interesting to consider how, according to this Model, the analysis of a possible situation of
the world would unfold. Consider the possible situation of the world that *this red apple has been on the brown table from ten to noon*. The red apple is a complex object, which can be decomposed into points of apple stuff, some of which are red (i.e. the points on the skin of the apple) and some of which will be white (i.e. the points of apple flesh, below the skin). Consider how one of these points would be analysed:

*This point of apple stuff was red from ten to noon* is equivalent to:

The property of *redness* and the property of *being made out of apple stuff* were instantiated at *this point in three-dimensional space from ten to noon*.

Let us assume that:

i The property of *redness* is made up of two simple properties, *b* and *q*, which meet the logical independence constraint.\(^7\)

ii The property of *being made out of apple stuff* is made up of two simple properties, *c* and *m*, which meet the logical independence constraint.\(^5\)

iii *This point in three-dimensional space* is made up of the three simple spatial locations \(t_2, 5, 11_z\).

iv *From ten to noon* decomposes into: \(t_{10}, t_{20}, \text{ etc.} \ldots t_{150}\)

The possible state of the world *this point of apple stuff was red from ten to noon* would therefore be the logical product of the states of affairs presented below in brackets:

\[
(12_z, 5, 11_z b t_{12}) (12_z, 5, 11_z q t_{12}) (12_z, 5, 11_z c t_{12}) (12_z, 5, 11_z m t_{12}) \ldots, \text{ etc.}
\]

\[
(12_z, 5, 11_b t_{150}) (12_z, 5, 11_q t_{150}) (12_z, 5, 11_c t_{150}) (12_z, 5, 11_m t_{150})
\]

Thus, the proposition ‘this point of apple stuff was red from ten to noon’ would be analysed into the logical product of the following elementary propositions:

\(^7\) In fact, the analysis of *redness* would be a much more complex one, but I will ignore this for the sake of the simplicity and clarity of this example.

\(^5\) As above.
The same would be the case for every red or white point of apple stuff and for every brown point of table stuff. The complete analysis of the ordinary level proposition 'this red apple has been on the table from ten to noon' would thus yield a logical product of elementary propositions. The spatial coordinates in the elementary propositions describing the apple and the table would reflect the fact that the apple was on top of the table at this time. Thus, all coordinates on the $y$ axis designating points of apple stuff would be larger than the coordinates on the $y$ axis designating points of table stuff.

### 4.3 Elementary propositions and states of affairs

One of the reasons why it is doubtful that Wittgenstein had a clear ontology of objects in mind when he wrote the *Tractatus* is that, if he had, he would have been able to be much more precise about the general composition of elementary propositions and states of affairs. Consider, for instance, what becomes of elementary propositions if one uses our current Model. Given this Model, the generalised form of an elementary proposition would be 'a simple property is instantiated at a point in three-dimensional space fixed by three simple spatial locations at a simple point in time'. This generalised form could be expressed by means of the function $'xyzp\,t'$, where 'x' is a variable to be filled in with a coordinate from the $x$ axis, 'y' is a variable to be filled in with a coordinate from the $y$ axis, 'z' is a variable to be filled in with a coordinate from the $z$ axis, 'p' is a variable to be filled in with the name for a simple property, and 't' is a variable to be filled in with a temporal coordinate. All Tractarian simple names would be possible arguments of this function.

Similarly, the generalised form of states of affairs would be *a simple property is instantiated at a point in three-dimensional space fixed by three simple spatial locations at a simple point in time*. The fact that Wittgenstein at no point gives this specification suggests that he hadn't made up his mind about the ontology of objects when he wrote the *Tractatus* (cf. *TLP* 5.526 and *TLP* 5.5261).

### 4.4 Internal and external properties

It is useful to clarify at this point Wittgenstein's notion of the internal and external properties of
an object. The best way to approach this issue is to consider again the idea of the form of an object.

The possibility of its occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object. *(TLP 2.0141)*

If two objects have the same logical form, the only distinction between them, apart from their external properties, is that they are different. *(TLP 2.0233)*

As we saw in part III, two objects can have the same form, and yet be different. The form of the object is a matter of the object falling under a particular formal concept.

When something falls under a formal concept as one of its objects, this cannot be expressed by means of a proposition. Instead it is shown in the very sign for this object. (A name shows that it signifies an object, a sign for a number that it signifies a number, etc.)

Formal concepts cannot, in fact, be represented by means of a function, as concepts proper can. [...]

The expression for a formal property is a feature of certain symbols.

So the sign for the characteristics of a formal concept is a distinctive feature of all symbols whose meanings fall under the concept.

So the expression for a formal concept is a propositional variable in which this distinctive feature alone is constant. *(TLP 4.126)*

It is now possible to use the Ontological Model presented above in order to clarify this issue further. If there were simple properties, as our Model suggests, then, according to our Model, they would fall under the following formal concept: a simple property is that which is capable of serving as an argument for *p* in the fully generalised form of elementary propositions (*p*, *x*, *y*, *z*, *t*). In other words, the form of a simple property would, given this Model, be its ability to combine with three simple spatial locations and a simple point in time so as to produce a state of affairs complying with the fully generalised form: property *p* is instantiated at the point in three-dimensional space fixed by three simple spatial locations *x* *y* *z* at time *t*.* This would be the simple property's form, the 'possibility of its occurring in states of affairs' *(TLP 2.0141)*.

That an object possesses a particular form is not however something that can be expressed by means of senseful propositions, since statements to this effect would not be bivalent and bipolar. Since objects are necessary, if an object possesses a particular form, it will possess it in all possible worlds, whereas, if it doesn't, it won't in any possible world. A statement to the effect that an object possesses this particular form would thus be either true in all possible worlds or false in all possible worlds, and could not be a genuine proposition. The fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that an object has a specific form is not asserted by means of propositions, but shows itself in the type of signs that we use to designate it. Thus, for instance, ‘(Ex, 0). 0 x’ shows that 0 is a property (cf. *TLP 5.5261).*
The form of a simple property does not however pick out any simple properties in particular. It cannot pick out their content, which is distinct from their form. And to know an object cannot be just to know its form. We cannot know an object if we only know the logical place it will occupy in states of affairs. Knowing an object must also involve knowing its content, which is distinct from its form. Consider the example of redness which, in spite of not being a Tractarian object, serves to illustrate this point (since it possesses a distinct form and content, as we saw in Part II): to ‘know’ redness cannot exclusively consist in knowing that redness is a property, or even in knowing that it is a colour property. It must involve knowing that it is a particular colour property, a colour property possessing a particular content which is different, for instance, from that of greenness. Indeed, although a colour-blind person could grasp the idea that redness is a colour property, she or he, being unable to distinguish between redness and greenness, would be unable to grasp the content of redness. A colour-blind person could not therefore be said to genuinely know redness: in order to know redness, it is imperative to know both its form and its content, and this remains true of all things possessing a distinct form and content. Hence, to know a simple object must involve knowing both the form and the content of this object.

If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs.
(If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties. (TLP 2.0123))

A new possibility cannot be discovered later. (TLP 2.0123)

If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs.
(If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties. (TLP 2.0123))

Given Wittgenstein’s numbering system, to know ‘all its possible occurrences in states of affairs’ (TLP 2.0123) is to ‘know all its internal properties’ (TLP 2.01231). Since knowing an object consists in knowing all of its internal properties, and since knowing an object involves knowing both its form and its content, the internal properties of an object will encompass both the form and the content of the object. Hence, the internal properties of an object aren’t simply its form (i.e. ‘the possibility of its occurring in states of affairs’ — TLP 2.0141).

The content of a simple object, like the content of redness, is not, however, something which can be picked out by means of a definition or a description. I cannot convey to a colour-blind person, by means of a definition, what distinguishes redness from greenness. Furthermore, it is impossible to describe a simple object if by ‘describing it’ we mean decomposing it into simpler components. For the ‘elements’ that ‘constitute’ a simple object (i.e. its form and its content) are not themselves genuine objects and cannot be named or mentioned in propositions. In any case, attempting to
describe a simple object by saying that it is this particular form together with that particular content would be as unhelpful as attempting to describe redness by saying that redness has the form of colour properties and the content of redness: either I already know what redness is, in which case I do not need to be given a definition of redness, or I don’t, in which case being given this definition is of no use to me.

It is impossible, however, to assert by means of propositions that such internal properties [...] obtain. (TLP 4.122)

In the case of perceptual properties, such as redness, knowing the content of a property involves being perceptually acquainted with particular instantiations of this property: only those having seen red things, and having noted the distinction between, for instance, red things and green ones can be said to know redness and greenness. This is indeed how redness and greenness are individuated. This cannot apply to Tractarian simples, however, since, as was shown above, simple objects cannot be perceived. If the individuation of simple objects is to be possible, it is therefore going to involve something other than perception. In the following entry, Wittgenstein begins to explain how this can be achieved:

Individuating a simple object involves noting that it is the object which helps to produce these particular states of affairs, represented by these particular elementary propositions, and that, when these states of affairs combine with those other states of affairs, they produce these possible situations of the world. In other words, we can individuate a simple object by noting the possible states of the world that it can help to produce.

Having established this, we can consider the following entry:

A description of an object describes it by giving its external properties (TLP 4.023)

It is clear that ‘description’ cannot mean here an analysis into even simpler objects, since no such analysis can be made of Tractarian objects. So, what exactly does ‘description’ mean in this context? In order to understand this, we need to clarify what Wittgenstein means by the ‘external properties’ of an object. We know that the external properties of objects cannot be perceptual properties, since, if objects possessed perceptual properties, they would fail to meet the logical independence constraint. We can also deduce that, since the internal properties of an object are
those properties that it cannot possibly lack, its external properties must be those properties that the object can, possibly, lack. The internal properties of an object are the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that the object can help to produce certain facts, facts which may happen not to obtain in reality. In other words, the internal properties of an object are the object's capacity to produce certain facts, a capacity which may or may not be realised in reality, since these facts may happen not to obtain. In turn, the external properties of an object consist in the instantiation of some of its internal properties. In other words, when some of the facts that the object is capable of producing happen to obtain, the object is said to have acquired certain external properties. It is easy to see why the object's external properties are, unlike its internal ones, properties that the object could lack. Consider again the internal properties of an object. If an object is capable of producing certain facts (i.e. if it possesses such-and-such internal properties), then it cannot not be capable of producing them: the object will, in all possible worlds, be capable of producing these facts, which is to say that the object will never lack its internal properties. In contrast, it isn't necessary to the object that the facts which it is capable of producing should obtain: the external properties of objects are therefore those properties the object can happen to lack. As a result, *TLP* 4.023 must be taken as saying that an object can be ‘described’ by noting what obtaining facts it has helped to produce.

It isn't therefore the case, as Canfield argues, that the *Tractatus* denies in *TLP* 2.02331 the principle of the identity of indiscernibles: *

Either a thing has properties that nothing else has, in which case we can immediately use a description to distinguish it from the others and refer to it; or, on the other hand, there are several things that have the whole set of their properties in common, in which case it is quite impossible to indicate one of them.

For if there is nothing to distinguish a thing, I cannot distinguish it, since otherwise it would be distinguished after all. (*TLP* 2.02331)

Wittgenstein is not suggesting here that Tractarian objects cannot be distinguished from each other because they cannot be described. On the contrary, *TLP* 4.122 and *TLP* 4.023 show that simples can be individuated and described. It is just that descriptions of simples will be radically different from descriptions of facts, complex objects and possible states of the world: they will not be descriptions decomposing these objects into ‘elements’ and specifying how these ‘elements’ are arranged. No such description of Tractarian objects could be given, since it would require being able to name ‘form’ and ‘content’, which are not themselves objects and cannot therefore

* See Canfield (1986 a) p. 358.
be named.

In a nutshell: *individuating* and *describing* an object can be achieved either by making its internal properties manifest (i.e. by noting that the object is capable of producing such and such facts), or by making its external properties manifest (i.e. by noting which obtaining facts the object has helped to produce). In contrast, in order to genuinely *know* an object, we need to know all of its internal properties, but we do not need to know any of its external ones:

> If I am to know an object, though I need not know its external properties, I must know all its internal properties. (*TLP* 2.01231)

In other words, in order to know an object, I need not know all of the facts the object is capable of helping to produce, but I need not know which of these facts actually obtain.

This helps to clarify an entry of the *Tractatus* which has until now remained poorly explained in the literature:

> If all objects are given, then at the same time all possible states of affairs are also given. (*TLP* 2.0124)

If an object is given to me, if I know an object, I know all of its internal properties, all of the possible states of affairs that it helps to produce. Hence, if all objects were given to me, I would know all of the internal properties of all objects, in other words all of the possible states of affairs that each and every one of these objects helps to produce. I would thus know all states of affairs and, thereby, also all possible situations of the world. Which is why:

> Objects contain the possibility of all situations. (*TLP* 2.014)

However, since objects produce states of affairs by combining with each other, knowing all of the states of affairs that an object can and cannot help to produce entails knowing all of the states of affairs that other objects can and cannot help to produce. Knowing an object therefore entails knowing all of the internal properties of other objects, which is the same as knowing these other objects:

> If objects are given, then at the same time we are given all objects. (*TLP* 5.524)

If I genuinely know an object, I automatically know all other objects.

Note Wittgenstein's use of the conditional in all of these remarks. For, as discussed above, not
even he could be said to know (or to have been ‘given’) any particular instances of Tractarian objects (see again NB 16.6.15). Wittgenstein didn’t feel that it was possible to know any instances of objects without having carried out a full analysis of language. Thus, his point in these remarks is not that we actually know objects, and that we thereby actually know all objects, all states of affairs, etc. The idea is rather that, if a full analysis of language was one day carried out, so that we could come to know simple objects, then knowing one object would entail knowing all other objects and all states of affairs. We will be returning to the issue of what is involved in ‘knowing’ a simple object in Parts VI and VII.

5 Conclusion

This Part leaves us with several key conclusions. Firstly, Tractarian objects are neither phenomenal nor material. Indeed, objects and states of affairs cannot be perceived: perceptual properties (those material properties which render perception possible) arise only at the level of possible situations of the world. Secondly, it is unclear that Wittgenstein had a clear view of the ontology of objects, when he wrote the Tractatus. We have, nevertheless, constructed a non-exegetical model for the ontology of objects, which takes objects to be simple properties and bare particulars. This model will be used in the rest of the thesis to illustrate points which would otherwise remain unnecessarily abstract, but these points will not be dependent on the choice of the model.
Part V: A definite direction of determination

1 introduction

Since Tractarian objects possess a distinct form and content, the account of the meaning of simple names advanced by Ishiguro and McGuinness cannot be correct. We therefore need to re-examine Wittgenstein's views as to what it is for a simple sign to have a meaning. Once this is done, and given that we now have a clearer grasp of the nature of Tractarian objects, we will be able to advance an account of Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of the proposition. This examination of the *Tractatus*' views on language will enable us to ascertain that Wittgenstein posits a definite direction of determination from objects to language and indeed to all forms of representation. Establishing this is important because, as we will see in Part VI, thinking is, according to Wittgenstein, a form of representation: mental representation.

Note that, although this Part of the thesis examines what it is for a simple name to have a meaning and what it is for a proposition to have a sense, it will not settle the question of *by virtue of what* names have meaning and propositions sense. In other words, we will not be exploring here the issue of what effects the connection between language and the world, according to the *Tractatus*. This question can only be addressed in Part VI, when we have gained a clearer understanding of Wittgenstein's views on thought and the mind.

Finally: at several points in this Part I will use, for illustrative purposes, the Ontological Model presented in Part IV. It is worth mentioning again, however, that this Model isn't presented as an exegesis of Wittgenstein's thinking. The validity of the points illustrated in this way will not, however, be affected by the choice of this Model.

2 The meaning and simplicity of names

In this section I propose to show that the meaning of Tractarian names consists of a use and a reference which are irreducible to each other, but which can nevertheless not be separated. The use of a name is determined by the form of the object that is its meaning, whilst its reference is the content of that object. This point has until now been overlooked in the literature, in spite of
the fact that it is the key to understanding the *Tractatus'* account of language and to fully appreciating its originality.\(^7\)

In what follows, I will make use of the distinction between a sign (e.g. a mark written on a piece of paper) and a genuine Tractarian name. Similarly, we will, in the following section, be drawing a distinction between the propositional sign (e.g. a series of marks written on a piece of paper) and the proposition proper.

### 2.1 The meaning of Tractarian names: use and reference

Tractarian names act as the representatives of simple objects (*TLP* 3.22) and objects are their meanings (*TLP* 3.203 and *TLP* 3.22). As was shown in Part III, objects have a form and a content which are irreducible to each other, but which can nevertheless not be separated: the form and content of an object make up the internal properties of this object, namely those properties that the object cannot possibly lack. This is required by the double role that Wittgenstein imposes on Tractarian objects: objects must both be capable of combining with each other to produce the reality we experience in our everyday lives (which features space, time and material properties) and be such as to allow senseful language to be possible. For objects to be able to produce material properties by combining with each other, they must, like material properties, possess a distinct form and content. In turn, since objects must be simple for senseful language to be possible, form and content, on their own, cannot be regarded as Tractarian objects: form-less 'objects' and content-less 'objects' are not genuine Tractarian objects. 'Pure content' and 'pure form' cannot therefore provide the meaning of simple names. As a result, objects must possess a form and a content which, though distinct, cannot be separated, if they are to be genuine Tractarian simples.

For a Tractarian name to stand as the representative of a simple object (and thereby have this object as its meaning), it must be able to reflect the fact that the object it designates has distinct, though inseparable, form and content. This is made possible by the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that simple names have a use and a reference which, though distinct, are inseparable from each other.

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We know that the form of an object is given by the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that the object falls under a specific formal concept. Let us illustrate this point again by using the Ontological Model presented in Part IV. According to this Model, an object falling under the formal concept of a simple property would be one capable of serving as the argument replacing the simple property variable $p$ in the fully generalised state of affairs $(x \, y \, z \, p \, t_1)$. Hence, in order for a simple sign to be the genuine representative of a simple property, it would have to be capable of serving as the argument replacing the variable $p$ in the fully generalised proposition ‘$x \, y \, z \, p \, t_1$’. To say this, however, is just to say that that which allows a simple name to reflect the form of the object it designates is its use, or, more precisely, the set of criteria for the correct use of this name: the name for a simple property must be used in such a way as to reflect the form of the object it designates (which is the form of all simple properties). It must therefore combine with three spatial coordinates and a simple point in time in order to produce an elementary proposition which complies with the fully generalised form of elementary propositions.

The form and content of objects are distinct, though inseparable from each other. Both must be reflected in Tractarian names, if names are to be genuine representatives of objects. Hence, whilst the use of a name mirrors the form of the object designated by this name, the reference of the name will be the content of the object it designates.

The form and content of objects are not separable from each other. Hence, the use and reference of names will have to be equally inseparable, if names are to be genuine representatives of objects. A sign (e.g. a mark written on a piece of paper) that has a reference but no use cannot be said to be standing as the representative for a Tractarian object, since it wouldn’t be reflecting the form of any object: such a sign would, at best, be acting as the representative for a form-less ‘object’ or a ‘pure content’ which, as was shown in Part III, cannot be said to be a Tractarian object. Conversely, a name that has a use but no reference does not stand for a genuine Tractarian object, since it isn’t reflecting the content of any object: it would, at best, be acting as the representative for a content-less ‘object’ or a ‘pure form’, which cannot be regarded as a genuine Tractarian object. Signs designating ‘pure content’ or ‘pure form’ cannot thus be regarded as genuine Tractarian names. Tractarian names are therefore simple, in that they cannot be analysed into even simpler, genuine Tractarian names. Genuine Tractarian names are therefore indefinable, just like objects are, in the sense that they cannot be analysed into other, even simpler, genuine Tractarian names.
The use and reference of a simple sign, though distinct, must go hand in hand if the sign is to have a genuine meaning and thus be a genuine Tractarian name. This idea helps to explain a series of key entries of the *Tractatus*, some of which have been, until now, either overlooked or unsatisfactorily explained in the literature:^8

Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning. *(TLP 3.3)*

If a sign is useless, it is meaningless. *(TLP 3.32)* [In Ishiguro's translation this reads: 'If a sign is without use, it is without reference.']

A name has a use in that it combines with other names to produce senseful propositions, propositions whose arrangement of elements reflect the combinatorial possibilities and impossibilities inherent in objects. Thus, a simple sign divorced from the 'nexus of a proposition' cannot be said to have a use: it isn't being used to produce a possible, *logical* combination of names (i.e. a senseful proposition), and cannot therefore be said to be acting as the representative for a genuine object. Such a sign would be attempting to act as the representative of a pure content, which isn't a genuine Tractarian object. It would thus fail to have a meaning and could not be regarded as expressing a genuine Tractarian name. Use and reference, though irreducible to each other, must go hand in hand for a simple sign to be a genuine Tractarian name.

Consider now the following entry:

Occam's maxim is, of course, not an arbitrary rule, nor one that is justified by its success in practice: its point is that *unnecessary* units in a sign-language mean nothing.

[...] signs that serve [no purpose] are logically meaningless. *(TLP 5.47521)* [In Ishiguro's translation this reads: 'Occam's maxim [...] its point is that unnecessary units in a sign language do not refer to anything. [...] and signs that serve none have, logically speaking, no reference.']

The purpose or role of a sign is to stand as the representative for an object. Wittgenstein tells us indeed that 'the possibility of propositions is based on the principle that objects have signs as their representatives' *(TLP 4.0312).* A sign that has no purpose is therefore one which isn’t acting as the representative of an object: it cannot be said to have meaning and will not be a genuine Tractarian name. Since use and reference must go hand in hand, only a sign that has a meaning

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can genuinely be said to have a reference: to refer is to refer to a Tractarian object, and such objects possess both a form and a content. Hence, a sign that serves no purpose will automatically lack a reference.

Similarly, two signs acting as the representatives for the same object will have the same meaning, and will thus be expressing the same Tractarian name:

Signs that serve one purpose are logically equivalent (TLP 5.47321)

Having a sign which designates no object, or the same sign designating two different objects, or two signs designating the same object, leads to confusion: in the first case, it leads us to suppose that there is an object which corresponds to the sign whereas in fact there isn’t; in the second, it leads us to suppose that two objects, which are in fact distinct, are the same object; in the third it leads us to suppose that two distinct objects are being designated, when in fact only one object is.

In everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification — and so belongs to different symbols — or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way. (TLP 3.323)

In this way the most fundamental confusions are easily produced (the whole of philosophy is full of them). (TLP 3.324)

In order to avoid such confusions, Wittgenstein stipulates that, at the ultimate level of analysis, there will be one and only sign designating one and only one object, and that there will be no signs that do not designate an object. Hence, at the ultimate level of analysis, all signs will be genuine Tractarian names.

In order to avoid such errors we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is to say, a sign language that is governed by logical grammar — by logical syntax. (TLP 3.325)

One name stands for one thing, another for another thing (TLP 4.0311)

In a proposition there must be exactly as many distinguishable parts as in the situation that it represents. (TLP 4.04)

2.2 Conclusion: the use of Tractarian names is determined by objects

Establishing that Tractarian objects must have distinct, though inseparable, form and content has allowed us to clarify thoroughly Wittgenstein’s view that the meaning of a simple sign (e.g.
a written mark on a piece of paper) is its use and reference. Use and reference are irreducible to each other, but cannot be separated if the sign is to have meaning — that is, if the sign is to be a genuine representative for a Tractarian object. Signs appearing to have a use but no reference, or a reference but no use, will therefore have no meaning whatsoever, and will, strictly speaking, have neither a use nor a reference. Such signs would have no purpose and could not be regarded as Tractarian names. Only genuine Tractarian names remain at the ultimate level of analysis: at this level, each name acts as the representative for one and only one object, and no name fails to act as such a representative.

In addition, this discussion enables us to conclude that the use of a simple name is determined by the object designated by that name. If a Tractarian name isn’t used in a way which complies with the combinatorial possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the object it designates, if the name’s use does not mirror the form of the designated object, then the name cannot be regarded as acting as a genuine representative of the object, and cannot be said to have a genuine meaning. It will thus not be a genuine Tractarian name. The use of a Tractarian name is therefore determined by the form of the object that the name designates.

3 The analysis of propositions about complexes

Before we go on to examine the Picture Theory, it is important to clarify exactly how the sense of propositions about complex objects is revealed through analysis.

Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely. (TLP 2.0201)

Imagine that we have the non-elementary proposition ‘P’: ‘This red point is solid at t’. The complexes that ‘P’ is about are this red point at t, and this (i.e. the same) solid point at t. Let us refer to the complex this red point at t by [rp,t] and the complex this (i.e. the same) solid point at t, [sp,t]. Here, r is the property of redness, s is the property of solidity, p is this point in space, and t, is this point in time. In TLP 5.526, Wittgenstein tells us that:

We can describe the world completely by means of fully generalized propositions, i.e. without first correlating any name with a particular object.

Then, in order to arrive at the customary mode of expression, we simply need to add, after an expression like, ‘There is one and only one x such that...’; the words, ‘and that x is a’. (TLP 5.526)

This suggests that ‘the propositions that describe the complexes completely’ mentioned in TLP...
2.0201 will be fully generalised propositions of the form ‘There is one and only one \( x \) such that...’.
The propositions describing the complexes \([rp,t_j]\) and \([sp,t_j]\) completely will therefore be: ‘There
is one and only one \( x \) such that \( f \neq \)’ and ‘There is one and only one \( y \) such that \( gy \)’, where \( x = y \).
Imagine now, for the sake of simplicity, that redness decomposes into two simple properties \( r_1 \)
and \( r_2 \), and solidity into \( s_1 \) and \( s_2 \). Imagine also that \( p \) is fixed by the three simple spatial locations \( 1 2 3 \). For the purpose of illustrating this point, let us use again our Ontological Model. According
to this Model, the statement about the constituents of these complexes would, in the case of
\([rp,t_j]\), be: ‘\([rp,t_j]\) is the logical product of \([r_1 2 3 t_j]\) and \([r_2 2 3 t_j]\)’. In the case of \([sp,t_j]\), the
statement would be: ‘\([sp,t_j]\) is the logical product of \([s_1 1 2 3 t_j]\) and \([s_2 1 2 3 t_j]\)’.

In this example, the analysis of ‘\( P \)’ therefore consists of two elements: ‘the propositions that
describe the complexes completely’ (namely: ‘There is one and only one \( x \) such that \( f \neq \)’ . ‘There
is one and only one \( y \) such that \( gy \)’. ‘ \( x = y \)’); and a statement about the constituents of these
complexes (which given our Ontological Model would be: ‘\( x = p_1 t_j ; f = r_1 ; g = s_1 ; [rp,t_j] \) is the
logical product of \([r_1 2 3 t_j]\) and \([r_2 2 3 t_j]\); \([sp,t_j]\) is the logical product of \([s_1 1 2 3 t_j]\) and \([s_2 1 2 3 t_j]\)’). The first element of ‘\( P \)’s analysis shows that ‘\( P \)’ asserts the complex situation it represents
(cf. TLP 4.21). The second shows how the complexes that make up this situation are ultimately
constituted. In what follows, for the sake of simplicity, I will not mention the first element of the
analysis of propositions about complexes. This first element should thus be regarded as implied
in my discussion.

4 The Picture Theory of the proposition

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed discussion of the vast amount
of literature that the Picture Theory has generated, it is important to put forward an account of it,
for this theory holds one of the keys to understanding the way in which objects are meant to
determine language — and indeed all representation — in the Tractatus. We will begin by summarising
Wittgenstein’s claims, and will then examine in more detail what he means by them.

4.1 Terminology

Wittgenstein tells us that propositions are pictures or models of reality:

\[ \text{Cf. Canfield (1986 a), pp. 352 - 353.} \]
A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it. (*TLP* 4.01)

According to the Picture Theory, all pictures (e.g. propositions, representational paintings, models, etc.) depict possible situations of the world:

A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs. (*TLP* 2.11)

Pictures are made up of elements which designate objects.

A picture is a model of reality. (*TLP* 2.12)

In a picture objects have the elements of the picture corresponding to them. (*TLP* 2.15)

In a picture the elements of the picture are the representatives of objects. (*TLP* 2.13)

Pictures have a 'structure', a 'pictorial relationship', a 'pictorial form', a 'logical form', and a 'representational form'. Let us consider how Wittgenstein presents these notions.

### 4.1.1 Structure

The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way.

Let us call this connection of its elements the structure of the picture [...] (*TLP* 2.15)

The structure of a picture therefore consists in the fact that its elements are arranged in a determinate way. The structure of a picture mirrors the determinate arrangement of elements making up the depicted possible state of the world.

### 4.1.2 Pictorial form

The possibility of [the structure of a picture is] the pictorial form of the picture. (*TLP* 2.15)

Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture. (*TLP* 2.151)

*That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.* (*TLP* 2.1511)

What a picture must have in common with reality, in order to depict it — correctly or incorrectly — *in the way that it does*, is its pictorial form. (*TLP* 2.17) [My italics]

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* In the sub-sections to 4.1, I make use of the interpretations advanced by Hacker and Kenny. See Hacker (1986) pp. 58—59 and Kenny (1975) p. 55—58. Note however that this isn't the only possible interpretation of these entries. See for instance Carruthers (1989) pp. 108—110, 114, 118, 203, 212—213, 149—162. It is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this thesis to give a detailed discussion of such alternative accounts.
Pictorial form is what is shared by a picture and the possible state of the world it depicts which enables the picture to have a structure which mirrors the structure of the depicted state, in the particular way it does. Wittgenstein tells us that it is because pictures have a pictorial form that they become attached to reality.®

4.1.3 Pictorial relationship

The pictorial relationship consists of the correlations of the picture’s elements with things (TLP 2.1514).

These correlations are, as it were, the feelers of the picture’s elements, with which the picture touches reality (TLP 2.1515).

So a picture, conceived in this way, also includes the pictorial relationship, which makes it into a picture. (TLP 2.1513).

The pictorial relationship connects an element of a picture to an element of the represented state of the world. It is because the elements of the picture are correlated with things in the world that the picture can be said to ‘touch’ reality. Wittgenstein also tells us that it is this pictorial relationship, this ‘touching’ of the world by the picture, which makes the picture into a picture. Note that, given Wittgenstein’s numbering system, the remarks on the pictorial relationship are meant to qualify and expand on his comments on pictorial form.

4.1.4 Logical form

Logical form is introduced by Wittgenstein in the following remark:

What any picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it — correctly or incorrectly — in any way at all, is logical form, i.e. the form of reality. (TLP 2.18) [My italics]

Logical form is the minimum requirement that any picture of the world must meet, in order for it to be a genuine picture. It is what a picture must share with reality which allows it to depict reality in any way at all.®

® Hacker and Kenny put forward similar definition of pictorial form, but they do not then develop this notion as I do in what follows. As a result, they fail to note the intimate connection between pictorial form and the pictorial relationship of a picture, and the relevance of the fact that complex objects such as paintings and models have one structure when regarded as pictures and another when regarded as non-representational objects in their own right. These ideas are examined below. See Hacker (1993) p. 59 and Kenny (1975) p.57.
4.1.5 Representational Form

A picture represents its subject from a position outside it. (Its standpoint is its representational form.) That is why a picture represents its subject correctly or incorrectly. (TLP 2.173)

Wittgenstein tells us that representational form is what enables a picture to represent 'its subject correctly or incorrectly'. Note that this isn't the same as saying that it is what allows a picture to be correct or incorrect, i.e. true or false.\(^5\) Representational form therefore encapsulates the criteria for correct representation which belong to the particular medium in which the picture is made: the particular 'standpoint outside the subject' from which the picture represents its subject.\(^6\)

4.2 The questions raised by the Picture Theory

The Picture Theory raises a vast range of questions, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss them all in detail. I will focus here only on those aspects of the Theory which help to establish that the *Tractatus* posits a definite direction of determination from objects to language.

i Wittgenstein argues that pictures succeed in representing the world because they are attached to the world by means of their pictorial form, and because they 'touch' the world by means of their pictorial relationships. Eventually, we will therefore need to clarify what is meant by this connection between pictures and the world, and in virtue of what it is effected. This issue will be discussed in Part VI. For the time being, I will limit myself to introducing Wittgenstein's notion of the projective relation.

ii It is going to be necessary to clarify whether the Picture Theory is meant to apply at the elementary level only or also at a higher level of complexity.

iii Finally, we need to ask ourselves what exactly Wittgenstein means when he says that the structure of a picture mirrors the determinate arrangement of objects in the depicted possible state of the world: in what sense, if any, is there meant to

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\(^5\) Hacker and Kenny put forward a similar interpretation of logical form, but confine themselves to speaking of a correspondence between elements and of logical multiplicity. Because of this, their exposition fails to capture the idea that each simple name has a particular logical role (a use) ascribed to it and that this role is determined by the form of the object it designates. This idea will be examined further below. See Hacker (1986) p. 59 and Kenny (1975) p.57.

\(^6\) If it seems awkward to speak of the truth-value of a picture, note that Wittgenstein himself does so in his argument for simples: 'In that case, we could not sketch any picture of the world (true or false). (TLP 2.0212)

\(^7\) This idea is put forward by Hacker (1986) p. 59 and Kenny (1975) p.57.
be 'isomorphism' between the picture and that which is depicted?

4.2.1 The projective relation: connecting pictures to the world

As noted above, Wittgenstein argues that propositions are pictures or models of reality. In the *Tractatus*, he draws a distinction between the propositional sign (such as a series of marks written on a piece of paper) and the proposition proper, which is what actually provides a representation of the world. He argues further that the proposition is the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world, and that this projective relation somehow involves thinking of the sense of the proposition.

In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses. (*TLP* 3.1)

We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.

The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition. (*TLP* 3.11)

I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign. – And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world (*TLP* 3.12)

In a proposition a thought can be expressed in such a way that elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of the thought. (*TLP* 3.2)

The projective relation thus transforms a representationally inert series of marks, or a series of sounds, into a proposition which genuinely depicts a possible state of the world. What Wittgenstein means by thought here, and whose thinking is supposed to be effecting this connection, is an issue which will be examined in Part VI. For the Picture Theory to seem plausible, however, it is important to mention at this stage the notion of the projective relation. Hence, in what follows, we will need to remember that Wittgenstein has in mind some account of how pictures in general, and propositions in particular, link up to the world, and that this account will involve the notion of thinking of the sense of the picture or of the proposition.

4.2.2 The level at which the Picture Theory applies

It is unclear from reading Wittgenstein’s remarks on pictures whether the Picture Theory is meant to apply only at the ultimate level of analysis (e.g. at the level of elementary propositions and simple names), or also at a higher level of complexity. In what follows, I propose to show that, although the essence of the Picture Theory applies to pictures belonging to all levels of analysis, it is only through complete analysis that the pictoriality of ordinary language propositions is revealed in full.
As noted above, the structure of a picture consists in the fact that the elements of the picture are arranged in a determinate way. This structure is meant to mirror the determinate arrangement of elements making up the depicted possible state of the world.

On the face of it, this is an extremely puzzling idea: although it is easy to see why the structure of a representational painting might mirror that of the depicted situation, it is highly unclear that the structure of an ordinary linguistic proposition does this. Imagine a representational painting of the fact that a particular red apple is to the right of a particular brown table. In the painting, the apple is drawn to the right of the table, thus mirroring the fact that the apple in the depicted possible situation is to the right of the table. But this is not the case in a proposition: the word 'apple' is not written to the right of the word 'table'. And yet, Wittgenstein tells us that:

At first sight a proposition — one set out on the printed page, for example — does not seem to be a picture of the reality with which it is concerned. But neither do written notes seem at first sight to be a picture of a piece of music, nor our phonetic notation (the alphabet) to be a picture of our speech.

And yet these sign-languages prove to be pictures, even in the ordinary sense, of what they represent. (TLP 4.011)

The key to understanding this idea is that pictures do not, at any level of complexity, possess a structure in and of themselves. Instead, they only acquire a structure when the signs that make them up have a meaning. It is because signs designate objects that these signs can be said to be arranged or to relate to each other in a particular way. This is what makes it possible for a picture to have a logical structure. In order to clarify this point, let us consider first what happens at the level of Tractarian names. Imagine that I am given the elementary proposition 'a b c d f'. If I didn't know what objects these simple names designate, I would not be able to tell what the structure of this proposition is: I would not be able to know how these names are meant to be arranged, what relations are meant to hold between them. The first step that needs to be taken in order to uncover the relations that hold between the signs that make up this proposition (i.e. how these signs are arranged, what the proposition's structure is) is to establish what these signs mean. Since the meaning of a name is the object designated by this name (TLP 3.203), to know the meaning of a name is to know the object designated by this name. And Wittgenstein tells us that to know an object is to know 'all its possible occurrences in states of affairs' (TLP 2.0123). As was shown in Part IV, this means that to know an object is to know all of the states of affairs that
the object can help to produce. Wittgenstein also tells us that, 'if objects are given, then at the same time we are given all objects' (TLP 5.524). Hence, if I know one object, I know not only all of the states of affairs that this object can help to produce, but also all of the states of affairs that all other objects can help to produce. I will therefore know, for each object, which combinations are possible and which are impossible. Knowing the meanings of the signs that make up this proposition therefore entails knowing the combinatorial possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the objects designated by these signs. And this, in turn, enables us to know how these signs must be used, if they are to be genuine representatives of the objects they designate. But to know how a sign must be used is to know what arrangements of signs it can feature in and what relations it must bear to other signs, when it appears in these possible arrangements. Hence, if we know the meanings of the names that make up proposition ‘a b c d f’, we automatically know how these names are arranged, what the structure of the proposition is.

This goes to show that pictorial arrangements of signs do not have a structure in and of themselves, independently of our knowing what their constituents stand for. We cannot by simply looking at a series of signs written on a piece of paper know what their arrangement is, for such signs only become genuinely structured when they are used to express a sense. It is by establishing a particular projective relation that pictures become representational and thus acquire a determinate structure. The fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that the structure of this picture mirrors the structure of that particular possible state of the world is made possible by the fact that the elements of the picture designate the elements of that state of the world. This explains why Wittgenstein’s remarks on the pictorial relationships of pictures are presented as qualifications or expansions of his remarks on pictorial form (which, according to Wittgenstein, renders structure possible — TLP 2.15). That Wittgenstein’s remarks on pictorial relationships are meant to be qualifications or expansions of his remarks on pictorial form is made clear by his numbering of the entries concerning these two notions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. Let us call this connection of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture. (TLP 2.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.151</td>
<td>Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture. (TLP 2.151)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1511</td>
<td>That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it. (TLP 2.1511)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1512</td>
<td>It is laid against reality like a measure. (TLP 2.1512)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*This key connection between pictorial relationships and pictorial form has hitherto been overlooked in the literature.*
Only the end-points of the graduating lines actually touch the object that is to be measured. *(TLP 2.15121)*

So a picture, conceived in this way, also includes the pictorial relationship, which makes it into a picture. *(TLP 2.1513)*.

The pictorial relationship consists of the correlations of the picture's elements with things *(TLP 2.1514)*.

These correlations are, as it were, the feelers of the picture's elements, with which the picture touches reality *(TLP 2.1515)*.

The pictorial relationships of a picture are part of what makes it possible for a picture to have a structure (i.e. they are part of the pictorial form of a picture). This is the case because a set of simple signs only becomes arranged in a specific way (and thereby acquires a structure) when these signs are attached to objects, when they acquire a meaning and thus become genuine Tractarian names. (As noted above, how this connection between signs and objects is effected will be explored in *Pat VI*.)

The same takes place at the level of non-elementary propositions. The reason why 'This apple is to the right of this table' can be said to have a structure which mirrors that of the represented situation, in spite of the fact that the word 'apple' is not written to the right of the word 'table', is that the word 'apple' represents the apple in the depicted possible situation, and that the word 'table' represents the table in the represented possible situation, and 'is to the right of' represents a particular spatial relationship. Knowing the meaning of these words enables me to know what their arrangement depicts. And it also enables me to understand other, different arrangements of these words, such as 'the table is to the right of the apple'. The same holds in the case of ordinary pictures, such as paintings. The reason why the structure of the painting can be said to mirror that of the possible situation represented is that the painted apple represents the real apple, and that the painted table designates the real table, and that painting the apple to the right of the table represents the fact that the apple is to the right of the table in the depicted situation.

Indeed, Wittgenstein goes as far as claiming that *all that we need in order to know how signs are arranged in a picture is to know what these signs designate*, what their meanings are. And this, he argues, holds both at the level of Tractarian names and at that of names for complex objects. That this holds, according to Wittgenstein, at the level of non-elementary propositions can be shown by considering his remarks on models. Whilst in Paris, Wittgenstein was drawn to the fact that, in French law-courts, car accidents were reconstructed by means of models made with dolls and toy cars.® In the *Notebooks* he writes:
In the proposition a world is as it were put together experimentally. (As when in the law-court in Paris a motor-car accident is represented by means of dolls, etc.)

This must yield the nature of truth straightaway (if I were not blind).

Let us think of hieroglyphic writing in which each word is a representation of what it stands for. Let us think also of the fact that actual pictures of situations can be right and wrong.

If the right-hand figure in this picture represents the man A, and the left-hand one stands for the man B, then the whole might assert, e.g.: 'A is fencing with B'. The proposition in picture writing can be true and false. It has a sense independent of its truth or falsehood. (NB 24.9.14)

Note that Wittgenstein says ‘if the right-hand figure in this picture represents the man A, and [if] the left-hand one stands for the man B, then...’ (my italics). For this must surely be the point. If I know that this toy car stands for that real car and that this doll stands for a passer-by, then it will be clear to me that the movements of the toy car in the street model represent the movements of the real car in the real street, and that the toy car crashing into the doll represents the real car running over the passer-by. In other words, if I know the meaning of these signs (i.e. the toy car, the doll, the street model, etc.), if I know that this sign is meant to be acting as the representative for this complex object and that sign as the representative for that complex object, then I automatically know what their arrangement represents. All that I need to know, in order to understand the arrangement of these signs, is what the signs are meant to be designating: the arrangement of signs does not need to be explained to me if I know the meaning of the signs that make it up. This idea emerges again and again in the Tractatus:

To understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true. [...] It is understood by anyone who understands its constituents. (TLP 4.024)

When translating one language into another, we do not proceed by translating each proposition of the one into a proposition of the other, but merely by translating the constituents of propositions. (TLP 4.025)

The meanings of simple signs (words) must be explained to us if we are to understand them.

With propositions, however, we make ourselves understood. (TLP 4.026)

In order to understand a proposition, the only thing I need to know is what its constituents stand for. As soon as I know this, I know what the arrangement of these constituents is meant to represent. Given this, the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that this arrangement represents this possible state of the world becomes clear to me without needing to have it explained:

A proposition is a picture of reality: for if I understand a proposition, I know the

* See Von Wright (1955) pp. 532 – 533.
This is indeed what allows us to produce propositions with new senses by merely re-organising the words of a proposition. And this is also why we can understand a new proposition made up of words whose meaning I already know without needing to have the new propositions explained to me.

It belongs to the essence of a proposition that it should communicate a new sense to us. (TLP 4.027)

A proposition must use old expressions to communicate a new sense. (TLP 4.03)

Now, imagine that I am at a law-court listening to the re-construction of a car-accident, and that one of the lawyers suddenly says 'And then the car did this' and picks up the toy car and waves it for a minute in the air making flying noises. Faced with this, I would protest 'But that cannot be the case!'. And if asked to explain myself, I would say 'That cannot be the case because cars do not fly!'. Now, at this non-elementary level, 'That cannot be the case' simply means 'This representation of what happened is false'. It is false because cars do not, in reality, have the capacity to fly. The waving in the air of the car does not however lack sense, since it is possible that cars should have the capacity to fly in some other possible world. Hence, the waving of the car in the air is picturing a possible, though not obtaining, situation in the world, a situation which does not contravene the set of possibilities inherent in Tractarian simples. It is therefore simply false, not senseless.

At the ultimate level of analysis, however, a sign which is not being used to reflect the form of the simple object it supposedly designates does not produce a false picture, but a senseless one: such a sign would be lacking in meaning, and the elementary picture produced by it would be lacking in sense and it would not be a genuine picture. Complex words can be used to represent situations that do not obtain in reality, but simple signs cannot be used to represent states of affairs which contravene the possibilities inherent in Tractarian objects. If they do, they are no longer standing as the representatives of objects, and cannot be said to have a use, a reference, or a meaning.

To sum up: grasping what use is being given to a sign presupposes knowing what the sign designates. It is because I know that the toy car stands for a real car, that the street model stands

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* Wittgenstein doesn’t use the term ‘elementary picture’ but it seems natural to do so in this context.
for the real street, etc. that I know what the car movements on the street model represent, and that the waving of the toy car in the air yields a false picture. As soon as I know what each of these signs stand for (the toy car, the street model, the doll, etc.) I will be able to understand what their arrangement represents. And the same is the case at the level of Tractarian names. The view that the use of a name (whether it is a genuine Tractarian name or an ordinary word) is determined by what the name designates, and the view that, if we know what the name designates, we automatically know how it is being used, is crucial to understanding the Picture Theory of the Proposition. We will explore these views further when we consider the issue of the structure of a picture, below.

At this point it could be objected that knowing what names designate does not suffice in order to understand the arrangement of these names: in order to grasp this, we need, in addition, to know the conventions governing the correct use of these names. Consider for instance, the statement ‘is to the right of the apple the table’: it could be argued that, although we know the meaning of ‘the apple’, ‘the table’ and ‘is to the right of’, it is totally unclear to us what possible situation of the world ‘is to the right of the apple the table’ is meant to represent, and thus what arrangement of complex objects its structure is meant to mirror. However, according to Wittgenstein, this does not show that knowing the meaning of these signs is not enough. What it shows is rather that we do not actually know the meaning of these signs, even though we think we do, or that no proper meaning has been ascribed to them, even though we think it has.

Any possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and, if it has no sense, that can only be because we have failed to give a meaning to some of its constituents. (Even if we think that we have done so.) Thus the reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ says nothing is that we have not given any adjectival meaning to the word ‘identical’. For when it appears as a sign for identity, it symbolizes in an entirely different way — the signifying relation is a different one — therefore the symbols also are entirely different in the two cases: the two symbols have only the sign in common, and that is an accident. (TLP 5.4733)

The meaning of a name (whether a Tractarian name or the name for a complex object) is not just its reference, but also its use. And the use of names contains both an element which is conventional and an element which is determined by the object(s) the word ultimately designates — an element which isn’t, therefore, conventional.

Although there is something arbitrary in our notations, this much is not arbitrary — that when we have determined one thing arbitrarily, something else is necessarily the case. (TLP 3.342)

Hence, I can conventionally stipulate that when the sign ‘is to the right of’ appears at the
beginning of a sentence, then the spatial relation it stands for holds between the two names that follow it, and the sentence will say that the (here complex) object designated by the name that immediately follows 'is to the right of' will be to the right of the (here complex) object designated by the other name. I cannot, however, conventionally stipulate that 'the apple is to the right of the (i.e. the same) apple' means that the apple is to the right of itself. For this isn't allowed by the possibilities inherent in Tractarian objects. That it isn't allowed, and thus that this proposition lacks sense, will be shown by the analysis of this statement. For – assuming that we adopt again the Ontological Model for illustrative purposes – this analysis will show that the coordinates for the objects designated by 'the apple' and 'the (i.e. the same) apple' are the same, and therefore that the apple cannot be to the right of itself.

Logic must look after itself. If a sign is possible, then it is also capable of signifying. Whatever is possible in logic is also permitted. (The reason why 'Socrates is identical' means nothing is that there is no property called 'identical'. The proposition is nonsensical because we have failed to make an arbitrary determination, and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate.) In a certain sense, we cannot make mistakes in logic. (TLP 5.473)

To know the meaning of a name (whether this name designates a simple or a complex) is therefore to know:

i The reference of the name

ii The use of this name, which:
   a/ is limited by the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in objects
   b/ is governed by certain conventions.

If I genuinely know the meaning of a name, I will be able to understand all possible arrangements of this name, and I will also be able to tell that certain arrangements of this name lack sense. Thus, it is not the spatial arrangement of simple objects that simple names must mirror in elementary propositions, but their logical arrangement. As a result, if we are to speak of 'isomorphism' in relation to the Picture Theory, it must be clear to us that we are talking about logical isomorphism, and not about spatial, perceivable isomorphism.

What corresponds to a determinate logical combination of signs is a determinate logical combination of their meanings. [...] (And what is not a logical combination has no combination of objects corresponding to it) (TLP 4.466)

This is also why a non-elementary proposition which appears, when looked at, not to be composite,
can nevertheless be logically composite:

It is only in so far as a proposition is logically articulated that it is a picture of a situation.
(Even the proposition, 'Ambulo', is composite: for its stem with a different ending yields a different sense, and so does its ending with a different stem.) (TLP 4.032)

It is not the perceptual appearance of a propositional sign which reflects its structure, but the logical relations between the elements of the sign. This is why I cannot know the structure of a picture merely by looking at the arrangement of signs on a piece of paper: in order to know what structure a picture has, I need to know what its elements designate.

Given this notion of logical pictoriality, propositions are certainly pictures just like paintings are. The only reason why a painting strikes us more immediately as a picture is that it shares with the possible state it depicts something which can be perceived by the senses, and which propositions do not share with the states they depict: whilst iconic pictures possess a pictorial form which is distinct from their logical form, the pictorial form of propositional pictures coincides with their logical form. In other words, it is because propositions are what Wittgenstein calls 'logical pictures', that their pictoriality does not immediately strike us (TLP 2.181 and TLP 4.03)

This idea can be best explained by means of an example. For this purpose, let us use again the Ontological Model presented in Part IV.

4.4 The Theory of iconic pictures

Imagine that an actual situation of the world, say the fact that this red apple is on this brown table, is represented in three different ways: by means of a three-dimensional, grey clay model where a piece of clay in the shape of the apple is sitting on top of a piece of clay in the shape of the table; by means of a two-dimensional, red and brown painting, where the apple is drawn in red on top of a table drawn in brown; and by means of a proposition written in black ink on white two-dimensional paper (e.g. 'This red apple is on this brown table.').

The depicted fact this red apple is on this brown table decomposes into a number of coloured points arranged in three-dimensional space at a particular time. These points ultimately decompose into a vast number of states of affairs made up of Tractarian objects. According to our Ontological Model, these states of affairs will each comply with the general form of states of affairs: a simple
property is instantiated at the point fixed by the combination of three simple spatial locations, at a simple point in time. The combination of these states of affairs will yield, on its own, the redness of the apple and the brownness of the table, their three-dimensional shapes, the spatial relation of the apple to the table (i.e. 'being on top of'), etc.

Let us consider the analysis of the two iconic pictures of this fact: the grey clay model and the red and brown painting. Once this is done, it will be easier to understand how propositional pictures differ from iconic ones.

The clay model and the painting can be viewed in two ways. They can either be regarded as pictures of the fact that this red apple is on this brown table, that is as representational facts depicting another fact, or they can be regarded as non-representational complex objects in their own right. To view them in the latter way is to view them divorced from any possible representational role that can be ascribed to them. Now, the clay model and the painting will have different analyses depending on whether we are considering them as representational facts (i.e. as pictures) or as non-representational complex objects. For, when we analyse a picture into simple signs, we are not looking for the things we look for when we analyse a complex object into simple objects. In the former case, we aim at uncovering the simple signs designating the simple objects that ultimately constitute the depicted state of the world. In the latter case, we are trying to discover what the ultimate, simple constituents of the complex object are. In other words: in the former case we look for those items which cannot be further analysed without ceasing to act as the representatives for the objects making up the depicted state of the world; in contrast, in the latter we look for those items which cannot be further analysed without ceasing to be genuine Tractarian objects.

When the painting and the clay model are regarded as pictures, they will be ultimately analysed into a logical product of elementary pictures made up of simple signs. If these signs genuinely act as the representatives for the simple objects in the depicted fact, they will have to be regarded as simple names. If it seems strange to speak of an iconic picture ultimately decomposing into simple names, note that Wittgenstein himself suggests that this is the case:

A proposition possesses essential and accidental features.
Accidental features are those that result from the particular way in which the propositional sign is produced. Essential features are those without which the proposition could not express its sense. (TLP 3.34)

So what is essential in a proposition is what all propositions that can express the
same sense have in common. And similarly, in general, what is essential in a symbol is what all symbols that can serve the same purpose have in common. (TLP 3.341)

So one could say that the real name of an object was what all symbols that signified it had in common. Thus, one by one, all kinds of composition would prove to be unessential to a name. (TLP 3.341)

If the simple signs into which a painting, a clay model and a proposition are ultimately analysed designate the same objects, as they would have to here (since all of these pictures represent the same fact), then these signs, whatever their appearance, will express the same names. Indeed, as pointed out before, there is, at the ultimate level of analysis, a one-to-one relation between simple names and simple objects. (More will be said on this issue below.)

Consider how this would work: the grey clay model, regarded as a picture of the fact that *this red apple is on this brown table*, decomposes into grey clay points arranged into a particular three-dimensional shape. Each of these points represents a point in the depicted fact. Imagine that a given grey clay point in the three-dimensional model (let us call this point ‘$A_n$’) designates a given red point made of apple stuff in the three-dimensional apple (let us call this $A$). According to our Ontological Model, $A$ would be equivalent, in terms of analysis, to the logical product of the facts [*redness is instantiated at the complex location in space fixed by three particular simple spatial locations at this simple point in time*] and [*the property of being made out of apple stuff is instantiated at the complex location in space fixed by these — i.e. the same — three simple spatial locations at this simple point in time*]. Thus, if $A_n$, when the clay model is regarded as a non-representational complex object, does not possess the properties of *redness* or of *being made out of apple stuff*. In other words, if $A_n$ genuinely stands for $A$ in the depicted fact, then it would have to be regarded as equivalent to the logical product of these propositions, even though, when considered as a point in the non-representational clay model, it is grey, not red, and it is made of clay, not of apple stuff. In turn, given our Ontological Model, since ‘redness’ and ‘being made out of apple stuff’ are not simple names, the propositions containing them will have to be analysed further until we obtain a logical product of elementary propositions complying with the generalised form

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'a simple property is instantiated at the spatial location fixed by three coordinates at a simple point in time'. The coordinates and the names for the simple properties and simple points in time making up these elementary pictures would be the simple names revealed when the clay model, regarded as a picture, is fully analysed.

The same occurs in the case of the painting. The painting decomposes into a series of red and brown dots made out of oil paint and arranged on a two-dimensional canvas. Imagine that a particular red dot in the painting regarded as a picture (let's call it 'Ap') represents point A in the three-dimensional depicted fact (i.e. the point also represented by 'Amp'), where A is made out of apple stuff and not of oil paint on canvas. 'Ap' would have to be analysed into the logical product of the propositions 'the property of redness is instantiated at this complex location in space fixed by three particular simple spatial locations at this simple point in time' and 'the property of being made out of apple stuff is instantiated at the complex three-dimensional location in space fixed by these (i.e. the same) three simple spatial locations at this simple point in time'. This would again be the case, even though A, as a point in the non-representational object, is made of oil paint on a two-dimensional canvas, and not of apple stuff. From this point onwards, the analysis of 'Ap' would be the same as that of 'Amp'. Hence, the clay grey model and the red and brown painting, when they are regarded as pictures of the same fact (e.g. of the fact that this red apple is on this brown table) have the same ultimate analysis: they are both analysable into the logical product of the same elementary propositions made up of the same simple names. Given our Ontological Model, these elementary propositions would all be of the generalised form 'a simple property is instantiated at the spatial locations fixed by three coordinates at a simple point in time'.

The deep level structures of these two pictures, as revealed by their complete analysis, is therefore the same, and this will be the case in spite of the fact that their structures as non-representational complex objects differ. Their deep level structure as pictures is given by the logical product of the elementary propositions revealed through their complete analysis.

The structures of the painting and of the clay model, when these are regarded as representational facts, differ, however, from the structures they have when they are regarded as non-representational

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9 As we saw before, it was Wittgenstein's hope, when he wrote the Tractatus, that colour properties would ultimately be analysable into simple properties meeting the logical independence constraint.
complex objects in their own right (that is, in isolation from the way in which they can be used to represent the fact that this red apple is on this brown table, or any other possible situation of the world). For, when we analyse the painting and the clay model as non-representational complex objects, we do so with a view to uncovering the simple objects which ultimately constitute these complexes.

Let us use again the Ontological Model in order to illustrate this point. Consider the grey, clay model. The clay model decomposes into grey, clay points. Let us take point $A_n$ in the clay model. $A_n$ is one of the grey, clay points making up the three-dimensionally shaped model. It is clearly not a simple object, since it is made of the material properties of greyness and of clayness. In order to reach a full analysis of the clay model regarded as a non-representational complex object, we therefore need to analyse $A_n$ (and all other points belonging like it to the model), until we discover what its ultimate simple constituents are. Hence, $A_n$ will be shown by this analysis to be logically equivalent to a combination of states of affairs, which, according to our Ontological Model, will all comply with the generalised form: a simple property is instantiated at the spatial location fixed by three simple spatial locations at a simple point in time. The structure of the clay model as a whole, when regarded as a non-representational fact, will therefore be given by the logical product of states of affairs whose simple objects will all combine according to this generalised form of states of affairs (given our Ontological Model). And the same would hold for the painting.

Note that the Tractarian objects ultimately making up the clay model will differ from those objects ultimately making up the painting. According to our Ontological Model, both the painting and the clay model ultimately decompose into simple spatial locations, simple points in time and simple properties. But the simple spatial locations making up the clay model differ from those making up the painting, since the clay model and the painting cannot be in the same place at the same time. Similarly, the simple spatial locations in the clay model are such as to produce, by combining with each other, a particular three-dimensional shape, whereas those in the painting combine with each other to produce a particular two-dimensional shape. The simple properties making up the clay model also differ from those making up the painting in that the former are such that their combination produces the properties of clayness and of greyness, whereas the latter are such that their combination produces the properties of redness, brownness, being made out of oil-paint and being made out of canvas.
As we saw above, the pictorial form of a picture is what is shared by the picture and the depicted state of the world which enables the former to have a structure which mirrors that of the latter in the particular way it does. The three-dimensional, grey clay model, shares with the depicted fact (i.e. with the fact that the red apple is on the brown table) its particular three-dimensional shape. It is because the points in the model are arranged three-dimensionally in a particular way, that the structure of the model mirrors that of the depicted fact. Hence, what allows this structure to represent that of the depicted fact in the particular way that it does, and what is shared by the clay model and the represented fact, is the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that the simple spatial locations that ultimately constitute them, though different (since the clay model and the fact cannot be in the same place at the same time) combine to produce three-dimensional shapes which resemble each other. It is because the clay model, regarded as a complex object in its own right, is made up of objects which combine to produce this particular three-dimensional shape, that the clay model depicts the fact that the red apple is on the brown table in the particular way that it does. The pictorial form of the clay model will therefore consist, at least in part, in the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that the objects that ultimately constitute it produce a particular three-dimensional shape.\(^9\) In contrast, the two-dimensional, red and brown painting shares with the fact it depicts its red and brown colouring. It is partly because the painting is an arrangement of red and brown dots that its structure can mirror that of the depicted fact in the particular way that it does. The pictorial form of the painting will therefore consist, at least in part, of the fact that some of the objects that constitute it combine together to produce redness and greenness, just like some of the objects that make up the depicted fact.

To sum up: the structures of the painting and of the clay model regarded as non-representational complex objects differ from the structure they have as pictures of the fact that this red apple is on this brown table. Although the painting and the clay model have different structures as complexes, they have the same structure when they are regarded as pictures of this fact. What allows the structures of these pictures to mirror the structure of the fact they depict in the particular way that they do is that the painting and the clay model are ultimately constituted by simple objects which resemble and, at times, may even be identical with the simple objects constituting the depicted fact: the painting, like the depicted fact, is for instance, ultimately made up of simple properties capable of combining together to produce redness and brownness, whilst the clay

\(^9\) I say ‘at least in part’ because there will be other elements to the model’s pictorial form, such as the fact that the \(y\) coordinates of the points making up the clay apple will be larger than the \(y\) coordinates of the points making up in the clay table, reflecting the fact that the real apple is on top of the real table.
model, like the depicted fact, is ultimately made up of simple locations in space capable of combining together to produce a specific three-dimensional shape. This therefore constitutes, at least in part, their pictorial forms.

To be ultimately made up of constituents that resemble (or are identical with) the constituents of the depicted fact does not, however, suffice for a complex object to become a picture and thus to possess a pictorial form. Part of the reason why the painting and the clay model can be regarded as pictures is that their ultimate constituents designate the ultimate constituents of the depicted fact. In other words, it is partly by virtue of their pictorial relationships that non-representational complexes become representational pictures possessing a pictorial form and a structure which mirrors that of the depicted fact. Which is why, as was noted above, Wittgenstein's comments on the pictorial relationship serve to expand on and qualify his remarks on pictorial form (see again TLP 2.15, TLP 2.151, TLP 2.1511, TLP 2.1512, TLP 2.15121, TLP 2.1513, TLP 2.1514, and TLP 2.1515, quoted above).

In contrast, the representational forms of the painting and of the clay model encapsulate the criteria for correct representation which belong to their particular mediums (TLP 2.173). I cannot, for instance, represent the fact that the red apple is on the brown table by painting a canvas in one colour all over, although I can represent this fact by painting a blue apple on top of a green table. Similarly, I cannot represent this fact by means of a piece of clay which has been extended and thinned out to become a two-dimensional sheet, although I can represent it by fashioning a piece of clay in the shape of a cone and putting it on top of a two-dimensional sheet of clay. That a monochrome painting and a two-dimensional clay model cannot represent this fact is determined by the rules for the depiction of possible states of the world which characterise the media of paintings and models.

Finally, consider the logical form of the painting and the clay model.

What any picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it — correctly or incorrectly — in any way at all, is logical form, i.e. the form of reality. (TLP 2.18) [My italics]

Wittgenstein tells us in this entry that reality has a form, which is logical form, and that this logical form must be shared by pictures 'of whatever form' if they are to be pictures. Note that Wittgenstein speaks here of the form of reality, clearly suggesting that reality has one and only one logical form. As a result, when he says 'of whatever form' he must mean that all pictures must have the
same logical form whatever pictorial and representational forms they may possess.® Thus, all pictures will have one and the same logical form: the form which corresponds to the form of reality.

TLP 2.022 argues that the form of reality coincides with the form of all other possible worlds (e.g. imagined ones). In Part II, we suggested that the form of reality (that which reality shares with all other possible worlds) is the totality of necessarily possible states of affairs. We can now give a more precise definition of the form of reality: the form of reality consists in the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that all possible states of the world are ultimately analyzable into states of affairs, and that these states of affairs comply with a certain generalised form. According to our Ontological Model, for instance, all states of affairs comply with the generalised form: \( (x \land y \land z \land p \land t) \).

The form of states of affairs shows how objects must be related to each other if their combination is to yield a genuine state of affairs.

The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure of the state of affairs. (TLP 2.032)

Form is the possibility of structure. (TLP 2.033)

The structure of a fact consists of the structures of states of affairs. (TLP 2.034)

In turn, states of affairs are representable by means of elementary pictures all of which (according to our Model) comply with the generalised form \( (x \land y \land z \land p \land t) \). The fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that all pictures result from applying logical operations to elementary pictures of the form \( (x \land y \land z \land p \land t) \) would therefore be, according to this Model, the logical form of pictures. Pictures not complying with this form could not be regarded as genuine representations of the world. More generally, the logical form of a picture is its ability to be decomposed into elementary propositions which can depict states of affairs, because they share their logical structure.

4.5 The Theory of propositional pictures

Let us now turn our attention to the propositional sign written in black ink on two-dimensional paper: 'the red apple is on the brown table'. The first thing to note about this sign is that its

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® This shows that pictorial form cannot always be the same as logical form, contrary to Carruthers.' view See Carruthers (1989) chs. 11 and 15, especially p. 114. This also means that TLP 2.182 — 'Every picture is at the same time a logical one. (On the other hand, not every picture is, for example, a spatial one.)' — must be regarded as meaning, not that all pictures are logical pictures in the sense of having a pictorial form which is the same as their logical form, but as simply meaning that all pictures are logical in the sense of having a logical form, whether or not they have a pictorial form which is distinct from their logical form.
structure will differ depending on whether or not it is being used to represent a possible state of
the world. For, as noted above, a propositional sign only becomes a representational, senseful
proposition when it is conceived in its projective relation to the world (TLP 3.12). And it is
conceived in its projective relation to the world when it is accompanied by thought, by thinking
the sense of the proposition (TLP 3.11). Hence, a propositional sign on its own, when it isn’t
accompanied by thinking, must be regarded as a non-representational fact, just like the painting
and the clay model when they are regarded as non-representational facts. Its analysis will thus
yield, at the ultimate level, not Tractarian names but Tractarian objects: objects capable of forming,
by combining with each other, the colour and two-dimensional shapes of the letters that make up
the propositional sign. In other words, the propositional sign only becomes analysable into
Tractarian names when it is accompanied by thinking and has thereby become a senseful,
representational proposition.

The structure of the proposition ‘this red apple is on this brown table’ is revealed in full when its
complete analysis has been carried out. As a first step, it would be analysed into the propositions
‘this apple is red’, ‘this table is brown’ and ‘this apple is on this table’, and the analysis would
continue until we reached the level of elementary propositions containing Tractarian names only.
The names yielded by this analysis would designate simple objects capable of combining with
each other to produce redness, brownness, this apple, this table, the spatial relations holding
between these complexes, etc. Note that there is a fundamental difference between the way in
which the proposition succeeds in representing the fact that this red apple is on this brown
table, and the way in which the painting and the clay model succeed in representing this fact. For
the proposition does not succeed in representing this fact by virtue of the fact (in a non-Tractarian
sense) that some of the objects into which it decomposes when it is regarded as a non-
representational fact (i.e. as a propositional sign on its own) resemble or are identical with those
which ultimately constitute the represented fact. Propositions do not succeed in representing the
world in the particular way that they do because they resemble what they depict. Propositions
succeed in representing the world purely because they are analysable into elementary propositions
which mirror the logical structure of states of affairs. According to our Ontological Model, for
instance, such elementary propositions would comply with the generalised form ‘x y z p t,’ whilst
the states of affairs represented by them will comply with the generalised form (x y z p t). In
other words, the reason why propositions succeed in representing the world in the particular
way that they do is the same as the reason why they succeed in representing the world in any
way at all. The pictorial form of propositions is their logical form, which is why Wittgenstein tells
us that:

A picture whose pictorial form is logical form is called a logical picture. \textit{(TLP 2.181)}

A proposition [is a ...] logical picture. \textit{(TLP 4.03)}

From a logical point of view, propositions are therefore the purest type of pictures there could be, since they succeed in representing the world exclusively by virtue of that which all pictures must share, if they are to be pictures at all.

It is worth noting that the representational form of a non-elementary proposition will be the set of conventions which govern the use of expressions in a particular language. Hence, for instance, 'Is to the right of the apple the table' is not a correct representation of the fact that the apple is on the table because it does not comply with the grammatical rules of English: English, as a language, has not created the conventions necessary to make this statement into a senseful representation of the fact that the apple is on the table.

5 \textbf{Conclusion: a definite direction of determination}

Establishing that Tractarian objects have distinct, though inseparable, form and content has enabled us to understand more thoroughly Wittgenstein's view that the meaning of a simple sign is its use and reference and his view that the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in objects determine how names can be used. If a simple sign doesn't stand as the representative of a simple object, it will fail to have a meaning and will not be a genuine Tractarian name. In other words, if the use and reference of a simple sign do not reflect the form and content of the designated object, the sign will be meaningless.

As noted in Part IV, the internal properties of an object determine its form and content. The combinatorial possibilities and impossibilities of an object are built into the object itself:

\textbf{If things [i.e. objects: cf. \textit{TLP 2.01}] can occur in states of affairs, this possibility must be in them from the beginning. \textit{(TLP 2.0121)}}

\textbf{If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs. (Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object.) \textit{(TLP 2.0123)}}

\textbf{Objects contain the possibility of all situations. \textit{(TLP 2.014)}}

Hence, a simple sign will only be meaningful if it complies with the possibilities and impossibilities
inherent in the object it designates: only then will it count as a Tractarian name. This is why, although we can mistakenly think that a sign has a meaning when in fact it doesn’t, and thus use it incorrectly, we cannot use a Tractarian name incorrectly: if a name is a genuine Tractarian name, it will comply with the logic of the object it designates. Which is why:

It is as impossible to represent in language anything that 'contradicts logic' as it is in geometry to represent by its coordinates a figure that contradicts the laws of space, or to give the coordinates of a point that does not exist. (TLP 3.032)

This therefore means that for a sign to be the representative of an object, it must be used to produce arrangements of names which correspond to the combinatorial possibilities inherent in objects. If a sign isn’t used in this way, it will lack meaning, and the arrangements of signs it will help produce will lack sense. Such a sign will not, therefore, be a genuine Tractarian name, and the arrangements of signs it will contribute to will not be genuine (i.e. senseful) elementary propositions.

As a result, whether or not a combination of signs constitutes a genuine elementary proposition is determined by the possibilities inherent in objects. An expression whose arrangement of simple signs does not reflect any of the combinatorial possibilities inherent in objects is not an elementary proposition. The possibilities inherent in Tractarian objects determine whether an elementary expression has sense, and thus whether it is a genuine elementary proposition. Hence:

Empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects. The limit also makes itself manifest in the totality of elementary propositions. (TLP 5.56)

As we saw above, the totality of objects determines what counts as a state of affairs, and therefore what counts as a fact. In other words, the totality of objects determines what facts could possibly be included in ordinary reality. Similarly, the totality of objects determines what counts as an elementary proposition. In turn, since all non-elementary propositions are the result of applying logical operations to elementary ones, this means, in turn, that the range of possible non-elementary propositions is limited by the totality of objects.

Suppose that I am given all elementary propositions: then I can simply ask what propositions I can construct out of them. And there I have all propositions, and that fixes their limits. (TLP 4.51)

That this is the case is shown in the fact that there is a limit to the representational conventions we can adopt: we cannot, for instance, conventionally stipulate that 'this apple is to the left of itself' represents that this apple is to the left of itself. For the latter is not a genuine possible situation of the world, it does not comply with the logic inherent in Tractarian objects.
Hence, the totality of objects determines both what facts can possibly feature in reality, and what expressions are senseful, and thus genuine propositions. Since language is the totality of senseful propositions, it is impossible to represent in language something which ultimately goes against the possibilities inherent in Tractarian objects. An expression which runs counter to these possibilities is not a genuine proposition and does not genuinely belong to language. Once we have conventionally established a particular projective relation, things are out of our hands. The way in which meaningful (simple and complex) names can be used is determined by the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the objects that all propositions are ultimately about.

Although there is something arbitrary in our notations, this much is not arbitrary — that when we have determined one thing arbitrarily, something else is necessarily the case. (*TLP* 3.342)

Propositions (both elementary and non-elementary ones) therefore succeed in having a *determinate* sense because their ultimate constituents are simple names acting as the representatives for simple objects. Which is why:

The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate. (*TLP* 3.25)

As a result, as soon as a propositional sign has been assigned a particular sense, as soon as a particular projective relation is applied to it, the resulting proposition will have one and only one analysis:

A proposition has one and only one complete analysis. (*TLP* 3.25)

Either an expression is a proposition (i.e. a propositional sign in a particular projective relation to the world) and is thus genuinely representing a possible state of the world which is in accord with the possibilities inherent in Tractarian objects, or it isn’t a proposition, in which case it isn’t representing anything. A proposition cannot therefore represent a state of the world which is impossible — that is, which contradicts the set of possibilities inherent in Tractarian objects. (This is indeed part of the reason why a contradictory statement cannot be regarded as a genuine proposition — *TLP* 4.466). Hence, a proposition, if it is a genuine proposition possessing one and only one analysis, cannot be given a ‘wrong’ sense:

We cannot give a sign the wrong sense. (*TLP* 5.4732)

Logic must look after itself.

If a sign is possible, then it is also capable of signifying. Whateoever is possible in logic is also permitted. (The reason why ‘Socrates is identical’ means nothing is that there is no property called ‘identical’. The proposition is nonsensical, because
we have failed to make an arbitrary determination, and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate."

In a certain sense, we cannot make mistakes in logic. \(TLP\) 5.473
Part VI: The connection between language and reality

1 Introduction

In Part V, we explored the *Tractatus' account of what constitutes the meaning of names and the sense of propositions. Wittgenstein tells us that it is by means of the projective relation, by means of thinking of the sense of the proposition (*TLP 3.11), that propositional signs become genuinely representational. It is clear, therefore, that thought is going to play some role in connecting language to the world in the *Tractatus.*

This Part begins with an account of Wittgenstein's claims that thoughts are logical pictures and that the mind is composite: according to Wittgenstein, thought and experience consist in mental representations of possible states of the world. We will then examine a view which has hitherto remained overlooked in the literature: the view that Wittgenstein also posits a non-representational type of awareness, in the *Tractatus.* Whilst representational experience and thought account for our acquaintance with the world (i.e. with necessarily possible states), they cannot account for the awareness that we clearly have of that which cannot be represented in language and thought. In order to account for this, Wittgenstein posits a non-representational type of awareness, which plays a crucial role both in his account of the connection between language and the world and in his discussion of solipsism. This non-representational notion of awareness will be explored in the context of a discussion concerning the distinction between sense, senselessness and nonsense and the distinction between saying and showing.

Having established this, we will examine Wittgenstein's views on the connection between language and the world. A significant level of controversy surrounds the issue of the connection between language and reality in the *Tractatus.* Hacker argues, for instance, that ordinary thought is representationally inert, and that it only succeeds in effecting a connection between language and the world by virtue of the ostensive acts of meaning carried out by a simple transcendental self which is distinct from our ordinary minds.\(^9\) In contrast, Pears, Sluga, Coyne and McDonough hold that no such metaphysical subject is posited in the *Tractatus.*\(^{96}\) I will attempt to show that,  

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According to the *Tractatus*, ordinary thought is responsible, on its own, for effecting the connection between language and the world.

Although I will be mentioning it in this Part, Wittgenstein’s discussion of solipsism will only be examined in detail in Part VII.

2 Thoughts as representations and the composite mind

2.1 Thoughts as pictures

Wittgenstein argues that thoughts are pictures, mental representations of possible states of the world.

- A picture is a model of reality. *(TLP 2.12)*
- ‘A state of affairs is thinkable’: what this means is that we can picture it to ourselves. *(TLP 3.001)*
- The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world. *(TLP 3.01)*

Thoughts are propositional pictures: they are logical pictures whose pictorial form coincides with their logical form:

- A logical picture of facts is a thought. *(TLP 3)*

The logical and representational forms of thoughts will be the same as those of propositions. Thoughts must therefore meet the constraints laid down by Wittgenstein for all pictures, and, in particular, for propositions:

1. Thoughts must represent possible states of the world (states of affairs in the case of elementary thoughts and possible situations of the world made up of logical arrangements of states of affairs in the case of non-elementary thoughts).\(^9\)
2. Thoughts are articulated representational arrangements of (complex or simple) psychical constituents (the mental equivalents of, respectively, words designating complexes and simple names).\(^6\) Thoughts are therefore representational facts,

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\(^6\) Wittgenstein does not use the terms ‘non-elementary thought’ and ‘elementary thought’, but these are the obvious counterpart to non-elementary and elementary propositions, and it is helpful to use these terms, for the sake of clarity.

\(^6\) Again, Wittgenstein speaks only of ‘psychical constituents’ and not of ‘complex and simple psychical constituents’ but these are the obvious counterpart to ordinary words and linguistic simple names, and it is helpful to use these terms, for the sake of clarity. See *NB*, pp. 129 – 130 (Letter to Russell, Cassino, 19.8.19).
like all pictures of the world.

iii Thoughts must be bivalent and bipolar: they must have a determinate truth-value and must both be capable of being true and be capable of being false. Thoughts are determinately true when they represent an obtaining possible state of the world and determinately false when the possible state of the world they represent does not obtain.

All thoughts are the result of applying logical operations to elementary thoughts.

i An elementary thought represents a state of affairs.

ii An elementary thought is made up exclusively of simple psychical constituents, the mental counterpart to linguistic simple signs. These simple psychical constituents designate the simple objects which combine to produce the state of affairs represented by the elementary thought.

iii Elementary thoughts, unlike non-elementary ones, must be independent of each other: the truth-value of one elementary thought cannot determine the truth-value of another elementary thought. Hence, the logical product of two elementary thought will never be a tautology or a contradiction: it will be bivalent and bipolar.

Although it is possible to have a thought which is not expressed by means of a (written, spoken, etc.) propositional sign, there is ample evidence in the Tractatus to suggest that Wittgenstein regards thoughts as being an integral part of propositions. Indeed, as was already indicated in Part V, he argues that a proposition is a propositional sign (e.g. a series of marks on a piece of paper) in its projective relation to the world, and that this projective relation involves thinking of the sense of the proposition.

I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign. – And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world (TLP 3.12)

We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.

The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition. (TLP 3.11)

In a proposition a thought can be expressed in such a way that elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of the thought. (TLP 3.2)

In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses. (TLP 3.1)

Hence a proposition is a propositional sign accompanied by the thought representing the possible state of the world which provides the sense of the proposition. Only when accompanied by the
thinking of a sense does a propositional sign become projected onto the world, and thereby acquires its representational character. (This was already indicated in Part V.)

2.2 Thought and experience

Thoughts are mental representations of the world. As such, they belong to what Wittgenstein calls 'experience'. Experience includes not just what can generally be called a thought (a belief, a judgement, a memory) but also perception. Experiencing the world, like thinking about it, involves mentally representing possible states of the world.

*TLP 5.634* offers several important clues as to Wittgenstein's notion of experience:

This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is at the same time *a priori.*
- Whatever we see could be other than it is.
- Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is.
- There is no *a priori* order of things. (*TLP 5.634*)

Three points can be drawn from this entry:

i. Experiencing is something that we (ordinary minds) do. This is clearly suggested by the use of 'our' in the first sentence of the remark. Whether or not our experience of the world depends, in order to be possible, on the transcendental acts of a metaphysical self, is something that remains to be seen, and which will be discussed below.

ii. The experience to which Wittgenstein is referring here is representational in nature. As we saw above, no representation can be *a priori* true. Hence, 'no part of our experience' can be *a priori* precisely because experience, in this sense, is representational and no genuine representation could ever be *a priori* true. We can only represent composite arrangements of elements, possible states of the world, and it belongs to the nature of such states that they can fail to obtain in reality, and thus be 'other than' they are. Experience in this sense therefore consists of mental representations, which can, of course, be put into words.

It is clear that sensory perception is included in this notion of experience, since, in order to illustrate the point that no part of experience can be *a priori*, Wittgenstein uses the example of

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9 Experience is also sometimes be called 'consciousness' in the literature on this subject. See, for instance, Pears (1987) p. 181.
visual perception. We also know that thoughts are mental representations. The question is, however: are thoughts included in Wittgenstein's notion of experience? NB 9.11.16 shows that Wittgenstein asked himself this very question:

Is belief a kind of experience?
Is thought a kind of experience?
All experience is world and does not need the subject.
The act of the will is not an experience. (NB 9.11.16)

There is no good reason to suppose that he gave negative answers to the two questions in this entry. Indeed, the most natural way to read it is to regard it as holding that beliefs and thoughts are experiences and that they do not require a 'subject' (whatever might be meant by this term here – this issue will be explored below) in order to be possible. This is corroborated by the Notebooks entry which follows immediately after:

What kind of reason is there for the assumption of a willing subject?
Is not my world adequate for individuation? (NB 19.11.16)

We will therefore take it that, according to Wittgenstein, beliefs and thoughts are included in this representational notion of experience, just as sensory perceptions are. This view is indeed accepted by most authors.®

In summary: experiencing, in this sense, is something that we (ordinary people) do, and which involves providing mental representations of possible states of the world. Perception, thinking and believing are all regarded by Wittgenstein as types of 'experience' in this sense.

2.3 The composite mind

Wittgenstein's view that thoughts are articulated pictures of the world and therefore facts, entails that our minds cannot be simple selves: a mind is not a simple entity 'having' thoughts, but a composite cluster of thoughts, of representational facts.

In the general propositional form propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations. (TLP 5.54)

® Although, as we saw in Part IV, simple, unalterable objects can be 'described' by giving the states of the world that they help to produce, these objects cannot be described in the way that complex, alterable objects can: we cannot, in language, give a description of simple objects which analyses them into even simpler objects, since Tractarian objects are simple. Indeed, as noted in Part IV, 'pure form' and 'pure content' are not genuine objects and cannot therefore act as the meanings of names. When Wittgenstein says 'Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is' in TLP 5.634, he must therefore mean that whatever we can describe via an analysis into simpler elements could be other than it is.

At first sight it looks as if it were also possible for one proposition to occur in another in a different way.

Particularly with certain forms of proposition in psychology, such as ‘A believes that $p$ is the case’ and ‘A has the thought $p$’, etc.

For if these are considered superficially, it looks as if the proposition $p$ stood in some kind of relation to an object $A$. (TLP 5.541)

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. (TLP 5.542).

This shows too that there is no such thing as the soul — the subject, etc. — as it is conceived in the superficial psychology of the present day.

Indeed a composite soul would no longer be a soul. (TLP 5.5421)

The correct explanation of the form of the proposition, ‘A makes the judgement $p$’, must show that it is impossible for a judgement to be a piece of nonsense. (TLP 5.5422)

Wittgenstein argues that the ‘superficial psychology of the present day’ interprets propositions such as ‘A believes that $p$’ or ‘A has the thought that $p$’ (where ‘A’ stands for some mind doing this believing and thinking, and ‘$p$’ for a proposition), by saying that they represent the fact that a simple object (namely mind $A$) stands in a particular relation (i.e. here, the relations of believing and thinking) to proposition ‘$p$’, a linguistic fact (TLP 5.541). If this was the case, then it wouldn’t be true that ‘propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-functions’: the proposition ‘A has the thought that $p$’ would indeed not be the result of applying logical operations to two propositions ‘$p$’ and ‘A has the thought that’, but would depict the holding of a ‘thinking’ relation between a simple object $A$ and a representational fact, proposition ‘$p$’.

Wittgenstein argues that, if this was the case, it would be impossible to speak of mind $A$ and to say things like ‘A believes that $p$’ or ‘A thinks that $p$’. For it is only by means of propositions that we can sensefully say anything, and propositions are arrangements of signs depicting composite, articulated arrangements of objects. Since $A$ would, in this theory, be a simple object, we would not be able to provide linguistic representations of it:

Objects can only be named. Signs are their representatives. [...] I cannot put them into words. (TLP 3.221)

Since it is possible to speak sensefully about minds and the mental actions they perform, this cannot be the case. ‘A has the thought that $p$’ must instead be roughly equivalent to ‘A fact about certain psychical constituents in $A$’s mind [namely the fact that they are related to each other in such and such a determinate way] represents that $p$’. This fact in $A$’s mind represents (i.e. is correlated to) the fact $p$ by virtue of the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that the ultimate constituents of the fact in $A$’s mind are correlated with the simple objects that ultimately make up the fact $p$. ‘A has the thought that $p$’ therefore has the same form as “$p$ says $p$”. For a propositional
sign (e.g. 'p') is a fact and it is correlated with the possible fact that is its sense (i.e. in this case, p) by virtue of a correlation of their respective constituents (TLP 5.542). A's believing that p, A's thinking that p and the proposition 'p' are all representations of p: they must therefore, like any other pictures of p, 'all be constructed according to a common logical pattern' (TLP 4.014).

Explaining 'A has the thought that p' in this way shows 'that it is impossible for a judgement to be a piece of nonsense' in that, if A's thinking genuinely constitutes a mental representation of p, then it will be constructed according to the logical possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the objects that ultimately make up p, and will thus, necessarily, be senseful (TLP 5.5422). It will represent a logically possible arrangement of objects.

Thought can never be of anything illogical, since, if it were, we should have to think illogically. (TLP 3.03)

To think illogically would involve mentally representing an arrangement which contravenes the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in objects. But, for this to take place, the ultimate constituents of the thought in question would have to be failing to act as the representatives for simple objects, in which case they would fail to have a meaning. The thought would thus fail to have a sense: it would not be representing anything, it would not be a genuine thought. As in the case of propositions (and all other pictures), either a thought is constructed according to the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in Tractarian objects, in which case it is a genuine representation of the world, or it isn't, in which case it isn't representing anything.

The fact that we can sensefully speak of minds and of the mental actions they perform shows that minds cannot be the simple selves posited by 'the superficial psychology of the present day' (TLP 5.5421) and by 'modern theory of knowledge (Russell, Moore, etc.)' (TLP 5.541). Minds cannot be simple, object-like things that 'have' or 'entertain' thoughts (TLP 5.5421). Instead, minds are clusters of thoughts, conglomerates of composite, articulated mental representations. The mind is not distinct from these thoughts, it is not a simple self 'having' these thoughts: the mind is entirely exhausted by the thoughts that make it up. Minds are, just like the thoughts that make them up, representational facts. They are therefore located within the world as the totality of facts (TLP 1.1).

For the sake of clarity, I will from now on use the expressions 'empirical mind(s)' to refer to these composite clusters of thoughts located within the world as the totality of facts, and 'empirical
thought(s)' to refer to mental representations of all types (e.g. beliefs, memories, imaginings, etc.), which are also located within this world.

3 A non-representational awareness

According to Wittgenstein, we can grasp possible states of the world by means of experience; that is, by means of mental representation. However, experience is not the only means by which we can gain knowledge about the world, according to the Tractatus. For Wittgenstein posits also a non-representational notion of awareness and holds that it is this non-representational awareness which allows us to grasp that which cannot be represented by means of thought or language (e.g. the logical scaffolding of the world and of representation). Noting this is crucial if we are to understand Wittgenstein’s distinction between saying and showing and his distinction between sense, lack of sense and nonsense. And yet, this notion of non-representational awareness has been seriously overlooked in the literature.\(^{100}\) For the sake of clarity, I will use the term ‘awareness’ for this non-representational notion, and the term ‘experience’ for the representational one.

This non-representational notion of awareness is implicit in the whole of the Tractatus. Consider for instance TLP 5.552:

The ‘experience’ that we need in order to understand logic is not that something or other is the state of things, but that something is: that, however, is not an experience.

\(\text{(TLP } 5.552)\)

In order to understand logic, we (i.e. ordinary people) need to be capable of a certain type of awareness. This type of awareness cannot, however, be called ‘experience’ (hence Wittgenstein’s use of inverted commas), since it isn’t representational in nature: it does not involve depicting possible states of the world (which may or may not obtain), but grasping the underlying logical scaffolding of the world. The logical scaffolding of the world is determined by the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in Tractarian objects, and these, like the objects themselves, belong to all possible worlds. Hence, ‘the ‘experience’ that we need in order to understand logic’ cannot consist in mentally representing possible states which may or may not obtain, and which could therefore be other than they are.

Similarly, what Wittgenstein calls ‘knowing’ an object (see Part IV, section 4.5), will too have to

involve this type of non-representational awareness. It is worth remembering that the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that a particular object has this set of internal properties (i.e. can produce these possible states of the world) is not something that can be said by means of propositions (see TLP 4.122 and our discussion of this issue in Part IV). It cannot be represented in language, and, for the same reasons, it cannot be represented in experience or thought either. Knowledge of simple objects must therefore be regarded as a form of non-representational awareness.

The same idea emerges again in Wittgenstein’s remarks on the Picture Theory:

> We understand the sense of a propositional sign without its having been explained to us. (TLP 4.02)

> A proposition shows its sense. (TLP 4.022)

According to Wittgenstein’s numbering system, TLP 4.022 is a comment on or an expansion of TLP 4.02. Hence the idea is that we understand the sense of a proposition without needing to have it explained to us, precisely because its sense shows itself to us. And Wittgenstein tells us that what can be shown cannot be said:

> What can be shown, cannot be said. (TLP 4.1212)

If by ‘the sense’ of a proposition in TLP 4.02 Wittgenstein meant simply the possible state depicted by the proposition, then it would be unintelligible of him to claim that the sense of a proposition can only be shown: the possible states of the world which provide the sense of propositions can, of course, be put into words, and thus said, namely by means of those propositions which depict them. Thus by ‘the sense of a proposition’ Wittgenstein must mean here, not the depicted state per se, but the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that this state is depicted by this proposition. This is indeed something that cannot be said, but which can only show itself to us: we can represent a possible state of the world by means of a proposition, but we cannot represent by means of a proposition the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that this state of the world is depicted by this proposition. The statement ‘this proposition depicts this possible state of the world’ is not a genuine proposition, since it isn’t itself depicting a possible state of the world. TLP 4.02 and 4.022 taken together therefore put forward the idea that:

i To understand a proposition is to understand that it represents this possible state of the world.

ii The reason why we (empirical minds) can grasp that this possible state of the
world is the one depicted by this proposition is that this shows itself to us. If this
didn’t show itself to us, we would be unable to understand propositions without
having them explained to us.

Thus:

A proposition shows how things stand if it is true. And it says that they do so stand.
(TLP 4.022)

For something successfully to show itself to us, however, we must be capable of grasping it. It is a
trivial fact that something which cannot be grasped by us cannot be said to show itself to us. This
grasp we must have of what is being shown to us cannot, however, be representational: it will
have to involve some kind of non-representational awareness.

To sum up: Wittgenstein holds that we (ordinary people) are capable of gaining insights by two
different means:

i Via experience proper which consists in mental representation and includes
perception, thinking and believing. This is what we use in order to grasp possible
states of the world.

ii Via a non-representational type of awareness. This is what enables us to grasp that
which cannot be said or mentally represented, but which shows itself to us (e.g.
the logical scaffolding of the world and of representation). We know that this type
of awareness must be possible according to Wittgenstein, but we don’t yet know
what it involves, or how it manifests itself.

These two ways of gaining insights are self-exclusive, since what can be shown cannot be said
(TLP 4.1212). Thus, that of which we can be non-representationally aware will not be something
that we can mentally represent. That which can be shown cannot be said, and cannot therefore
be given (i.e. represented) in experience either.

4 Sense, lack of sense, and nonsense

It is now possible to draw the distinction between those statements which are senseful, those
which are senseless or lacking in sense, and those which are nonsensical. A senseful statement is
any bivalent and bipolar proposition depicting a possible state of the world. In turn, a statement
is ‘senseless’ or ‘lacking in sense’ when it says nothing (i.e. it does not depict a possible state of
the world) and shows clearly that it says nothing. In spite of not saying anything, such statements
are nevertheless part of the symbolism because they show us something importantly correct
which cannot be said or thought or experienced, but of which we can become non-representationally
aware. Finally, a ‘nonsensical’ statement is one which fails to say anything (i.e. it fails to depict a
possible situation of the world), but which, in addition, also fails to show clearly that it says
nothing. It is a statement which attempts to say the unsayable without showing clearly that it is
unsayable and which thereby conveys an incorrect impression about the logical scaffolding of the
world and of representation.

This distinction between senseful, senseless and nonsensical statements emerges most clearly in
Wittgenstein’s discussion of tautologies and contradictions.

Among the possible groups of truth-conditions there are two extreme cases. […]
In one of these cases the proposition is true for all the truth-possibilities of the
elementary propositions. We say that the truth-conditions are tautological.
In the second case the proposition is false for all the truth-possibilities: the
truth-conditions are contradictory.
In the first case we call the proposition a tautology; in the second, a contradiction.
(TLP 4.46)

Propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say
nothing.
A tautology has no truth-conditions, since it is unconditionally true: and a
contradiction is true on no conditions.
Tautologies and contradictions lack sense. […]
(For example, I know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either
raining or not raining.) (TLP 4.461)

Tautologies and contradictions are not, however, nonsensical. They are part of the
symbolism, much as ‘0’ is part of the symbolism of arithmetic. (TLP 4.461)

A tautology’s truth is certain, a proposition’s possible, a contradiction’s impossible.
(TLP 4.464)

Several important points can be drawn from these entries:

i Contradictory and tautological statements do not say anything (4.461). They lack
sense in that they are not depicting possible states of the world (i.e. states both
capable of obtaining and capable of failing to obtain in reality), and are not therefore
bipolar or bivalent. They are not well formed propositions: they do not meet the
constraints laid down by Wittgenstein for representation. They are therefore
uninformative in the sense that they are not putting forward a claim about how
the world might be. They do not tell us anything about what might be included in
the world as the totality of facts.
Nevertheless, contradictory and tautological statements are not nonsensical (TLP 4.4611).

Contradictory and tautological statements show something. In particular, they show that they say nothing (TLP 4.461).

Contradictory statements express (though do not say) impossibilities, that is, things that fail to obtain a priori, in all possible worlds (TLP 4.464). In turn, tautological statements express (though do not say) things that obtain a priori in all possible worlds (TLP 4.464).

The tautological statement ‘It is raining or it isn’t raining’ does not tell us anything about the contents of reality. It is informative only in the sense that it shows something important about the logical scaffolding of the world (namely that the disjunction of a proposition and its negation is true in all possible worlds). It therefore belongs, like all tautological and contradictory statements, to the limits of language. Note indeed that, even though contradictory and tautological statements do not play the full role of well formed propositions (i.e. they do not represent possible states of the world and aren’t therefore both capable of being true and capable of being false), they nevertheless play part of the role of propositions, according to Wittgenstein: they play the role of showing (TLP 4.461 – cf. TLP 4.022, quoted above). It is because they play part of this role that Wittgenstein can loosely call them ‘propositions’ in TLP 4.46 and 4.461. They are not well formed propositions but they can still be said to belong to the propositional ‘kind’: although they do not play the full role of propositions (i.e. that of saying and showing), they do play part of this role (i.e. that of showing something unsayably correct). They are thus, as Wittgenstein puts it, ‘part of the symbolism’ (4.4611). In other words, they are pseudo-propositions, limiting cases of the well formed proposition. Indeed, if some statements weren’t a priori false and others a priori true, truth wouldn’t be what it is, and there could be no well formed, bivalent and bipolar propositions. Contradictory and tautological statements are part of the structure of truth, and therefore part of what makes well formed propositions what they are. It is highly possible that Wittgenstein regarded variables in a similar way: variables might have been, for him, pseudo-names, just like tautologies and contradictions are pseudo-propositions. For, although variables designate no specific objects, they give us an insight into the nature of objects and the logical scaffolding of the world: they give us an insight into generality. Property variables (such as the variable ‘ϕ’ mentioned in TLP 5.5261) show, for instance, that there is something common to all names for properties, since a property variable marks the logical place to be occupied by (i.e. the use to be given to) all names designating properties. In turn, since names are the representatives for objects, variables help to
show that there is something common to all properties: a given form, a given logical place in possible states of the world. In addition, a variable can be used, according to Wittgenstein, for showing that there is something common to all objects (TLP 4.1272). As a result, it highly likely that statements comprising variables would have been regarded by Wittgenstein as being senseless, but not nonsensical.101

In summary, those statements which show, without pretending to say, something unsayably correct are senseless statements: they lack sense (i.e. they say nothing) but they are not nonsensical. Tautologies and contradictions are precisely such statements: they do not purport to say anything, indeed they clearly show that they say nothing. That they say nothing, however, shows something unsayably correct and important about the logical scaffolding of the world and of language. Because these statements show something unsayably correct, they can be regarded as fulfilling at least part of the role of well-formed propositions: they are, as noted above, part of the symbolism, they are pseudo-propositions.

In contrast, nonsensical statements are those statements which appear to say something when in fact they do not, and which convey, because of this, an incorrect impression about what can and cannot be said (and thus about the logical scaffolding of the world and of representation). Consider, first of all, statements such as ‘There are objects’, ‘There are facts’, etc. and those statements which mention ‘The total number of objects’, ‘The total number of facts’, etc. These statements are characterised by Wittgenstein as being nonsensical in TLP 4.1272. Indeed, these statements say nothing (in that they do not depict necessarily possible situations of the world), but they don’t show clearly that they say nothing (like tautologies and contradictions do). On the contrary, they appear to be putting into words important insights about the logical scaffolding of the world. The insights that they purport to express in this way are correct, according to Wittgenstein, since he himself, in the Tractatus, argues that there are objects (TLP 2.026) and facts (TLP 1.2), and speaks of the totality of objects (TLP 5.5561) and of the totality of facts (TLP 1.1). The reason why these statements are nonsensical isn’t therefore that the insights that they purport to express are incorrect. The reason is, rather, that, in attempting to express these (correct) insights without making it clear that the insights are unsayable, they convey a misleading impression about what can and cannot be said. By attempting to put into words, in this way, these unsayably correct insights, these statements convey the mistaken impression that such insights can be put into

101 At least when these variables are being used correctly. Cf. TLP 5.5351.
words. They mislead us into thinking that these insights can be represented by means of language, when in fact they cannot. In other words, what this type of nonsensical statement gives with one hand it takes away with the other: these statements help us gain a correct insight into what must be the case for representation to be possible, whilst, at the same time, misleading us into believing that it is possible to represent in language things that cannot be represented.

According to Wittgenstein, the insights that these statements mistakenly attempt to put into words are correct and can be shown to us. The other side of this coin is of course that, when these insights are _shown_ to us and that we grasp them, this 'grasping' will _not_ involve having mental representations of them, but becoming non-representationally aware of them (see again _TLP_ 5.552, quoted above). In the following entry, Wittgenstein gives an example of how we might succeed in showing one of these unsayably correct insights:

> The existence of an internal property of a possible situation is not expressed by means of a proposition: rather, it expresses itself in the proposition representing the situation, by means of an internal property of that proposition.

> It would be just as nonsensical to assert that a proposition has a formal property as to deny it. (_TLP_ 4.124)

Consider also, for instance, the insight that there are simple and necessary objects. For this insight could be _shown_ by carrying out a complete analysis of language. If we carried out such an analysis, then, according to Wittgenstein, we would eventually reach a level at which signs could not be analysed further. And this would _show_ us that, at this ultimate level, names must designate objects which are simple. Since names act as the representative of objects, and since names, at this level, cannot be analysed further, the objects that they designate must be equally undecomposable. Similarly, if we carried out a complete analysis of language, we would come to realise that these unanalysable names help to produce both propositions which are true and propositions which are false. Noticing this would help us realise, in turn, that the objects designated by these names must be the ultimate constituents of both real and imaginary states of the world. And this, in turn, would help us become non-representationally aware of the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that these objects must be the constituents of all possible (i.e. thinkable) worlds, and must therefore be necessary (cf. _TLP_ 2.022). When Wittgenstein wrote the _Tractatus_, he hadn't carried out a full analysis of language. He therefore felt compelled to convey certain insights by attempting to put them into words (e.g. by saying things such as ‘There are objects’, ‘There are facts’, and by speaking of ‘The totality of objects’ and ‘The totality of facts’). But he was well aware of the fact that attempting to put these insights into words was not the best way of conveying them:
although it helped to transmit certain key notions, it also created a deeply misleading and mistaken impression as to what could and could not be sensefully said. This is why, at the end of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein wrote:

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them — as steps — to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
> He must transcend these propositions and then he will see the world aright. (*TLP 6.54*)

The *Tractatus* also suggests that there are other nonsensical statements, which are, in a way, doubly nonsensical. These are statements which not only attempt to put into words that which cannot be said, but which do this in an attempt to convey insights which are, in fact, *incorrect* (i.e. unsayably incorrect). In other words, the insights that these statements attempt to express are not insights that could ever be *shown*: these are insights which cannot be said or shown, precisely because they are ultimately incorrect. As an example of such a nonsensical statement, consider for instance the claim that the empirical mind is simple, which is, according to Wittgenstein, advanced by the 'modern theory of knowledge (Russell, Moore, etc.)' (*TLP 5.541*). This isn't just something which cannot be *said*: it is also something that could never be shown, since it doesn't express a correct insight into the mind. Indeed, an analysis of language would show that the opposite is correct: the empirical mind is composite, not simple. A statement such as 'The empirical mind is simple' is therefore 'doubly' nonsensical: it mistakenly attempts to express in language a mistaken view. Indeed, it is possible that Wittgenstein believed most philosophical statements and questions to be doubly nonsensical in this way:

> Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only point out that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of language. (The belong to the same class as the question whether the good is more or less identical than the beautiful.)
> And it is not surprising that the deepest problems are in fact not problems at all. (*TLP 4.003*)

To sum up, nonsensical statements (of either variety) are characterised in the following way:

1. They convey at least one incorrect insight about what can and cannot be represented (and thus an incorrect insight into the logical scaffolding of the world and of

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102 These aren’t, necessarily, all of the varieties of nonsensical statements envisaged by the *Tractatus*. 
Nonsensical statements of the first type (e.g. 'There are objects') mistakenly attempt to put into words insights which are correct. These insights cannot be said but can be conveyed by means of showing. Statements of the second type (e.g. 'The empirical mind is simple) attempt to put into words things that cannot be said or shown, because they are ultimately incorrect.

Since nonsensical statements (of both varieties) attempt to say things that cannot be said, one good way of identifying whether a given question or statement is nonsensical is to ask ourselves whether it can be replied to by means of language.

To ask whether a formal concept exists is nonsensical. For no propositions can be the answer to that question.

(So, for example, the question, ‘Are there unanalysable subject-predicate propositions?’ cannot be asked.) (TLP 4.1274)

Scepticism is not irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked.

For doubts can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something can be said. (TLP 6.51)

5 Connecting language to the world

The time has come to examine Wittgenstein’s views on the connection between language and reality. In particular, we need to ask ourselves the question: how – by virtue of what – is the connection between simple signs and objects established? What is Wittgenstein’s account of this connection? Hacker argues that this connection is explained, according to Wittgenstein, by referring to the ostensive acts of meaning performed by a simple, transcendental self belonging to the limits of the world. In contrast, Ishiguro, McGuinness and Sullivan reject the view that ostension plays a role in effecting the connection between simple signs and their bearers, and Sluga, amongst others, argues that representation does not require a transcendental self in the Tractatus. In this section, I propose to show that, according to the Tractatus, the connection between simple signs and objects cannot be accounted for by referring to the ostensive acts of a simple, transcendental self. It must, instead, be explained by considering the role played in representation by the composite, empirical mind.
5.1 Two contrasting accounts

I will begin by giving an account of the interpretations put forward by Hacker, Ishiguro and McGuinness. Once this is done, we will be able to assess these accounts and to put forward a new understanding of Wittgenstein’s views on the connection between simple names and objects.

5.1.1 The interpretation put forward by Hacker

Hacker begins by accepting the view that no simple, representing self can be located in the world, according to Wittgenstein.102 Hacker argues, however, that the *Tractatus* does posit such a simple, representing self at the limits of the world, and that this metaphysical self is the transcendental precondition of Tractarian representation. Indeed, according to Hacker, Wittgenstein’s argument against the view that our minds are simple selves entertaining thoughts is not exhausted by *TLP* 5.54 – 5.542, but carries over into *TLP* 5.631, 5.633, 5.6331 and 5.634, where it is shown that such a simple self must nevertheless be posited at the limits of the world. He argues that a metaphysical, representing subject needs to be posited precisely because only such a subject could effect the connection between simple names and simple signs.101

Wittgenstein is presented as advancing two distinct arguments for this view, in *TLP* 5.631, 5.633, 5.6331 and 5.634: an argument from the non-encounterability of a simple self in the world, and an argument from the *a prioricity* of such a self.

Let us consider first the non-encounterability argument:

There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called *The world as I found it*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather, of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book. (*TLP* 5.631)

The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world. (*TLP* 5.632)

Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?

You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye.

And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is being seen by an

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Hacker argues that these remarks show that no simple self entertaining thoughts can be encountered in the world as it can be given in experience. Experience is mental representation, and ‘the world’ is the world as it can possibly be given in experience — the totality of possible states which can be depicted in experience by means of mental representation. Since mental representation, like all representation, can depict only composite possible states of the world and facts, and since a simple self would not be composite, no such self can ever be encountered in this world. According to Hacker, a simple self is, however, posited in these entries at the limits of the world: although our ordinary minds located in the world are not simple, a simple, representing subject must be posited at the limits of the world, because, without it, senseful language would not be possible (TLP 5.632).

The above argument is, he claims, supplemented by the *a prioricity* argument. 105

This is connected with the fact that no part of experience is at the same time *a priori*. Whatever we see could be other than it is. Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is. There is no *a priori* order of things. (TLP 5.634)

Since representations cannot be *a priori* true, no experience, defined in terms of mental representation, can be *a priori* true either. If the thinking, experiencing self was located in the world, however, we would be able to experience it. But then, given that such a self would be the one ‘doing the experiencing’, our experience of it would be *a priori* true: if we were able to experience this self, we would always experience it, since, without it, there would be no experiencing. Our experience of this self would thus be an *a priori* true mental representation, which is impossible. The simple representing self cannot therefore belong to the world as it can be given in experience: it must belong to the limits of the world and must therefore be a metaphysical self.

Thus, according to Hacker, Wittgenstein rejects empirical solipsism only to endorse a transcendental

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version of this doctrine. Whilst his rejection of a simple self located in the world entails that he
cannot be said to be an empirical solipsist, his acceptance of a transcendental self belonging to
the limits of the world turns him into a transcendental solipsist: the world is the world of the
metaphysical self, and the metaphysical self is transcendental in that it is the precondition of

This remark provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism.
For what the solipsist means is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest.
The world is my world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of language (of that language which alone I understand [of the only language I understand]) mean the limits of my world. (TLP 5.62)

Wittgenstein is thus here presented as agreeing with the essence of transcendental solipsism. The only criticism he raises against this doctrine, according to Hacker, is that solipsism tries to say what can only be shown.\footnote{See Hacker (1986) p. 81. See also O’Brien (1996) pp. 175 – 176.} Since representation is not possible without this transcendental self, the statement ‘the transcendental self is the precondition of representation’ is \textit{a priori} true. It is not a genuine proposition, and cannot therefore be sensefully said. Such a statement would therefore be a senseless, but not nonsensical statement: although it does not represent a possible state of the world capable of failing to obtain, it is showing something unsayably correct, namely the fact that representation requires a method of projection, thinking of the sense of the proposition, and that this thinking is made possible only by virtue of the transcendental self.

It is worth noting the two key assumptions which underlie this understanding of the \textit{Tractatus}. Firstly, Hacker assumes that Wittgenstein agrees with the \textit{definition} of the ‘self’ put forward by ‘the superficial psychology of the present day’ (TLP 5.5421). According to Hacker, although Wittgenstein rejects the view that a simple self could be located in the world, he agrees that a self, in order to be a genuine self, must be simple, and thus akin to a simple object. Hence, according to Hacker, when Wittgenstein says

\begin{quote}
Indeed a composite soul would no longer be a soul. (TLP 5.5421)
\end{quote}

he is endorsing the idea that only a simple self could be a genuine self. This is why, he claims, the metaphysical self posited by Wittgenstein at the limits of the world is simple.

Secondly, this interpretation assumes that, for Wittgenstein, ordinary, empirical thought is
representationally inert. Although propositional signs only become genuine propositions when accompanied by empirical thought, empirical thought could not ensure this projective relation if it wasn't for the intentional acts of meaning carried out by the transcendental self. Hence, although empirical thoughts and propositional signs provide representations of the world, they do not do so in and of themselves: they require, in order to be able to represent the world, the transcendental, non-composite self which belongs to the limits of the world. It is this metaphysical self, therefore, which is the genuine source of the projective relations that render representation possible in the *Tractatus*. 108

According to Hacker's interpretation, the transcendental self renders representation possible by connecting simple signs to simple objects. It is the ostensive pointing of the self to objects which makes it possible to explain the meanings of simple signs. Thus, Hacker explains Wittgenstein's remark that:

> I correlate the facts to the symbol 'xRy' by thus dividing them into those of like sense and those of opposite sense. To this correlation corresponds the correlation of name and meaning. Both are psychological. (NB p. 99)

by saying that:

> it is plausible to suppose that Wittgenstein conceived of the correlation of names and the objects that are their meanings (Bedeutungen) as effected by acts of meaning (meinen), i.e. meaning this object by such and such a name. The directedness of symbols is derived from mental acts that one performs in using symbols. 109

> For it is probable that he [Wittgenstein] had himself conceived of meaning something by a sign as an act of will performed not by the empirical self... but by the metaphysical self, the willing subject (NB p.80). 110

Hacker expands on this in *Insight and Illusion*, by commenting on Wittgenstein's notion of 'elucidations':

> So, if we are to share a common language, 'the meaning of simple signs must be explained to us if we are to understand them' (*TLP*, 4.026). This is done by means of elucidations or clarifications... 111

According to Hacker, there are two ways of understanding Wittgenstein's remarks on 'elucidations'. 112 His own view is that elucidations are, in the *Tractatus*, propositions providing

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ostensive definitions (e.g. 'This is A'). He argues that Wittgenstein must have been confused on this issue, since no expression can, at the same time, be a well formed proposition and provide an ostensive definition:

in the Tractatus the envisaged elucidations were assigned two essentially incompatible roles, viz. as bipolar propositions and as rules (explanations of meaning) i.e. ostensive definitions... The Tractatus elucidation was, I think, conceived of in the form of the sentence 'This is A', a form shared by the bipolar proposition 'This is A' and by the ostensive definition (which is a rule, not a bipolar proposition) 'This is A'.

The alternative to this interpretation of Wittgenstein's concept of 'elucidation', consists, according to Hacker, in the view that:

an elucidation is a 'full-blown' proposition (i.e. elementary proposition) in which the signs are used to make a true or false statement. On this view it is emphasized that I cannot grasp the meaning of a name independently of its use in propositions. I do not first learn the meaning of a name by hooking it on to an object and then put it together with other words to form a sentence.

According to this second understanding, an 'elucidation' of the term 'red', for instance, would be a well formed proposition making use of the word 'red' – for instance 'The red apple is on the table'. The idea would be that we come to grasp the meaning of 'red' by being exposed to well formed propositions in which the word 'red' is used correctly. It is these well formed propositions that Wittgenstein would be calling 'elucidations'.

Hacker argues that this second interpretation cannot be correct for three reasons. Firstly, it entails that Wittgenstein is saying something contradictory in TLP 3.263:

Clearly Wittgenstein is not saying that before one can understand propositions one must understand the names that occur in them and that in order to understand names one must understand the propositions in which they occur.

Secondly, it implies that all propositions making use of a given simple sign constitute elucidations of that simple sign. Thirdly, Hacker argues that there is ample, though speculative, evidence for the view that it is ostension which binds language to the world for the early Wittgenstein. He refers us to the following passages from the Notebooks to support this point:

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116 See Hacker (1986) p.76. ‘Well-formed’ or ‘full blown’ propositions are propositions that meet the constraints laid down by Wittgenstein for representation and discussed in Part V.
117 Clearly, I am not arguing here that 'red' is a simple name, since redness does not satisfy the logical independence constraint and cannot be a Tractarian object. I am merely using this example for the sake of simplicity.
Names are necessary for the assertion that this thing possesses that property. (NB 31.5.15)

"What seems given to us a priori is the concept This. — Identical with the concept of the object. (NB 16.6.15)

Finally, Hacker points us to Wittgenstein’s later avowal of having been confused about ostension in the Tractatus.¹¹⁹

In the Tractatus logical analysis and ostensive definition were unclear to me. At the time I thought there was ‘a connection between language and reality’.¹²⁰

Note that Hacker’s view that simple signs are connected to Tractarian objects by means of ostensive definitions entails that objects are perceivable. For one can only ostensively point to that which is perceived. We will return to this point below.

To sum up, Hacker argues that:

i The connection between simple signs and objects is effected by means of ostensive definitions. These ostensive definitions are what Wittgenstein calls ‘elucidations’.

ii It is the simple, transcendental self, not the ordinary, empirical mind, which performs these ostensive acts of meaning.

Hacker’s account makes use of the following assumptions:

i Empirical thought cannot, on its own, effect the connection between simple signs and objects because it is representationally inert: simple psychical constituents need to be connected to objects by virtue of something external to them, just like in the case of simple linguistic signs.

ii Wittgenstein agrees with the view that a composite self cannot be a genuine self.

iii Tractarian objects are perceivable and can thus be ostensively pointed at.

¹²⁰ See Waismann (1979) p. 209 f.
5.1.2 The interpretation put forward by Ishiguro and McGuinness

Although the account advanced by Ishiguro, McGuinness and Sullivan rests on the view, discarded in Part III, that objects are purely formal, it is worth examining their thoughts on the connection between simple signs and objects, since they are diametrically opposed to Hacker’s and serve as a useful counterpoint. These two interpretations indeed present the two opposite poles of the literature’s debate on the connection between language and the world in the *Tractatus*.\(^{121}\)

A first consequence that Ishiguro and McGuinness draw from the view that objects are purely formal is that learning the meaning of a simple name can only be achieved by attending to propositions in which the criteria for the correct use of this name are exhibited. Ishiguro and McGuinness therefore argue that Wittgenstein rejects the Ostensive Definition Model of meaning (ODM), according to which we learn the meaning of a name by identifying, in the first place, the object designated by this name. In contrast, ODM interpretations of the *Tractatus* hold that it is through perceptual acquaintance with Tractarian objects, understood as irreducible units possessing both a form and a content, that we work out the meaning of the names that designate them. According to the ODM interpretation, to grasp the meaning of a name involves grasping not only the way in which the name is used, but also its reference, which is distinct from this use: it is by becoming acquainted with this reference that the use of the name (the criteria for its correct use) becomes clear to us. Objects are therefore presented as the pre-linguistically ‘given’ which determines the correct use of names, and therefore what can and cannot be sensefully said. According to Ishiguro, the fact that ODM interpretations of Wittgenstein are incorrect is shown in the fact that one can only ostensively point to that which can be perceived.\(^{122}\) In fact, for ostension to apply it is not sufficient that an object should be a possible object of perception: the object needs to be currently being perceived, if we are to speak of ostensively pointing at it. Hence, if I know the meaning of ‘Pablo Picasso’ but have never perceived the man or any images of the man, I cannot be said to have learnt the meaning of this expression by having had Pablo Picasso ostensively pointed out to me.

According to Ishiguro and McGuinness, Tractarian objects are purely formal (and do not therefore

\(^{121}\) See Hacker (1986) p. 76.

\(^{122}\) See Ishiguro (1969) p. 29.
possess material properties), and cannot therefore be perceived. As a result, it cannot be the case that, according to the *Tractatus*, we learn the meaning of simple names by ostensively pointing to the objects they designate. Instead, Ishiguro and McGuinness argue that we learn the meaning of a simple name by attending to 'elucidations' of this name.

"The meanings of primitive signs can be explained by means of elucidations. Elucidations are propositions that contain the primitive signs. So they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known. (TLP 3.263)"

'Elucidations', in this view, are propositions in which the name is used correctly. Ishiguro argues that this doesn't entail that Wittgenstein is saying something contradictory or circular in *TLP* 3.263. Wittgenstein isn't here saying that we learn the meaning (i.e. the use) of a simple name by attending to elucidations, but that, in order for these to be of help to us, we already need to know the meaning (i.e. the use) of this simple name. Instead, what he is trying to point out when he says 'So they can only be understood if the meaning of those signs are already known' (*TLP* 3.263) is that, when one understands an elucidation, one is already identifying the reference of the simple name used in it, because the reference of a name is just its use in propositions.

A second consequence that Ishiguro and McGuinness draw from the view that objects are purely formal is that we do not identify simple objects in the way that we might identify ordinary objects (such as tables, bodies, etc.). Since simple objects are purely formal, and are not therefore perceivable, to identify a simple is just to grasp the criteria for the correct use of the name that designates it. In other words, simple objects are only identified by coming to understand the 'elucidations' that clarify the meaning of simple names. We do not therefore discover the nature of Tractarian objects through perceptual acquaintance, and thereby learn the correct use of names. The opposite is the case: we grasp the correct use of simple names, and thereby come to identify the simple objects these names designate.

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125 Note however that Ishiguro's and McGuinness' conception of elucidations differ. For Ishiguro, elucidations are elementary, logical propositions that show the purely formal role of objects. McGuinness argues in contrast that elucidations are non-elementary propositions: ordinary propositions such as 'This table is red' show the logical role that all properties and all particulars have, and can therefore help us learn the meaning of simple names. See Ishiguro (1969) pp. 28, 29 and McGuinness (1981) p. 70.
126 In fact, Ishiguro argues that this is the case not just for simple names and objects, but also for ordinary, complex ones. See Ishiguro (1969) p. 29.
5.2 Assessing these interpretations

This section aims to show that neither Hacker’s account, nor the one advanced by Ishiguro, McGuinness and Sullivan can be regarded as accurate portrayals of Wittgenstein’s views on the connection between language and the world. The account advanced by Ishiguro and McGuinness suffers from the obvious difficulty that it is based on the view that objects are purely formal, a view which was discarded in Part III. In turn, Hacker’s interpretation raises three key difficulties: the first involves hacker’s claims on ostension and Wittgenstein’s notion of elucidations; the second concerns the role that he ascribes to the metaphysical self; the third involves his view that we (ordinary people) fix and learn the meanings of simple names, according to the Tractatus.

5.2.1 The issue of ostensive definition

Ishiguro and McGuinness are right in arguing that ostensively defining objects presupposes that objects are perceivable. And they are also right in thinking that, since objects are not perceivable, this connection cannot be effected by means of ostension. Their account as to why Tractarian objects cannot be perceived is incorrect, since it relies on the view that objects are purely formal, but, as was shown in Part IV, it is possible show that objects cannot be perceived without relying on the view that they are purely formal: objects and states of affairs cannot be perceived because, if they could, they would fail to satisfy the logical independence constraint, thereby rendering senseful language impossible.

Simple objects cannot therefore be connected to simple names by means of ostension, as Hacker argues. Nor can it be correct to argue that we learn the meanings of simple names or succeed in individuating Tractarian objects by means of ostension. Note, indeed, that nothing in Wittgenstein’s remarks about how we may gain knowledge of objects (discussed in Part IV) suggests that the process involves anything akin to perceiving or ostensively pointing to them. On the contrary, the remarks suggest that knowing an object involves something much more reflective than this, since it consists in clarifying which possible facts the object can help to produce, and since this clarification can only be achieved once a full analysis of language has been carried out. The entries to which Hacker refers, in order to support his ostensive definition interpretation, must therefore be accounted for in a different way. We will consider them in 5.3.1, below.
5.2.2 Elucidations

Since Tractarian objects cannot be individuated by means of ostension, Hacker’s ostension-based account of ‘elucidations’ will have to be replaced with a different one. One possible alternative is that put forward by Ishiguro. However, this account of elucidations relies on the view that objects are purely formal, which was shown to be unacceptable in Part III. We will present, at the end of this section, a new understanding of Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘elucidations’.

5.2.3 The notion of a transcendental representing self

According to Hacker:

i Wittgenstein posits a simple, metaphysical self belonging to the limits of the world.

ii This self is the transcendental precondition of representation: it is that which connects language to reality.

iii This connection is effected by means of ostension: the transcendental self carries out intentional acts of meaning which connect simple names to objects.

There are two key difficulties with this view: firstly, there is simply no conclusive textual evidence to suggest that Wittgenstein ever posited a transcendental, representing self. Secondly, it is highly unclear how such a self could effect a psychological connection between language, thought and the world.

5.2.3.1 The textual evidence

Let us consider first the issue of the textual evidence. In order for Hacker’s interpretation to be validated, we would ideally need to find conclusive evidence to the effect that Wittgenstein posits, in the Tractatus, a simple self belonging to the limits of the world which is the ultimate precondition of representation. In fact, however, no such evidence can be found, either in the Tractatus or in the Notebooks.

All of the relevant passages of the Tractatus can be given interpretations that conflict with
Hacker's and which, on the face of it, are equally plausible. Pears and Coyne argue, for instance, that the remarks quoted above as part of my exposition of Hacker's account (TLP 5.631, 5.62, 5.632, 5.633, 5.6331, 5.634) show that Wittgenstein is trying to *undermine* the notion of the metaphysical subject posited by the transcendental solipsist, *not* defend it.\(^\text{127}\) No remarks in this text can thus be regarded as constituting conclusive evidence for Hacker's view. (See the Appendix for a detailed discussion of the *Tractatus* evidence in relation to Hacker's interpretation.)

No such evidence can be found in the *Notebooks* either. Although this text clearly posits, at least initially, a metaphysical willing subject (NB 5.8.16), this subject is primarily presented as the precondition of *ethics* (NB 21.7.16), not of representation. There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the metaphysical subject of the *Notebooks*, in addition to being the transcendental precondition of ethics, is also the transcendental presupposition of representation. Indeed, several of the *Notebooks* remarks on the subject, the I, the self, etc. are made in the context of a discussion focusing exclusively on ethics, *not* on the issue of representation (see NB 27.4.15; 11.6.16; 5.7.16; 8.7.16; 13.8.16). In turn, those remarks which aren't as exclusively connected to the issue of ethics are too ambiguous to provide conclusive evidence for the view that the willing subject is the precondition of representation, and not just of ethics (see NB 23.5.15; 21.7.16; 2.8.16; 4.8.16; 5.8.16; 7.8.16; 11.8.16; 12.8.16; 2.9.16; 12.10.16; 15.10.16; 17.10.16; 20.10.16 and 4.11.16). (For a detailed discussion of these entries, see again the Appendix.)

Finally, consider NB 9.11.16:

> Is belief a kind of experience?
> Is thought a kind of experience?
> All experience is world and *does not need the subject.*
> The act of the will is not an experience. (NB 9.11.16) [My italics.]

As noted in p. 100, Wittgenstein replied affirmatively to the two questions of this entry. He must therefore have held that belief and thought are types of experience, understood as mental representation. Indeed, Hacker agrees in saying that both perceptions and thoughts are types of representational experience in this sense, for Wittgenstein:

> There is no empirical soul-substance thinking thoughts, there are only *thoughts.* The self of psychology is a manifold, a series of experiences, a bundle of perceptions in perpetual flux. [...] All that empirical psychology needs to say about the psyche can *be said.*\(^\text{128}\) [My italics]

\(^{127}\) See Pears (1987) ch. 7 and Coyne (1986). This interpretation will be explored in more detail in Part VII.

9.11.16 therefore suggests that experience (understood as mental representation) does not require any type of subject — not even a subject belonging to the limits of the world — in order to be possible. In other words, Wittgenstein very much appears to be saying here that such a subject is not the precondition of representation.

Hacker could object to this by saying that the subject which is not needed for representation to be possible is not the metaphysical subject, but the supposedly simple self located in the world. Understood in this way, 9.11.16 would indeed be compatible with the view that a transcendental, metaphysical subject, belonging to the limits of the world, is necessary for representation be possible. Thus, the 'act of the will' referred to in this entry would be the act which connects names to their bearers, and which, like the transcendental, representing self, belongs to the limits of the world. In order for this interpretation of this passage to hold, however, Hacker would need to show that the act of the will to which Wittgenstein is referring here is indeed the act of connecting simple names to simple objects, and that 'subject' means only the empirical subject located within the world, and not the metaphysical subject. As noted above, however, no entry in the Notebooks concerning the will or the metaphysical subject explicitly connects the notion of the subject to that of representation. We have, moreover, no real reason to believe that the 'subject' in 9.11.16 is only the empirical subject located within the world, and not the metaphysical subject. In fact, the textual evidence suggests the opposite: the willing subject in 9.11.16 is a metaphysical subject. The last entry in which Wittgenstein explicitly discusses the empirical, i.e. thinking, subject, is 5.8.16.

The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists. [...] What is good and evil is essentially the I, not the world.

In this entry, Wittgenstein is contrasting the thinking, empirical subject with what he calls the 'willing subject'. And 2.8.16 clearly shows that this willing subject is not empirical but metaphysical:

Good and evil only enter through the subject. And the subject is not part of the world, but a boundary of the world.

Then, in the entry dated 4.11.16 (three entries before 9.11.16, which we are currently discussing) Wittgenstein says again:

The subject is the willing subject.

Indeed, 19.11.16, which follows immediately after 9.11.16, explicitly mentions 'the willing
subject':

What kind of reason is there for the assumption of a willing subject? Is not my world adequate for individuation? (NB 19.11.16)

All of this strongly points to the idea that the subject mentioned in NB 9.11.16 isn’t just the empirical subject, as Hacker would need to argue, but the metaphysical subject belonging to the limits of the world. If this is indeed the case, then Wittgenstein’s claim in NB 9.11.16 that:

All experience is world and does not need the subject.

should be taken to mean that experience (i.e. mental representation) does not require any type of subject, whether empirical or metaphysical, in order to be possible.

5.2.3.2 The metaphysical self and the psychological connection

Another serious problem with Hacker’s interpretation emerges when one attempts to explain how a metaphysical self, belonging to the limits of the world, could be the source of a psychological connection between language (which is made up of representational facts) and the world (which is the totality of facts – TLP 1.1).

The letter Wittgenstein wrote to Russell from Cassino on 19.8.19 is a key piece of evidence here:

(2) ‘...But a Gedanke [a thought] is a Tatsache [a non-elementary fact]. What are its constituents and components, and what is their relation to the pictured Tatsache? 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 the thought and of the pictured fact is irrelevant. It would be a matter of psychology to find out. (NB, p.129 – Letter to Russell, Cassino, 19.8.19.).

(4) ‘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. (NB, p.130 – Letter to Russell, Cassino, 19.8.19.).

On the surface, (4) could appear to give some support to Hacker’s view that thought is representationally inert, and that psychical signs ‘hook on to objects’ only by virtue of something outside them (i.e. the metaphysical self). This is, after all, one plausible way to read Wittgenstein’s

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claim that thoughts are made of ‘psychical constituents that have the same sort of relation to reality as words.’ However, Wittgenstein doesn’t tell us enough here to conclusively settle this issue. For he could be merely stating again that thoughts (i.e. the mental equivalent to propositions) must be analysable into elements standing for the elements that make up the depicted fact, just like propositions are. In other words, he could simply be reiterating here the idea that thought is mental representation, and that it must therefore be composite and articulated.

Wittgenstein’s claim in (2) that ‘the kind of relation of the constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact is irrelevant’, as well as the fact that the only thing he says about this relation is that ‘It would be a matter of psychology to find out’ (my italics in both cases) raises serious doubts as to the accuracy of Hacker’s interpretation. After all, in the Tractatus, Wittgenstein clearly places the subject-matter of psychology within the world as the totality of facts, and thus divorces it from the metaphysical realm. Psychology is indeed one of the natural sciences:

> Psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science. (TLP 4.1121)

> The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences). (TLP 4.11)

Hacker attempts to make this compatible with the idea that the metaphysical self is the ultimate precondition of representation by saying that this empirical, psychological connection, which takes place in the world, is only made possible by virtue of the transcendent self. It is the transcendent acts of meaning carried out by the metaphysical self which make the empirical, psychological connection between simple psychical constituents and objects possible. Indeed, Hacker would argue, the psychological part of this connection is of little interest (even ‘irrelevant’ – NB p. 129) to Wittgenstein: it is the transcendent element of the connection between names and objects, the element yielded by the metaphysical self, which is regarded by him as crucial.131

This explanation of Wittgenstein’s reply to Russell is implausible however: if this was indeed the view held by Wittgenstein, it would have been absurd of him not to have mentioned the transcendent self at all in his reply to Russell’s query about the connection between thoughts and the world. If it is the transcendent self which is primarily responsible for this connection, whilst the psychological attributes of empirical thought are effectively ‘irrelevant’, then why mention only the latter and not at all the former? This must cast a serious doubt on the view that

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it is the metaphysical self which effects the connection between thoughts and the world.

This doubt is aggravated by the fact that it is highly unclear how such a self, belonging to the limits of the world, could ever be responsible for effecting a connection between facts that are in the world (i.e. between thoughts and propositions on the one hand and the facts depicted by them on the other). Indeed, Wittgenstein's discussion of ethics makes clear his view that that which lies at the limits of the world cannot have an impact on facts, on that which is located within the limits of the world:

It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (TLP 6.421)

If the good or bad exercise of the will does alter the world, it can alter only the limits of the world, not the facts – not what can be expressed by means of language. (TLP 6.43)

In summary: the fact that there is no conclusive textual evidence for Hacker’s notion of a transcendental, representing self, together with Wittgenstein’s claim that the connection between thought and the world is ‘psychological’, and the fact that Wittgenstein cannot have thought a metaphysical self to be capable of having an effect on that which is located within the world of facts, suggests that it is highly unlikely that the metaphysical subject is the precondition of language, according to the *Tractatus*.

### 5.2.4 Learning the meaning of simple names

Hacker’s argues that ostensive definition (made possible by virtue of the intentional acts of a transcendental self) is used by us (i.e. ordinary people) in order to learn and teach each other the meanings of simple names. According to this view, the first thing that we do when we wish to learn a language is to learn what takes place at this ultimate level of analysis. Indeed, according to Hacker’s interpretation, it is us, ordinary people, who fix the meanings of simple names (albeit by virtue of the intentional acts of the transcendental self). Independently of the problems concerning ostension and the transcendental self, which were discussed above, there is a serious difficulty with this view, in that it suggests that we all know (i.e. have at some point learnt) the meanings of simple names. Hacker himself admits that there is something puzzling about this notion:

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There is something extraordinarily bizarre about this discussion, in the Tractatus, unless Wittgenstein was assuming that we are all equipped with a fund of logically proper names which we do explain to each other. In fact, Wittgenstein cannot possibly have thought that learning a language involves, as a first step, learning the meanings of simple names. He cannot have thought that we (ordinary people) actually teach each other as a matter of course the meanings of Tractarian names or that it is us who consciously fix their meanings. For Wittgenstein admits that neither he nor anyone else has a knowledge of what takes place at the ultimate level of analysis. Indeed, since the meaning of a simple name is the simple object designated by this name, knowing the meaning of a simple name must involve knowing the simple object designated by this name. And, as was shown in Part IV, knowing an object involves knowing all of the possible states the world that the object can help to produce, something which cannot be known without having carried out first a full analysis of language. But this is something that Wittgenstein admits having failed to do:

My difficulty surely consists in this: In all the propositions that occur to me there occur names, which, however, must disappear on further analysis. I know that such a further analysis is possible, but I am unable to carry it out completely. In spite of this, I certainly seem to know that if the analysis were completely carried out, its result would have to be a proposition which once more contained names, relations, etc. In brief it looks as if in this way I knew a form without being acquainted with any single example of it. (NB 16.6.15)

Hence, according to Wittgenstein, neither he nor any of us knows any instances of simple names, Tractarian objects, elementary propositions or states of affairs. This idea emerges again in the following remarks:

Elementary propositions consist of names. Since, however, we are unable to give the number of names with different meanings, we are also unable to give the composition of elementary propositions. (TLP 5.55)

Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is – just as people speak without knowing how the individual sounds are produced. Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it. It is not humanly possible to gather immediately from it what the logic of language is. Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes. The tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated. (TLP 4.002) [My italics]

On this issue, Pears writes:

The surprising thing is not just that the user of the sentence does not know its analysis, but, rather, that he has no idea what kind of thing would be mentioned in its analysis, and might even find that he was not familiar with that ultimate kind of thing when he was told what it was.\footnote{133}

Since Wittgenstein does not hold that he or any of us knows any Tractarian names or any of their meanings, he cannot be arguing that learning a language involves, as a first step, learning the meanings of simple names.

5.3 Towards a new interpretation

5.3.1 Learning a language

Learning a language (which clearly does occur, in spite of our ignorance of what takes place at the fully analysed level) must happen at a higher level of complexity, according to Wittgenstein. Part V showed that learning a language must begin with learning the meanings of \textit{words}, not the senses of propositions (cf. \textit{TLP} 4.025): once we have learnt the reference and use of words, we can construct all of the propositions which can sensefully be made up of those words (\textit{TLP} 4.024, \textit{TLP} 4.026, \textit{TLP} 4.027, \textit{TLP} 4.031, \textit{TLP} 4.0311). Hence, learning an ordinary language must begin with learning the meanings of \textit{ordinary} words, the meanings of words standing for complex objects, such as tables, apples, etc. Since these complexes are perceivable, and given the textual evidence surrounding this issue, Wittgenstein must have thought that learning the meanings of names for complexes involved ostensively pointing to these complexes. This would indeed explain his remark to the effect that:

\textit{In the Tractatus} [...] ostensive definition [was] unclear to me.\footnote{134}

For he could simply be saying here that, in the \textit{Tractatus}, ostensive definition was unclear to him in that, when he wrote this work, he believed that it was possible to learn and teach the meanings of ordinary names for complexes by using ostensive definitions only -- a view that he would later discard. This would also explain Wittgenstein's later preoccupation with the Augustinian theory of meaning, which concerns ordinary words and objects, and not simple names and simple objects.

\footnote{135 See Pears (1987) p. 68 – 69.}
\footnote{136 See Waismann (1979) p. 209 f.}
Augustine does not speak of there being any difference between kinds of words. If you describe the learning of language in this way you are, I believe, thinking primarily of nouns like 'table', 'chair', 'bread' (PI §1).

Questions as to how one might explain the meanings of simple names (i.e. questions surrounding Wittgenstein's notion of 'elucidations'), and questions as to how we might gain knowledge of simple objects must thus be regarded as separate from the issue of ostension. Ostensive definitions apply, not at the fully analysed level, but at the level of ordinary language. This crucial point has hitherto been overlooked in the literature, leading to serious misunderstandings of the Tractarian account of meaning.

5.3.2 Elucidations of simple names and our knowledge of objects

The meanings of primitive signs can be explained by means of elucidations. Elucidations are propositions that contain the primitive signs. So they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known. (TLP 3.263)

As we saw above, Hacker interprets TLP 3.263 as saying that the 'elucidations' which help to explain the meanings of simple names are pseudo-propositions (i.e. propositions which are not well-formed). These propositions provide ostensive definitions of the meanings of simple names. Hence, according to Hacker, the meanings of simple names are explained by pointing to the simple objects designated by these names. In contrast, Ishiguro and McGuinness hold that elucidations are well-formed, senseful propositions which display the use of simple names. Since, in their account, the meaning of a simple name is exhausted by its use (in that objects are purely formal) such propositions are capable of explaining the meanings of simple names in their entirety. Both accounts are, however, ultimately unsatisfactory. Hacker's account relies on the view that it is possible to ostensively point, and thus to perceive, simple objects, whilst Ishiguro and McGuinness' accounts only work if we assume that objects are purely formal. We therefore need to explore an alternative way of understanding TLP 3.263.

The first thing to note is that by 'primitive signs' Wittgenstein does means, in TLP 3.263, simple names. For, according to Wittgenstein's numbering system, TLP 3.263 is a comment on TLP 3.26, and the latter states that unanalysable names are 'primitive signs'. Indeed, all of the TLP 3.2s are primarily concerned with Tractarian names, with those names which designate simple objects.

In TLP 3.26 and TLP 3.261, Wittgenstein discusses the idea that, whereas signs for complex objects can be defined by analysing them into simpler signs, this cannot be done in the case of
simple names:

A name cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition: it is a primitive sign (TLP 3.26)

Every sign that has a definition signifies via the signs that serve to define it; and the definitions point the way.

Two signs cannot signify in the same manner if one is primitive and the other is defined by means of primitive signs. Names cannot be anatomized by means of definitions.

(Nor can any sign that has a meaning independently and on its own.) (TLP 3.261)

Simple names, like simple objects, cannot be dissected further: explaining simple names cannot thus involve providing definitions which analyse them into even simpler names. It is interesting to note the similarities that exist between Wittgenstein's remarks on how we can explain the meanings of simple names (TLP 3.263) and his remarks on how we can gain knowledge of simple objects (TLP 2.0123 and TLP 2.01231). For, in both accounts, he directs us towards that which is more complex: knowing a simple object involves knowing the states of affairs that the object can help to produce, whilst explaining a simple name involves using propositions which contain that name. As was noted above, it isn't possible to know a simple object by means of direct perceptual acquaintance: it is only possible to know by perceptual acquaintance those complex objects which consist in the instantiation of possible situations of the world. In fact, it is impossible to know a simple object before having carried out a complete analysis of language, since only after having performed such an analysis could we be in a position to tell which states of affairs the object helps to produce.

Carrying out a complete analysis of language would involve analysing the non-elementary propositions we use in everyday life, those propositions which represent possible situations of the world and which mention complex objects. Such an analysis would start off with the analysis of words for complex objects that we can perceive (e.g. 'this red apple'). We would, first of all, analyse these words into non-elementary propositions (e.g. 'there is redness at this location in space, at this time', 'there is solidity at this location in space, at this time', etc.) and we would eventually reach the level of elementary propositions made up of simple names. Having completed a full analysis of language, we would be able to know complex objects, in that we would know that this object is the one which helps to produce these states of affairs, represented by these elementary propositions, and that it helps to produce, at a higher level of complexity, these perceivable complexes (e.g. redness or solidity, etc.) and these perceivable possible situations of the world (e.g. this apple is red), represented by these non-elementary propositions.
Bearing this in mind, it is possible to give an interpretation of TLP 3.263 which is not circular and which helps to explain the resemblance that exists between Wittgenstein's account of how we can know simple objects and his account of how we can explain simple signs. For a plausible way of interpreting TLP 3.263 would be to say that the meanings of simple names can be explained by means of non-elementary propositions, but that these non-elementary propositions can only be understood if we understand the meanings of the words for complex objects that are used in them. In this interpretation, 'those signs' in 'So they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known' (TLP 3.263) would refer, not to the primitive signs that need explaining, but to the non-elementary propositional signs which help to elucidate the meanings of the primitive signs in question. Note indeed that Wittgenstein often uses the term 'Zeichen' ('sign') on its own as a short-hand for 'propositional sign', in other words for the perceptible element of a proposition (e.g. TLP 4.061, TLP 4.062, TLP 4.0621) and that he has indeed just used it in this way in TLP 3.261 (two entries before TLP 3.263) to refer to signs for complexes.

The idea would be as follows: we can explain the meaning of the simple sign 'a' by means of elucidations such as, for instance, "'a' is the name which helps to produce the propositions 'this apple is red', 'this table is green', etc.' , but these elucidations can only be understood if we understand the propositional signs mentioned in the elucidations (i.e. 'this apple is red', 'this table is green', etc.). In turn, these propositional signs can only be understood if the words that make them up ('this apple', 'this table', 'red', 'green', etc.) are understood, that is if their meanings have been explained to us by means of ostensive definitions. The resemblance between Wittgenstein's account of how we gain knowledge of simple objects and his account of how we explain the meaning of simple names is now revealed in full: to know an object is to know that it helps to produce all of these possible states of the world (which can of course be represented by means of propositions), whilst to explain the meaning of a simple sign is to point out that this simple sign is one of the ultimate constituents of these propositions (which, of course, depict certain possible states of the world). This should not come as a surprise, since the meanings of simple names are the simple objects designated by these names (TLP 3.203). Hence, to explain the meaning of a simple name is to explain what simple object is designated by this name, and this has to involve knowing the designated object. Note also that, according to this interpretation, Wittgenstein is, in this entry, indicating once more that learning the meanings of ordinary words

132 I am grateful to Jane Heal and Jim Hopkins for suggesting this possible line of interpretation.
Elucidations of simple names (i.e. statements of the type ‘this simple name is the one which helps to produce these non-elementary propositions’) are thus not well-formed propositions, but nonsensical ones. Indeed Wittgenstein uses exactly the same term (i.e. ‘elucidations’) to refer to the elucidating propositions of TLP 3.263 and to the propositions of TLP 6.54 (i.e. to the propositions of the Tractatus), which he explicitly characterises in that entry as being nonsensical. The ‘elucidations’ of TLP 3.263 are nonsensical statements of the first kind. These ‘elucidations’ appear and purport to be saying something, but they do not say anything since they do not depict possible states of the world. Indeed, if a simple name genuinely helps to produce these propositions it will do so in all possible worlds; if it doesn’t it won’t in any possible worlds: either way, elucidations will fail to be bivalent and bipolar. However, if an elucidation succeeds in its role of explaining a simple name (i.e. if it explains it correctly), then the elucidation will capture an insight which is (unsayably) correct. The elucidation will convey a correct insight, but, by attempting to put this insight into words, it will also end up conveying a mistaken and misleading impression about what can and cannot be said.

In summary, according to Wittgenstein, all names, whether they designate simple objects (and are therefore genuine Tractarian names) or complex objects need to be explained to us if we are to understand them. Learning a language indeed starts off by learning the meanings of ordinary words for complexes, not the meanings of propositions. But there is a difference between explaining the meanings of simple signs and explaining the meanings of ordinary words for complexes. Explaining the meanings of simple names cannot involve ostensively pointing to the simple objects they designate, for the latter are not perceivable. Hence, explaining the meanings of simple names is done by means of the nonsensical (in sense 1) ‘elucidations’ described above. In contrast, since complexes consisting in the instantiation of possible situations are perceivable, the words for these complex objects can be explained by means of ostensive definitions. When such ostensive definitions are put into words by means of statements such as ‘This word means this’ (accompanied by a pointing), these statements will be nonsensical in the first sense, just like the elucidations that help to explain the meaning of simple names. Hacker was therefore right in arguing that ostension helps to explain the meanings of words in the Tractatus, and he was also right in claiming that ostensive definitions cannot be regarded as senseful, well-formed propositions. His account errs, however, in its target: for it isn’t the meanings of simple names that can be
explained by means of ostension, but only the words standing for perceivable, and therefore complex, objects.

5.3.3 Connecting language, thought and the world

Wittgenstein is highly circumspect on the issue of how, exactly, language and thought succeed in 'hooking on' to the world. Although the *Tractatus* states that a propositional sign acquires a sense (and thus becomes a genuinely representational proposition) by having a thought appended to it (i.e. by thinking the sense of the proposition — *TLP* 3.11 and *TLP* 3.12), Wittgenstein never tells us explicitly how thought itself succeeds in representing the world. The best that we can do is therefore to gather the strings of textual evidence that are available to us on this issue, and see whether a coherent picture can emerge from them.

Two important consequences can be drawn from what has come before. Firstly, the meanings of simple names must be fixed for language to be possible, but, since we use senseful language without knowing what takes place at the ultimate level of analysis, it cannot be us, ordinary language users, who consciously fix the meanings of simple names. And, it cannot be either that a metaphysical self settles the meanings of simple names behind our backs as it were, unbeknown to us. The only alternative that seems to be left open for us is therefore to think that the meanings of simple names get fixed automatically and unbeknown to us the moment that we learn a language, that is the moment that we learn to carry out the relevant projections at the non-elementary level (which is the level at which language is learnt). Secondly, since language is not connected to the world by virtue of a metaphysical self, and since it must be somehow connected to the world in order to be possible (i.e. senseful), it must be the case that, according to Wittgenstein, empirical thought is not representationally inert. Empirical thought must, in some sense, be intrinsically intentional. And it must be in virtue of this intrinsic intentionality of thought that language succeeds in 'hooking on' to the world. Let us consider these two conclusions in turn.

We know that propositional signs succeed in representing states of the world, and thereby in becoming senseful, representational propositions, by virtue of the fact that they are accompanied by thoughts (i.e. by representational mental facts — thinking the sense of the proposition) (*TLP* 3.11 and *TLP* 3.12). Wittgenstein must have held therefore that, when we use a (senseful) proposition, we succeed in doing so because we append a particular mental fact (e.g. the thought that *this*
apple is on this table) to a given propositional sign (such as 'this apple is on this table'). It is because a thought accompanies the propositional sign that the latter becomes a senseful, representational proposition. By extension, it is because a thought accompanies the propositional sign that the words that make up the propositional sign (e.g. here, 'table', 'apple', etc.) cease to be mere signs and become meaningful symbols for complex objects. And again, by extension, it is because thoughts accompany propositional signs that it is possible to speak of the propositional signs being ultimately analysable into Tractarian names. For Tractarian names are intrinsically meaningful: a simple sign which lacks meaning cannot be regarded as a genuine Tractarian name. Strictly speaking, Tractarian names are not therefore the ultimate constituents of propositional signs: they only arise at the ultimate level of analysis once a propositional sign has become a proposition, once it has acquired a sense by virtue of being accompanied by a thought (see Part V). For a propositional sign, on its own, is not a representational fact: it is merely a complex object (just like the painting and the clay model when regarded as non-representational facts), and cannot thus be considered to be ultimately analysable into Tractarian names. The connection between simples signs and objects, the connection which turns the former into genuine Tractarian names must therefore have been regarded by Wittgenstein as taking place automatically and unbeknown to us, as soon as we think the sense of a proposition: as soon as a mental, representational fact, a thought, is appended to a propositional sign.

Having said this, the fundamental question remains: how do thoughts themselves succeed in 'hooking on' to the possible states of the world that they depict? McDonough puts forward an interesting interpretation on this issue. He argues that Wittgenstein follows in the footsteps of the earlier Russell when he argues, in the Tractatus, that thought must be regarded as the 'meaning locus' of propositions. According to McDonough, a 'meaning locus' is:

an entity which is such that (1) what it means in particular is intrinsic to it, that is, it is determined by its structure, and (2) it is intrinsic that its structure is 'meant' or projected.

To say that thought is a 'meaning locus' is to say that thought 'is intrinsically directed towards, or means, something distinct from itself' and that the relation between the thought and that which

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158 See McDonough (1986) ch. VI. I am indebted to Jane Heal for pointing out the relevance to this discussion of McDonough’s account.


it means is ‘analogous to a necessary connection’. According to this interpretation, the relation between a thought and the possible state it represents is not a contingent, empirical matter: the relation is *a priori*. McDonough argues that *TLP* 3.02 and *TLP* 2.1513 show that thought is intrinsically representational in this sense:\textsuperscript{142}

A thought contains the possibility of the situation of which it is the thought. What is thinkable is possible too. (*TLP* 3.02)

So a picture, conceived in this way, also includes the pictorial relationship, which makes it into a picture. (*TLP* 2.1513)

He argues that this is made manifest in these entries because *TLP* 3.02 shows that thought contains within it the possibility that certain objects are structured in a determinate way, and *TLP* 2.1513 shows that a thought contains within itself the conditions both ‘of its particular meaning and of its meaningfulness’.\textsuperscript{143}

In addition to being a ‘meaning locus’, McDonough argues that, according to the *Tractatus*, a thought is an ‘interpretation terminus’. A thought:

- contrasts with perceptible propositional signs in that whether it has meaning and what its meaning is in particular is not open to interpretation.\textsuperscript{144}

Thus, to be acquainted with one’s thoughts is to be acquainted with entities which are perfectly transparent to us, which need not (and cannot) be interpreted and cannot thus be misinterpreted. To be acquainted with one’s thoughts is to be acquainted with something which shows itself unambiguously to the thinker as having a meaning, and which also unambiguously shows the thinker what its meaning is.

In spite of the merits of this interpretation, several difficulties arise. The first is simply that the textual evidence put forward by McDonough does not conclusively show that thought is a meaning locus, and thus representationally non-inert. For it would be possible for Hacker, for instance, to argue that it is only by virtue of the intentional acts of a metaphysical self that thoughts and pictures succeed in being representational and thus in ‘containing’, respectively, the possibility

\textsuperscript{141} See McDonough (1986) p. 153


\textsuperscript{144} See McDonough (1986) p. 163
of that which they represent and their pictorial relationships. In other words, \textit{TLP 3.02} and \textit{TLP 2.1513} are, in and of themselves, compatible with the view that thought, on its own (e.g. when it isn’t accompanied by the intentional acts of a metaphysical self), is representationally inert (although they do not, of course, entail this view). In order to use \textit{TLP 3.02} and \textit{TLP 2.1513} as McDonough does, one needs first to have discarded interpretations such as Hacker’s.

Having said this, and given that we have discarded the metaphysical self-based interpretation, can we agree with McDonough’s account? One significant problem emerges when we consider the content of Wittgenstein’s letter to Russell from Cassino:

(2) ‘...But a Gedanke [a thought] is a Tatsache [a non-elementary fact]: what are its constituents and components, and what is their relation to the pictured Tatsache? 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 the thought and of the pictured fact is irrelevant. It would be a matter of psychology to find out. (\textit{NB, p.129} — Letter to Russell, Cassino, 19.8.19.).

In the first entry, Wittgenstein tells us that it would be a matter of psychology to find out the kind of relation that exists between the constituents of a thought and the constituents of the fact depicted by that thought. This suggests that, according to Wittgenstein, it would be up to psychology to explain, to \textit{tell} us about this relation. That Wittgenstein says this, and assuming that he isn’t here contradicting himself, immediately provides us with an important clue about these entries. For psychology, like all other natural sciences, can speak only of facts, of that which can be represented in language (\textit{TLP 4.11} and \textit{TLP 4.1121}). Psychology can thus speak only of that which is contingent and empirical, not \textit{a priori}, since nothing sayable can be \textit{a priori} (\textit{TLP 5.634}). Hence, if we are to retain the line of interpretation presented by McDonough, we will need seriously to modify it.

Let us consider this issue in stages. Firstly, the remarks in Wittgenstein’s letter from Cassino can only be made compatible with the view that thought is not representationally inert in the \textit{Tractatus} if we assume that, according to Wittgenstein, a thought is, \textit{in part}, a mental sign which stands as much in need of interpretation as the propositional sign which partly makes up a proposition. Interpreting a mental sign would thus involve projecting it onto that which it depicts, and the relation between the mental sign and the depicted state would be as contingent as the relation between the propositional sign and the state depicted by it. As a result, the connection between the mental sign (the mental equivalent to the propositional sign) and the depicted state would be a contingent relation between facts, which could be described by psychology. Having said this,
note that the remarks in Wittgenstein's letter to Russell can be regarded as being concerned with the connection between mental signs (as opposed to mental symbols) and the depicted facts. For Wittgenstein states that the 'psychical constituents' which make up thoughts play a role akin to that of 'words' in language. And, in the _Tractatus_, he often uses the term 'word' in the context of discussions of signs, not of symbols (see _TLP_ 3.14 – cf. _TLP_ 3.1431 – , _TLP_ 3.323, _TLP_ 4.026, _TLP_ 4.243). This is made clearest in _TLP_ 3.323:

> In everyday language it very frequently happens that the same word has different modes of signification — and so belongs to different symbols [...].

Secondly, when Wittgenstein says that the relation between 'the psychical constituents of the thought and [the constituents] of the picture fact' is a matter for psychology to find out, he cannot mean by 'the psychical constituents of the thought and of the picture fact' the ultimate constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact. For the ultimate constituents of the pictured fact are simple objects, and psychology can only find out and speak about sayable relations between sayable, and thus composite, facts. Just as neither psychology nor we can speak of a simple empirical self being related to certain facts (_TLP_ 5.541 to _TLP_ 5.5422), neither psychology nor we can speak of the relation between a simple object and the ultimate psychical constituent of a thought. When Wittgenstein says that the relation between 'the psychical constituents of the thought and of the picture fact' is 'a matter of psychology to find out', he must thus be referring to the relation between the non-ultimate, factual constituents of, respectively, the thought and the non-elementary, pictured fact. Let us illustrate this by means of an example. Consider the thought that *this red apple is on this brown table*, which depicts the fact that *this red apple is on this brown table*. Wittgenstein must be saying here that it would be a matter of psychology to clarify the relation between the thought that *this apple is red* (which is one of the non-ultimate constituents of the thought that *this red apple is on this brown table*) and the depicted fact that *this apple is red* (which is one of the non-ultimate constituents of the depicted fact that *this red apple is on this brown table*). This relation, being a relation between facts is, presumably, something about which psychology could speak. This wouldn't be the case if Wittgenstein was referring here to the correlation between simple objects and their simple psychical

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The citation from the Notebooks, p. 99, used by Hacker and cited again at the end of this footnote, must therefore be explained either by saying that, when Wittgenstein wrote the Notebooks, he thought that the relation between simple names and simple objects could be explained by psychology, a view he abandoned in the _Tractatus_ having realised that psychology could only speak of facts, or by saying that, in this remark, Wittgenstein does not mean by 'names' and their 'meanings' simple names and objects but names for complexes and complex objects: 'I correlate the facts to the symbol 'xRy' by thus dividing them into those of like sense and those of opposite sense. To this correlation corresponds the correlation of name and meaning. Both are psychological.' (NB p. 99)
Thirdly, since the metaphysical self-based interpretation put forward by Hacker has been discarded, Wittgenstein must have believed that a thought consists, in part, of a mental sign (i.e. the mental counterpart to a propositional sign) which stands in need of interpretation but which is capable of interpreting itself without requiring anything outside itself in order to achieve this. Like in the case of the propositional sign, the mental sign stands in need of an interpretation and its relation to the depicted fact is contingent. But the mental sign differs from the propositional sign in that that which enables it to become senseful would be intrinsic to it. In this scenario, it is only once the mental sign has interpreted itself that it becomes senseful and gets to represent a specific state of the world. Only when the sign has become senseful in this way does it acquire one and only one analysis into simple psychical constituents standing for simple objects, and thus a determinate sense. Hence, it is only once it has become senseful in this way that a thought cannot fail to comply with the logical possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the simple objects that constitute its ultimate meanings. For, if the thought doesn't comply with them, it is no longer the thought which asserts the state of the world ultimately made up of these objects. In other words, only the relation between the senseful, picturing thought and that which it depicts can be said to be a priori. This does not hold for the relation between mental signs (i.e. mental signs prior to interpretation) and that which they might depict if they acquired a sense; nor does it entail that mental signs need not be interpreted.

Thoughts are intrinsically representational in two importantly distinct senses. Firstly, a thought is intrinsically representational in that a genuine, that is picturing, thought isn't merely a mental sign (i.e. a sign prior to interpretation). A mental sign only becomes a fully fledged symbol, and thus a genuine, representational thought (i.e. a thought of something), when a particular projection has been carried out. When a mental sign has become a genuinely picturing thought, then it cannot be illogical. For, in order for a thought to be illogical, the simple psychical signs that ultimately constitute it would need to fail to act as the representatives of the objects they supposedly designate. In such a case, the thought would fail to have a sense; it would not be depicting anything. A thought is therefore intrinsically representational in this first sense in that, if it fails to represent that which it purports to represent, then it can no longer be regarded as a genuinely representational thought. But then, propositions and other pictures are also intrinsically representational in this sense: a proposition is only a genuine proposition when a particular projection accompanies its propositional sign and that the proposition complies with the
possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the objects that constitute its ultimate meanings; a painting and a clay model can only be regarded as pictures (i.e. as representational facts) when they are accompanied by specific projections and that they comply with the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the objects constitute their ultimate meanings. That which distinguishes thoughts from other pictures is not therefore that thoughts are intrinsically representational in this sense. For, in this sense, all pictures, including propositions, are intrinsically representational.

This is indeed why Wittgenstein says that:

'The content of a proposition' means the content of a proposition that has sense.

(TLP 3.13)

This is also why, according to Wittgenstein (and in contrast to McDonough’s claims), it is not just thoughts, but all pictures, including propositions, which ‘contain’ the possibility of that which they depict (see TLP 3.03, TLP 3.13, TLP 2.15 and TLP 2.151).

However, thoughts are also intrinsically representational in second sense, in a sense which isn’t shared by other pictures. For that which enables a mental sign (i.e. the equivalent to a propositional sign) to become a senseful thought is intrinsic to the mental sign itself. Propositional signs and iconic pictures only succeed in becoming symbols by virtue of something which is extrinsic to them: by virtue of the intentional powers of thought. But a mental sign is self-interpretative: that which allows it to project itself onto the world is contained within the sign itself. How, exactly, complex mental signs succeed in interpreting themselves in this way, what exactly thoughts and their non-ultimate constituents are, is, according to Wittgenstein, an empirical matter: the contingent relation between mental sign facts and the facts depicted by them is ‘irrelevant’ to him as a logician, it is ‘a matter of psychology to find out.’ According to the Tractatus, mental signs are not transparent to the thinker in that they require no interpretation at all: they are transparent to the thinker because the interpretation that they do require arises from them alone. Mental signs, on their own, settle how they are to be interpreted; it is in this sense that they transparently show their sense to us. As we will see in Part VII, it is this idea which would later be the target of Wittgenstein’s ‘private language argument’.

It is important to note that the idea that mental signs stand in need of an interpretation (even if this interpretation emerges from within them) is more sound than the view that mental signs require no interpretation at all (as is held by McDonough). For, consider the following example: imagine that A speaks little Spanish and that B tells A: ‘el agua está caliente’ (the water is hot).
And imagine that A finds her or himself repeating this sentence in their head (i.e. thinking it) and believing that it means *the water is cold*. Later, A tells B about this and B corrects A. Before B corrected A, whenever A thought 'el agua está caliente', A was entertaining a genuinely senseful thought (i.e. not a mere mental sign) depicting the possible state that *the water is cold*. After B corrected A, when A thought 'el agua está caliente', A was also entertaining a genuinely senseful thought, but this time A's thought 'el agua está caliente' depicted the possible state that *the water is hot*. 'El agua está caliente' was therefore a mental sign used by A in the first instance to express the thought that *the water is cold* and used later by A to express the thought *the water is hot*. One and the same mental sign was therefore used to express two different symbols, so that A could even say something like: 'I used to think that 'el agua está caliente' means *the water is cold*, but I have now realised that it means *the water is hot*. Note also that one could even entertain, in one's mind, a mental sign without giving it any interpretation. (In such a case, the sign could of course not be regarded as a genuine – i.e. senseful, representational – thought, according to Wittgenstein.) For imagine that C knows no Spanish at all but overhears A saying 'el agua está caliente'. C could then think about this sentence, entertain it in her or his mind, attaching no sense (i.e. no interpretation) at all to it, but considering it, for instance, purely from the point of view of the beauty or ugliness of its sound. In such a case, the mental sign would be acting as a non-representational fact, analogous to the painting and the clay model discussed in Part V, when they were regarded as non-representational objects in their own right.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. Firstly: Wittgenstein says nothing in the *Tractatus* or in his later remarks about the *Tractatus* on the issue of how *simple* linguistic signs and the *ultimate*, simple constituents of thought hook on to the *simple* objects that they designate. He only says that he knows, *a priori*, that this must take place if senseful language is to be possible. He may well have regarded these connections as taking place unbeknown to us, as soon as non-elementary propositional signs are projected unto the world by virtue of their being accompanied by thinking. Secondly: in his letter to Russell from Cassino, Wittgenstein speaks only (and very briefly) of the connection between, on the one hand, ordinary words (i.e. names for complexes) and the non-ultimate constituents of thoughts, and, on the other, the complex objects and facts that the former two stand for. At this non-elementary level, signs acquire a sense by being accompanied by certain projections. Whilst words are able to project themselves onto the world by virtue of something extrinsic to them (i.e. by virtue of the fact that the propositional signs that contain them are accompanied by thinking), mental signs are able to project themselves onto the world by virtue of something intrinsic to them: mental signs are self-interpretative. It is
only once these projections are established that complex linguistic and mental signs (like other pictures) become susceptible to a complete analysis into simple signs designating objects, and that it is therefore possible to speak of genuine Tractarian names.

6 Conclusion

Our discussion has yielded a plausible, though (due to the absence of conclusive textual evidence) inevitably speculative account of Wittgenstein’s views of the connection between language, thought and the world. We have also shown that in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein does not hold the metaphysical self to be responsible for representation. The subject which is the focus of his discussion of solipsism (*TLP* 5.6 – 5.6341) is therefore not the simple, representing self, which, in Hacker’s interpretation, is posited by Wittgenstein at the limits of the world. Wittgenstein’s argument against the possibility of a simple thinking self is therefore exhausted by the argument from nonsense presented in *TLP* 5.54 – 5.5422.

If a metaphysical subject is posited by Wittgenstein, then its role will not be that of effecting a connection between simple names and simple objects. Language is made possible by the intrinsically intentional character of empirical thinking, by the fact that thoughts are self-interpretative. Hence linguistic representation, like experience, does not require a subject in order to be possible.

Is belief a kind of experience?
Is thought a kind of experience?
All experience is world and does not need the subject.
The act of the will is not an experience. (*NB* 9.11.16) [My italics.]

The task of Part VII will be to establish whether Wittgenstein nevertheless posits a metaphysical subject in the *Tractatus*, and if so, what the role of this subject is.
Part VII: Solipsism

1 Introduction

The aim of this final Part of the thesis is to examine Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism and his remarks on the metaphysical subject. I will begin by assessing Pears' account of Wittgenstein's remarks, and will then put forward a new, alternative understanding of them.

2 Pears' account of Wittgenstein's views on solipsism

Pears rejects Hacker's view that Wittgenstein endorses, in his discussion of solipsism, the notion of a simple, metaphysical, representing self. He argues that the *Tractatus* remarks on solipsism cannot be regarded as aiming to show that it is only by virtue of a metaphysical subject that linguistic and mental pictures are made possible. Pears then develops a new, more convincing way of understanding Wittgenstein's thoughts on solipsism. Unsurprisingly, however, given the notorious complexity of the material, his account of the *Tractatus* views on this issue contains several tensions and difficulties which render it ultimately unsatisfactory. I will begin by summarising the key aspects of Pears' account and will then put forward a critical assessment of it.

2.1 A subject-less perspectivalness of experience

*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (TLP 5.6)*

This remark provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism. For what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest.

*The world is my world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of language (of that language which alone I understand [or: of the only language I understand]) mean the limits of my world. (TLP 5.6)*

According to Pears, Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus* is to undermine solipsism, whilst drawing our attention to an essentially correct insight yielded by this doctrine. What the solipsist says or means (i.e. 'The world is my world' – *TLP 5.62*) is 'only I and the phenomena perceived by me in my lifetime exist'. Hence the world of the solipsist is 'the world as I found it', the totality of facts perceived by him during his lifetime.

The solipsist's world is 'the world as I found it', the phenomena encountered by him in his lifetime. It includes the visual field, but, of course, it also includes the fields of
his other senses

The solipsist’s view that ‘only I and the phenomena perceived by me in my life time exist’ yields the insight that experience is had from a point of view which is not represented in experience, and it is in this sense that solipsism is correct for Wittgenstein (5.62). This insight manifests itself in factual discourse, namely in the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that language (i.e. any language that could possibly be intelligible to me or anyone else) has to be understood from a point of view not represented in language: ‘the limits of language (of that language which alone I understand [of the only language I understand]) mean the limits of my world’ (TLP 5.62).

In turn, the idea that experience and language are viewed from a perspective which isn’t represented in them shows itself in that ‘the limits of my language mean the limits of my world.’ (TLP 5.6).

Pears explains that ‘my world’ in 5.6 is not just ‘the totality of facts’, or ‘the world as I found it’, but the world of all possibilities (i.e. the totality of possible situations of the world, whether or not they obtain as facts) as they are represented by me in perception and the imagination.

According to Pears, TLP 5.6 therefore claims that the world (i.e. the totality of possible situations represented by me/us in perception and the imagination) and language (i.e. any intelligible language) are both limited by the same thing, namely the totality of simple objects.

Empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects. The limit also makes itself manifest in the totality of elementary propositions. (TLP 5.5561)

What differentiates 5.5561 from 5.6 is, according to Pears, the inclusion of the prefix ‘my’ in 5.6, by which Wittgenstein intends to signify that he is now discussing the problems surrounding the idea that the world and language are limited by the totality of objects known by me. This insight

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is, however, treated incorrectly by the solipsist. He makes the mistake of arguing that it is the objects known by him personally which limit language and the world, and this leads him to claim that only he and the objects he knows exist. In turn, Wittgenstein's reply to the solipsist, according to Pears, is that:

i It is indeed correct to say that language and experience are limited by the range of objects that I, the subject, knows.

ii It is correct to say that both language and experience are viewed from a perspective which is not represented in them: I cannot represent the fact that language and experience are viewed from my point of view.

However

iii The subject, the 'me', which limits the world and language in this way is not a specific person, and cannot therefore be the solipsist himself. Indeed, the subject cannot be individuated personally: Tractarian objects are known or encountered from a particular perspective, but this perspective is an impersonal one. One cannot, as the solipsist tries to do, impose a personal restriction on the range of available objects, by claiming that only those objects that be (as a person) knows exist.

Pears argues that, in order to draw insights i and ii out of solipsism, Wittgenstein has to use an 'expository device': by his own admission, Wittgenstein never carried out a full analysis of language, and he therefore could not be said to know any particular instances of simple objects, but, in order to put forward the insight yielded by solipsism, Wittgenstein asks us to pretend that a full analysis of language has been carried out, and that we therefore know particular instances of simple objects (and thus all instances of simple objects — TLP 5.524). Only then could the idea that the world and language are limited by the range of objects known from this impersonal viewpoint seem intelligible, according to Pears.

There is evidently no need to worry about the tiresome fact that my language has not yet been analysed into elementary sentences. (...) We may, therefore, pretend that the analysis of factual sentences has been carried out all the way to simple objects with which I am directly confronted. This is merely an expository device (...). It allows us to concentrate on the limits of the range of alternative possible worlds with which Wittgenstein's treatment of solipsism is concerned.  

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152 See Pears (1987) p. 162
Pears claims that although, according to Wittgenstein, we can individuate ourselves as persons, the only method for doing so which is available to us is one which is useless to the solipsist: I can only individuate myself as a person by finding out which body is attached to my mind. In other words, without referring to my body, I cannot individuate myself personally. Before we go on to explain why this method cannot serve the purpose of the solipsist, it is worth examining briefly Pears' account of what it is to individuate myself as a person, according to Wittgenstein. Pears claims that the self-ascription of experience presupposes embodiment for Wittgenstein: I know that this is my experience, because I can individuate myself as a person, by establishing that it is this body which is attached to my mind. Although no real details are given on this issue, the idea seems to be that I achieve this by pointing alternatively to my body and my mind. Indeed, Pears refers us to *WLC*, p. 62 and to *NLPESD*, p. 297, as evidence for this interpretation.

"What is seen I see" (pointing to my body). I point at my geometrical eye, saying this. (*NLPESD*, p. 297)

Given this assumption, the solipsist is portrayed as facing a dilemma. If he attempts to individuate his ego by claiming that the ego is that mind which is attached to a body, his claim becomes self-refuting, because the subject understood as an embodied person cannot be considered to be the universal seat for all consciousness. Indeed, the body which serves to individuate me as a person doesn't stand in the privileged position of being the seat of the only consciousness there is. This is shown, according to Pears, by *NB* 2.9.16.

The philosophical I is not the human being, not the human body or the human soul with the psychological properties, but the metaphysical subject, the boundary (not part) of the world. The human body, however, my body in particular, is part of the world, among animals, plants, stones, etc., etc.

Whoever realises this will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body. He will regard humans and beasts quite naïvely as objects which are similar and belong together. (*NB* 2.9.16)

If, on the other hand, the solipsist attempts to individuate the subject independently of any reference to his body, by arguing that the subject is purely mental, his claim becomes empty. The only way to individuate a subject is to identify the body which is attached to this subject's mind: it is impossible to individuate a purely mental subject. The solipsist fails to realise this because he suffers from the transcendental illusion that his ego is a kind of mental, 'internalised body', which

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can provide him with a suitable reference point. Because he is caught in this illusion, the solipsist tries to argue either that his ego is an object encountered in his mind (i.e. in experience or consciousness) via introspection, or that his ego can be described by saying that it is 'that which experiences all this' (pointing to the field of consciousness). Both attempts to individuate a purely mental ego in this way fail, however.

According to Pears, Wittgenstein’s argument against the view that a subject could be encountered in one’s field of consciousness or experience is presented in the following remarks:

There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called The world as I found it, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather, of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book. (TLP 5.631)

Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?
You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye.
And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is being seen by an eye. (TLP 5.633)

For the form of the visual field is clearly not like this

![Eye](image)

The eye in 5.633 and 5.6331 is here regarded as standing for the purely mental subject of solipsism. Hence, when Wittgenstein says ‘you do not see the eye’ and ‘nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is being seen by an eye’ (5.633), his point is that the subject cannot be encountered as an object within the field of experience and that nothing amongst these experiences could lead us to infer the existence of such an object-like subject. It isn’t just that I happen never to have encountered my ‘I’ as an object within my field of experience but, rather, that I could never encounter such an object in this way, since I do not even have a clear idea of what encountering my ‘I’ as an object within my field of consciousness might be like. The ego is simply not an object which could possibly be encountered and thus named.

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158 Pears (1987) p. 158.
159 As noted before, Pears seems to use the terms 'consciousness' and 'experience' interchangeably.
162 Pears argues that Wittgenstein’s target is here Russell’s attempt to individuate the subject by presenting it as an object of introspective acquaintance. See Pears (1987) p. 181, and Pears (1996) p. 127.

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A purely mental ego cannot be individuated by description either. It cannot, for instance, be defined *a priori* as 'the subject of all these experiences', because this description fails to pick out anything in particular. Such a description would be entirely circular, and therefore empty: experience would in such a view be defined as 'that which is had by the subject' whilst the subject would be defined as 'whatever is having these experiences'. No objective reference point would thereby be provided and such a definition would lack all content. This idea is said to be put forward in *TLP 5.634-5.634*:

> This is connected with the fact that no part of experience is at the same time *a priori*.
> Whatever we see could be other than it is.
> Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is.
> There is no *a priori* order of things. (*TLP 5.634*)

Pears' view is therefore that, although the solipsist's insight is correct, according to Wittgenstein, this insight is presented in an incorrect and misleading way: the solipsist is right in thinking that language and experience are perspectival and that this perspective isn't represented in them, but he is mistaken in trying to restrict the range of objects in a personal way. His claim that only those objects he knows personally exist is either empty or self-refuting, since the subject cannot be individuated if it is portrayed as being purely mental, and the ordinary way of individuating persons, which is available to us, is of no use to the solipsist.

As a result, solipsism fails to be the restrictive doctrine it is attempting to be and collapses into realism: it becomes indistinguishable from the latter, since that which distinguished the two, namely the solipsist's view that the world is his world, has evaporated. This is Pears' interpretation of Wittgenstein's claim that:

> Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality coordinated with it. (*TLP 5.64*)

In 'Wittgenstein's Treatment of Solipsism in the *Tractatus*', Pears draws the conclusion that it might nevertheless be correct to regard Wittgenstein as subscribing to a non-restrictive variety of solipsism, in which the 'I' stands neither for the souls of all humans (as in idealism) nor for my

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164 See Pears example of the pilot, in Pears (1996) p. 126.
166 See Pears (1987) p. 188.
own personal soul (as in traditional solipsism), but for a more abstract ‘world-soul’. According to this interpretation, the ultimate insight yielded by solipsism would thus be that the world and language are perspectival, in that they are viewed from the perspective of this ‘world-soul’, and that this soul cannot be represented in experience or in language. This was Pears’ initial understanding of the following remarks from the Notebooks:

There really is only one world soul, which I for preference call my soul and as which alone I conceive what I call the soul of others. (NB 23.5.15)

The philosophical I is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul with the psychological properties, but the metaphysical subject, the boundary (not a part) of the world. The human body, however, my body in particular, is a part of the world among others, among beasts, plants, stones, etc., etc.

Whoever realises this will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body.

He will regard the world quite naively as objects which are similar and which belong together. (NB 2.9.16)

Is this the solution to the puzzle why men have always believed that there was one spirit common to the whole world?

And in that case it would, of course, also be common to inanimate things.

This is the way I have travelled. Idealism singles human beings out from the world as if they were unique, solipsism singles me alone out, and at last I see that I too belong with the rest of the world, and so on the one side nothing is left over, and on the other side there remains something really unique, the world. Thus idealism leads to realism if it is strictly thought out. (NB 15.10.16)

However, by the time Pears comes to write The False Prison, his views on this issue had changed. Here, Pears argues that this non-restrictive variety of solipsism is ultimately empty, and therefore that Wittgenstein cannot genuinely be said to have espoused it. Wittgenstein cannot thus be said to advocate solipsism in any sense at all: there is nothing of substance left to this doctrine, once his discussion of it is over. Hence, the Notebooks entries cited above are re-interpreted as showing the extent to which solipsism turned out to be empty in Wittgenstein’s view:

The most important consequence of this letting go is that the word ‘ego’ ceases to be a count-noun. This comes out very clearly in the transition from solipsism through idealism to panpsychism. If there is no empirical criterion for its individuation, the ego will be spread all over everything. But that means that it will extend to inanimate things. Of course Wittgenstein’s point is not that we should still associate the ego with consciousness and believe in panpsychism: his argument is, as so often, reductive, and the implication is that the content of the word ‘ego’ would drain away too, leaving us with a completely empty panpsychism.

TLP 5.641 is interpreted in a similar way.

Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way.

What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that ‘the world is my world’.

The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject,

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107 See Pears (1987) p. 188.

Pears claims that the philosophical self mentioned here is the metaphysical subject of *TLP* 5.633, and that this subject is said to be 'metaphysical' because it is neither physical nor psychological: we cannot individuate the 'I' by identifying it with a person (i.e. a mind connected to a body), and there is no purely mental way of individuating it either. Any attempt to talk about this self nevertheless yields an important insight, namely that language and the world given in experience are viewed from an impersonal perspective which isn't represented in them. 171

### 2.2 The problems with Pears' account

It is useful to examine in some detail the problems facing Pears' interpretation, as this will help us develop a new understanding of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism. In the rest of this Part, I will be making use of the distinction drawn in Part VI between senseful, senseless and nonsensical statements. Senseful statements are statements which represent possible states of the world and which are bivalent and bipolar (i.e. fully fledged, senseful propositions). In contrast, senseless statements are statements which clearly show that they say nothing, and which thereby show us something unsayably correct about the logical scaffolding of the world and of representation (e.g. tautologies and contradictions, which are pseudo-propositions). Finally, nonsensical statements are those statements which attempt to put into words that which is unsayable, and which do not show clearly that what they attempt to say cannot be said. These statements divide into two sub-categories. Those belonging to the first sub-category are statements which attempt to put into words a correct, though unsayable, insight into the logical scaffolding of the world and of representation. These statements convey an important insight, but, by attempting to put this insight into words, end up conveying also a misleading and mistaken impression about what can and cannot be said (e.g. the 'propositions' or 'elucidations' of the *Tractatus*, mentioned in *TLP* 6.54). In contrast, statements which are nonsensical in the second sense are doubly nonsensical in that they mistakenly attempt to put into words an incorrect insight (e.g. 'The empirical mind is simple' – cf. *TLP* 5.541 to *TLP* 5.5422). For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the former type of nonsensical statements as statements which are 'nonsensical in sense 1' or 'nonsensical in the first sense' and to the second type as statements which are 'nonsensical in sense 2' or 'nonsensical in the second sense'.

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2.2.1 An apparent difficulty: what solipsism generally says

Child argues that the key problem with Pears' account is that it is highly unclear how the view that language and experience are impersonally perspectival can be said to be 'solipsistic'.\(^\text{172}\) This view, which is presented by Pears as constituting the genuine insight of solipsism (i.e. that about which solipsism is 'correct', according to Wittgenstein), is, he argues, not something which bears much resemblance to anything a solipsist might generally be taken to say. Child puts this point in the following way:

\[
\text{what is the relation between the insight about the first person point of view and solipsism as a claim that attempts to place some limit on the world? Pears thinks that 'what the solipsist means', which is said by Wittgenstein to be quite correct, is that any experience is had from a point of view not represented in experience. But, on the face of it, the solipsist does not aim to express that thought.} \text{\(^\text{173}\)}
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It is unclear, however, that this objection to Pears is genuinely sound. For it is far from clear that the insight drawn by Wittgenstein from solipsism coincides with what a solipsist might generally be taken to say.\(^\text{174}\) Generally, a solipsist is taken to say that there is something unique about him in that only he exists as a subject. In other words the distinguishing mark of this doctrine is usually taken to be that it poses a sceptical question about the existence of other minds and answers it by saying that we have no good reason to believe in their existence. This issue is not, however, the focus of the *Tractatus' or Notebooks' remarks on solipsism. Instead, Wittgenstein's discussion focuses on the idea that 'the world is my world', which is presented in *TLP 5.62 as being 'what the solipsist means' and also as being essentially 'correct'. Note, moreover, that Wittgenstein tells us that he aims to uncover 'how much truth there is in solipsism' (*TLP 5.62), which suggest that he regards the solipsist's doctrine as containing some correct elements and some incorrect ones. Wittgenstein may well have believed that what the solipsist is generally taken to say is incorrect, but that solipsism nevertheless yields some other correct and important insight(s).

Child is right, however, in pointing out that an account of Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism


\(^{174}\) Indeed, the insight into the first-personal subject which, according to Child, is drawn by Wittgenstein from solipsism is no more straightforwardly 'solipsistic' than the insight into the impersonal perspectivalness of experience which features in Pears' account. See Child (1996).
must make it clear how the view that 'the world is my world' can be derived from solipsism. And he is right in arguing that Pears fails to establish this. Our account will thus aim to show how 'the world is my world' (and any other insights yielded by solipsism) is contained within the solipsist's argument.

### 2.2.2 The tension in Pears' definition of 'the world'

One minor problem which does emerge in Pears' account is that he claims that the world, in 5.6, is the world of all possible situations as they are represented by me/us (i.e. ordinary people) in perception and the imagination. As it stands, however, there is a serious tension running through this definition of the world. For it is clear that the world of all possibilities need not coincide with the world as it is actually represented by ordinary people in perception and the imagination: by the time I die, I will most probably not have perceived and imagined all that it is possible to perceive and imagine. There are, as we will see below, versions of solipsism which focus, not on the notion of what has actually been experienced by me, but on the notion of what it is possible to experience. It is most likely that it was the latter, not the former variety of solipsism which concerned Wittgenstein.

### 2.2.3 The difficulty in the notion of a 'subjectless perspective'

Another problem with Pears' account is his claim that experience and language are impersonally perspectival, according to Wittgenstein. Whereas in 'Wittgenstein's Treatment of Solipsism in the *Tractatus*' Pears concludes that this perspective is impersonal in that it is the perspective of an impersonal subject (namely the 'world-soul' mentioned in the *Notebooks*), in *The False Prison* he has moved to the idea that this perspective is impersonal in that it is subject-less. This is clearly shown by Pears' claim that:

> Of course Wittgenstein's point is not that we should still associate the ego with consciousness and believe in panpsychism: his argument is, as so often, reductive, and the implication is that the content of the word 'ego' would drain away too, leaving us with a completely empty panpsychism.

However, whilst the notion of a perspective which has as its source an impersonal subject might be intelligible, it is far from clear that that of a subject-less perspective is. More importantly,
however, if the insight that Wittgenstein was after was the idea that language and experience are perspectival, but that this perspective is not represented in them, it is entirely unclear why he took the roundabout route of discussing an ultimately empty, content-less metaphysical subject, in order to reach it. For, according to Pears, Wittgenstein argues that we can individuate ourselves as persons by reference to our bodies, and that the self-ascription of experience is therefore non-problematic. All that Wittgenstein says is that this (i.e. the only) method for individuating ourselves personally does not serve the purposes of the solipsist. Given this, it is highly unclear why Wittgenstein didn’t simply conclude by saying that language and experience are viewed from the perspective we have as persons, that no person in particular has a monopoly on this perspective, and that this perspective is not represented in language or experience. This tension in Pears’ account manifests itself at the very end of his chapter on solipsism, when he says:

philosophy can talk of the self in spite of the fact that it does not figure as a nameable object in psychology. [...] It would be better to conclude that the self-ascription of experiences is non-problematical. [My italics.]

2.2.4 The sense in which philosophy can talk about the self

The most serious problem with Pears’ interpretation is, however, that it fails to show why Wittgenstein concludes his discussion of solipsism by saying that:

Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can ‘must’ in NB 11.8.16] talk about the self in a non-psychological way. What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that ‘the world is my world’. The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not part of it. (TLP 5.641)

For, in Pears’ account, the solipsist’s notion of the subject has been entirely drained of its content (i.e. it has been shown to be totally empty) by the end of Wittgenstein’s discussion. Consider, for instance, the following remarks advanced by Pears in The False Prison, on the subject of the Notebooks’ notion of a world-soul:

The most important consequence of this letting go is that the word ‘ego’ ceases to be a count-noun. This comes out very clearly in the transition from solipsism through idealism to panpsychism. If there is no empirical criterion for its individuation, the ego will be spread all over everything. But that means that it will extend to inanimate things. Of course Wittgenstein’s point is not that we should still associate the ego with consciousness and believe in panpsychism: his argument is, as so often, reductive, and the implication is that the content of the word ‘ego’ would drain away too, leaving us with a completely empty panpsychism. [Note: the original text appears to have a citation out of order.]


Given Pears' view that the content of the word 'ego' has entirely drained away, it becomes impossible to explain in a satisfactory manner why Wittgenstein chose to end his discussion of solipsism by saying 'thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can ['must' in NB 11.8.16] talk about the self in a non-psychological way.' (TLP 5.641). For, if Pears's interpretation was correct, there would be no sense in which philosophy could or should talk about the metaphysical self: why should philosophy talk about a notion which is, ultimately, entirely empty? Talking about such a self would not just be nonsensical in sense 1, it would be nonsensical in sense 2: any statements about such a 'subject' would be mistakenly attempting to put into words something incorrect, namely that the perspectivalness of experience and language has as its source some kind of a subject. If Pears' claim is, in essence, that, according to Wittgenstein, experience and language are perspectival in a subject-less way, why should Wittgenstein encourage philosophers to speak about a subject? Given Pears' account, philosophy should only continue to talk about the fact (in a non-TRACTarian sense) that we, ordinary people capable of being individuated personally, experience the world from a perspective which isn't itself representable and that this perspective is subjectless. But the problem then becomes, of course, that talking about this can in no way be construed as talking about a philosophical self which 'is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world -- not part of it'. (TLP 5.641)

The only way in which TLP 5.641 can be rendered intelligible is by showing that, according to Wittgenstein, solipsism yields a genuine insight into the notion of the subject, and thus that the solipsist's notion of the subject is not ultimately empty. Wittgenstein must have been trying to draw our attention to some particular view the solipsist has of the self, a view which is essentially correct, and which philosophy ought therefore to talk about, albeit by means of 'elucidations' which will be nonsensical in sense 1 (like the propositions of the Tractatus are, according to TLP 6.54). It is because Pears presents Wittgenstein's treatment of the solipsist's subject as being entirely negative, that he cannot then give a satisfactory explanation of TLP 5.641. The same problem was faced by Williams, who expressed the ensuing difficulty in the following way:178

We cannot in any straightforward sense say that there is, or that we can believe in, or accept, a metaphysical [...] self [...] for neither what it is, nor that it is, can be said, and attempts to talk about it or state its existence must certainly be nonsense. [...] Indeed, granted this, I find puzzling why Wittgenstein can say (5.641) that there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way. [My italics]

3 Preliminary work

Before attempting to give a new interpretation of the *Tractatus* remarks on solipsism, it is important to draw some conclusions from our previous considerations. Firstly, the fact that Wittgenstein concludes his discussion of solipsism by saying that philosophy can (even ‘must’ – *NB* 11.8.16) ‘talk about the self in a non-psychological way’ (*TLP* 5.641), suggests that his exploration of solipsism has yielded a substantial (i.e. not an ultimately empty) insight into this non-psychological view of the self. We must therefore try to uncover what view of the self he has in mind here, how solipsism reveals it, and which is the correct (i.e. non-psychological) way for philosophy to talk about it. Secondly, since Wittgenstein explicitly mentions ‘solipsism’ in his remarks, we must make sure that our account shows exactly how the insights uncovered by Wittgenstein may be drawn from the solipsist’s doctrine. Even if these insights do not coincide with what a solipsist might generally be taken to say, we must show that they are contained within and/or can be deduced from something that he can generally be taken to say.

This section will begin by examining what Wittgenstein might mean by the metaphysical, non-psychological self in *TLP* 5.641, and will then describe the kind of solipsistic argument that he may have had in mind when he wrote the *Tractatus*.

3.1 A non-psychological view of the subject

Our first task is therefore to clarify what Wittgenstein means by ‘the philosophical self’. In order to do this, it is useful to return to the notion of the self ‘as it is conceived by the superficial psychology of the present day’ (*TLP* 5.5421), which is explicitly contrasted by Wittgenstein to that of the philosophical subject in *TLP* 5.641.

3.1.1 The third-personal self of psychology

Since Wittgenstein explicitly draws a contrast between the philosophical notion of the self and the psychological one in *TLP* 5.641, examining again the latter can help us gain an insight into the former. We already know, from Part VI, that the self ‘as it is conceived by the superficial psychology of the present day’ is a simple self. According to this superficial, psychological view:
A composite soul would no longer be a soul. (*TLP* 5.5421)

We also know that Wittgenstein rejects this notion of a simple self. Having established that Hacker's interpretation misrepresents Wittgenstein, we concluded that Wittgenstein's attack on the idea of a simple self is contained within *TLP* 5.541 – 5.5421, and ends with Wittgenstein's all-out rejection of it (see Part VI). Wittgenstein discards all notions of a simple self, whether located in the world or belonging to its limits.

However, this doesn't mean that, according to the *Tractatus*, psychology is left with no subject matter. Rather, Wittgenstein's point is that the genuine subject matter of psychology cannot possibly be a simple self. Psychology, being a natural science (*TLP* 4.1121), can investigate only that which is factual. It therefore needs to present itself as exploring, not some supposedly simple self, but the composite, empirical minds which are located within the world, and which consist of facts (i.e. of empirical thoughts, of mental representations of the world). This composite mind is therefore 'the self of psychology', once psychology has rid itself of its mistaken, 'superficial' assumption about the simplicity of self.

The legitimate subject matter of psychology is the composite, empirical mind. We therefore need to ask ourselves what are the distinctive features of the psychological way of viewing the composite mind. What is distinctive about this way of talking about the self, which could be contrasted with the *philosophical* way of talking about it?

The most salient feature of the psychological treatment of the mind is that operates within the third-personal perspective. It is indeed from this third-personal point of view that psychology carries out its investigations: the task of the psychologist is to consider her or his subject matter from the outside, in the hope of providing an objective account. Hence, psychology presents and views the self as something which is thing-like, an object of experience and study (in the ordinary senses of 'thing' and 'object'), which can be explored from the impersonal point of view. (Unless otherwise specified, I will, in what follows, be using the terms 'thing', 'thing-like' and 'object' in their ordinary, non-TRACTarian senses.)

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Wittgenstein accepts psychology and its outlook on the self so long as psychology recognises that it is the composite mind, and not some supposedly simple self, which is its legitimate subject matter. Indeed, this third-personal view on the mind has applications which go beyond the discipline of psychology. After all, as *TLP* 5.542 – 5.5421 show, it is to such composite minds that we refer when we say things like 'A believes \( p \)'. The third-personal notion of the mind is part of our ordinary language, and has a clear use, not just for psychologists, but for the linguistic community at large.

We make use of this notion of the self whenever we speak of the mind from the third-personal point of view, whether we are referring to somebody else's mind, or to our own mind regarded as an object of study. The latter takes place, for instance, in psychoanalysis, where patients are encouraged to consider their minds from the external, psychoanalytical, point of view: part of the aim of psychoanalysis is indeed to get the patients to view themselves from this external, objectifying perspective.

The reason why Wittgenstein wishes to speak of the self in a non-psychological way is not, therefore, that the third-personal notion of psychology is useless, but that it fails to capture something which is of deep importance to us, and of great interest to philosophy. Indeed, if all that we had was this third-personal concept of the mind, sentences such as 'I believe \( p \)' would have to be presented as being equivalent to: 'A believes \( p \) and A is this mind'. In other words, if all that we had was the psychological approach, all apparently first-personal expressions would have to be translated into third-personal terms. According to Wittgenstein, this would be unacceptable, in that there is something fundamentally important which cannot be captured by such a third-personal viewpoint.

What the third-personal perspective fails to capture is that we are not just minds to be explored from the external point of view: we are not just *objects* of experience and awareness, but also *subjects*. And this is something which could never be captured by an exclusively third-personal approach to the mind. The third-personal, psychological view of the mind, although useful, is of no deep interest to philosophy:

*Psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science.*
(*TLP* 4.1121)

The 'subject' which emerges in Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism, the 'I' which seemed so
very mysterious to him (NB 5.8.16), will therefore have to be contrasted with the mind, viewed from the third-personal point of view, which is the legitimate subject matter of psychology.

It is useful to end this section by pointing out what this third-personal approach to the mind encompasses. For, as we said above, this approach doesn’t restrict itself to the domain of psychology. All of the following notions belong indeed to the third-personal viewpoint (this list is not meant to be exhaustive):

i The mind viewed as a composite cluster of thoughts. This is the legitimate subject matter of ordinary psychology. It is also that to which we sometimes refer when we say things like ‘A believes p’.

ii The brain, regarded as a complex material object, which is the subject-matter of neurology.

iii The self conceived much more ordinarily as a person, in other words as a mind connected to a body via the will. We often refer to this too when we say things like ‘A believes p’.

### 3.1.2 A first-personal notion of the subject

It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the philosophical subject, which is to be contrasted with the self of psychology, is characterised by the fact that it is not thing-like. It is not an object (be it simple or complex in the Tractarian senses), but a subject of experience and awareness. It is that from whose first-personal point of view all experience and non-representational awareness is had.

The I is not an object. (NB 7.8.16)

I objectively confront every object. But not the I.

So there really is a sense in which there can and must be mention of the I in a non-psychological sense in philosophy. [Cf. *TLP* 5.641] (NB 11.8.16)

As a result, the various methods we use for individuating (simple and complex) objects cannot be applied to the philosophical subject. Our approach to this subject needs to be radically different from our approach to objects. Our traditional methods for individuating things must be put aside if we are to gain a genuine non-psychological insight into the self as a subject.

The subject is not an object, let alone a complex one that could be represented in language. As a result, anything we say about it will, at best, be nonsensical in the first sense. In other words,
statements about the first-personal subject will, at best, be analogous to the nonsensical elucidations that make up the *Tractatus* (*TLP* 6.54): they will mistakenly attempt to put into words insights which are correct but unsayable. In addition, a statement about the subject will be nonsensical in sense 2 if it mistakenly attempts to put into words an unsayably incorrect insight about the subject. Hence, the acceptable way for philosophy to talk about the first-personal subject must be, according to Wittgenstein, for it to use statements which are nonsensical in sense 1, but not in sense 2.

To sum up: although the third-personal, psychological notion of the mind has a clear use in language, Wittgenstein argues that it is of little interest to philosophy, in that it fails to capture something crucially important to us. What is of real interest to philosophy is the 'deeply mysterious' (NB 5.8.16) notion of the non-thing-like, first-personal subject of experience.

### 3.2 The doctrine of solipsism

The time has come to show why Wittgenstein might have thought that the insight 'the world is my world' is contained within the solipsist's doctrine. I will therefore draw an outline of the version of solipsism that I take Wittgenstein to have in mind, and will then explain why we should take this to be the type of solipsism that the *Tractatus* takes as its target. The solipsist envisaged by Wittgenstein puts forward an argument along the following lines:

(A) We can only gain knowledge the world (i.e. of 'the world as the totality of facts', in Wittgenstein's terminology) by experiencing it.

(B) It is impossible to experience that which cannot be experienced (i.e. that which it is impossible to experience).

Hence:

(C) There is no good reason to suppose that anything which cannot be experienced could possibly exist. Having a good reason to suppose this would involve being able to experience that which cannot be experienced, which is impossible.

(D) It is impossible to experience other people's selves.

and

(E) The only self that I do experience is my own.

Hence

(F) There is no good reason to suppose that any selves other than mine could possibly exist.
exist. Again, having a good reason to suppose this would involve being able to experience that which cannot be experienced, which is impossible.

Hence

(G) Only one subject of experience exists and could possibly exist: my self.

(H) Only my self and those things that I can possibly experience exist and could possibly exist.

(I) Conclusion ('what the solipsist means', according to Wittgenstein): 'The world is my world', everything possible can possibly be experienced by me, there are no possibilities which cannot be experienced by me.

Premises (A) to (H) capture what a solipsist of this type might generally be taken to say. The conclusion (I) presents 'what the solipsist means', according to Wittgenstein. In other words, it presents what Wittgenstein takes the ultimate conclusion of solipsism to be. And it is clear that (I) can be deduced from the previous premises (i.e. from what a solipsist of this type might generally be taken to say). Let us now consider why this brand of solipsism can be regarded as the one envisaged by Wittgenstein.

3.2.1 A solipsism based on the notion of experience

The first thing to note about the argument I have just sketched is that it focuses on the notion of experience. This isn't always the case: some versions of solipsism work on the narrower concept of perception. In contrast, 'experience' includes, in Wittgenstein's terminology, not just perceptions, but also beliefs, and thoughts (see Part VI). This version of solipsism well fits Wittgenstein's discussion, since *TLP* 5.634 refers explicitly to this wider concept of experience, and since the eye metaphor (*TLP* 5.633 and 5.6331) also refers to it implicitly. We therefore have strong reasons to believe that the variety of solipsism which interested Wittgenstein was based on this wider concept of experience, rather than on the narrower one of perception.

The argument sketched above could be amended so as to transform it into an argument for sense-data solipsism. This would be done by replacing the wider notion of experience with the narrower one of perception, and by characterising all perception as being made up of intrinsically private sense-data. Such a solipsist would modify premise (B) by saying that the reason why it is impossible to perceive that which cannot be perceived is that my perceptions form an impenetrable veil of essentially private sense-data standing between me and the supposedly real world. Thus,
his conclusion (I) would become: everything possible can possibly be perceived (in this strongly private sense) by me.

The reason why I haven't presented the solipsist's argument in this way is that sense-data solipsism, like sense-data phenomenalism, turns primarily on a particular conception of perception: to perceive is to access directly one's strongly private sense-data which form an impenetrable veil between us and the supposed real world. In contrast, Wittgenstein's discussion focuses almost exclusively on the solipsist's notion of the subject. Indeed, the only way in which experience and perception are explicitly qualified in these entries is when it is said that no part of them can be a priori (TLP 5.634). There is, therefore, no reason to focus exclusively on this version of the solipsist's doctrine. Although Wittgenstein's argument will have an impact on sense-data solipsism, its impact will not be restricted to it.

3.2.2 A solipsism based on the notion of the possible

The second thing to note is that this version of the solipsist's argument puts the emphasis on the notion of what it is possible to experience. Indeed, as noted by Pears, the 'world' introduced at TLP 5.6 is the world of all possible states (TLP 5.6). That this is the notion of the world intended here is shown by the fact that TLP 5.61 (which, according to Wittgenstein's numbering system, is a comment on TLP 5.6) explicitly mentions the issue of possibilities and the idea of what can and cannot possibly be thought and said:

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. (TLP 5.61) [My italics]

We will examine this entry in more detail below.

The 'world of the solipsist' is therefore the world as it can possibly be experienced by me, rather than 'the world as I [actually] found it' (TLP 5.631), as Pears argues. Indeed, as noted above, starting off with the latter notion renders the interpretation of TLP 5.6 problematic, since it is clear that the world of the possible need not coincide with the world as it has actually been given to me in experience. There is, indeed, no compelling reason to accept Pears' view that Wittgenstein is in TLP 5.631 defining the variety of solipsism he will be focusing on.
If I wrote a book called *The world as I found it*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather, of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book. (*TLP* 5.631)

This entry plays a very different role in Wittgenstein’s discussion. We will examine it below.

### 3.2.3 The world is my world

*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (TLP 5.6)*

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

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

The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand [of the only language I understand]) mean the limits of *my* world. (*TLP* 5.62)

‘The world is my world’ expresses the view that everything possible can possibly be experienced by me. This is indeed made clear by the entries adjacent to *TLP* 5.62. ‘The world’ in ‘the world is my world’ of *TLP* 5.62 (my italics) is, like ‘world’ in *TLP* 5.6, the world of all possibilities, the world of all possible states (both states of affairs and more complex possible situations). In turn, ‘my world’ in 5.62 is the world of the solipsist, the world as it can possibly be experienced by me, given the version of solipsism that Wittgenstein had in mind. Hence, what the solipsist means (i.e. ‘the world is my world’ in *TLP* 5.62) is that everything possible (i.e. all possible states of the world) can possibly be experienced by me. As noted above, this conclusion can be derived from the other premises of the solipsist’s argument (i.e. from what this kind of solipsist might generally be taken to say).

### 4 Wittgenstein’s discussion of solipsism

According to Wittgenstein, the solipsist’s argument makes three (interesting) mistakes and also captures two important insights. We will begin by considering the solipsist’s mistakes and will then examine the ways in which solipsism is correct.

#### 4.1 The mistakes of the solipsist

According to Wittgenstein, solipsism makes three crucial errors. The first is that of failing to realise that, given the notion of the self at work in his argument, it is as impossible to experience my self as it is to experience another’s self. The second mistake is that of thinking that it is
possible to deduce from a senseless, tautological statement what is and isn't included in the world as the totality of facts (i.e. what exists). The third and final mistake of solipsism is that of thinking that it is possible to derive from a senseless, tautological statement what is possible (i.e. what is and isn't included in the world of all possible states). Let us consider these in turn.

4.1.1 Experiencing my self as a subject

The first mistake of the solipsist is that of making, in premise (E) (i.e. 'The only self that I do experience is my own'), a claim which is nonsensical in sense 2. For the solipsist's argument presented on p. 159 requires, in order to work, the philosophical, first-personal notion of the self as a subject. This is clearly shown by premise (D) (i.e. 'It is impossible to experience other people's selves'). For, if the solipsist was using 'selves' in the third-personal sense, this premise would be blatantly false. It is, of course, possible to experience other selves, when 'selves' is understood in its third-personal sense: I perceive other people's bodies and think of them as persons, I can study other people's minds in the way that a psychologist would, etc. What the solipsist means in (D) is therefore that it is impossible to experience other selves as subjects of experience.

In turn, Wittgenstein's objection to the solipsist is that, since this is the notion of the self at work in his argument, (E) is nonsensical in sense 2. I cannot experience myself as a subject of experience, for the subject is not an object, let alone a complex one which could possibly be experienced or mentally represented. (As we will see below, this does not mean, however, that I can have no awareness of myself as a subject, according to Wittgenstein.)

The I is not an object. (NB 7.8.16)
I objectively confront every object. But not the I. (NB 11.8.16)

Note that, in what follows, whenever I write 'the subject cannot be experienced' or 'the subject is not a possible object of experience', I will always mean that the subject cannot, as a subject, be experienced.

Wittgenstein's point is therefore that, if we try to individuate the philosophical subject by 'looking for it' in experience, we will not only fail, but we will lose sight of what it is that we were trying to individuate. For, in effect, we will be treating the philosophical subject as if it were a thing, viewed from the third-personal point of view. This idea appears first in TLP 5.631:
If I wrote a book called *The world as I found it*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather, of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned in that book. (*TLP* 5.631)

Note that Wittgenstein isn't saying here that *no* report of the self could be included in this book. If I did write a book called *The world as I found it*, that is a book purporting to describe all of the things I have encountered in experience, I *would* be able to include a report of my self in it. *However*, such a report would have to be the report of my self viewed third-personally, as a (complex) object of experience. Given this restriction, and in order to individuate (or, as Wittgenstein puts it, 'isolate') myself, I would have to apply the methods that belong to the third-personal approach to the world. Wittgenstein tells us that 'a method for isolating' (i.e. individuating) the self in this way involves willing something and checking which parts of my body react (i.e. 'are subordinate') to this willing. By will, he clearly means here the 'will as phenomenon' which 'is of interest only to psychology' (*TLP* 6.423): the will which causes action, the empirical wanting to act. This will is an experience, a mental representation of the world, just like perceivings, thoughts, and beliefs. It is:

> that [will] which sets the human body in motion [...] wanting (thinking) (*NB* 21.7.16)

By using this third-personal method, I can individuate my self, as an *empirical* person in the world: I am the composite mind which is connected to *these* parts of *this* body. The notion of 'person' is, as we saw in p. 158, one of the non-philosophical notions of the self: the person is, crudely speaking, a composite mind attached to a body by means of the phenomenal will. Hence, the idea is that, in order to individuate myself as a person in the world, I need to discover which body is attached to my mind, and how exactly it is attached to it. Establishing which body, amongst the various bodies that I encounter in experience, is my body involves working out which parts of this body react to my mind's willing. Hence, this self, the self understood as a person, can be included in the book called *The world as I found it*, for everything that makes it up (my composite mind, my body, the phenomenal will) can be experienced, and can be represented by means of senseful propositions.

In contrast, I cannot include in this book a report of my self understood in the philosophical sense as a *subject* of experience. For the self, understood in this sense, consists precisely in its not being an object of experience but a subject. Since *The world as I found it* is the book
purporting to report everything I have encountered in experience, no report of the self, understood in this way, could be included in it. This is also the point of the following entries:

The subject does not belong to the world. *(TLP 5.632)*

Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do *not* see the eye. *(TLP 5.633)*

For the form of the visual field is surely not like this *(TLP 5.6331)*

Part of the point of the eye metaphor is that the philosophical subject, not being thing-like, could not possibly be encountered amongst complex things in experience. It could never be encountered *as a subject* amongst the facts that we experience, since it isn’t, as a subject, a possible object of experience, but the opposite: that from whose first-personal point of view all experience is had.

To sum up: the first thing which is incorrect about the solipsist’s argument is that it treats the self in an improper way. It is clear that his argument requires, in order for premise (D) to work, the first personal notion of the self. Given this, the solipsist cannot then claim (E). If the self which is being referred to here is the first-personal subject of experience, then it isn’t possible to say that ‘the only self that I do experience is my self’. For it is just as impossible for me to experience my self as a subject as it is for me to experience other selves as subjects.

### 4.1.2 Deriving what is real from what is *a priori*

According to Wittgenstein, the second thing which is incorrect about the solipsist’s argument is that it tries to deduce from a tautology or senseless statement (i.e. ‘It is impossible to experience that which cannot be experienced’ — premise [B] of the solipsist’s argument presented in p. 159) what facts are included in reality (i.e. ‘Only my self and those things I can possibly experience exist’, which is part of premise [H]). In order to grasp this idea, let us consider again Wittgenstein’s remarks on contradictory and tautological statements *(TLP 4.46, TLP 4.461, TLP 4.4611, TLP 4.464)*. As noted in Part VI, several important points can be drawn from these entries:

- Contradictory and tautological statements do not say anything, they lack sense in that they are not depicting possible states of the world. Because of this, they are
uninformative in that they are not putting forward a claim about how the world might be. They cannot therefore be regarded as telling us anything about the contents of the world as the totality of facts.

ii Nevertheless, contradictory and tautological statements are not nonsensical but merely senseless (4.4611).

iii Contradictory and tautological statements show something importantly correct about the logical scaffolding of the world and of representation. (4.461).

Point (i) is highly relevant to understanding Wittgenstein's views on solipsism. For the solipsist regards certain tautological statements as if they were, on the contrary, highly informative and could be used to deduce what is and isn't contained within the world as the totality of facts. Indeed, the solipsist attempts to deduce from 'It is impossible to experience that which cannot be experienced' (which is a tautological statement) the view that there can be no selves other than his in reality (i.e. in the world as the totality of facts). According to Wittgenstein, the solipsist thus makes the mistake of treating a tautological, a priori true statement as if it was informative and could be used to decide what there is and what there isn't in the world as the totality of facts. In other words, the solipsist is trying to establish a priori what facts are included in reality. This cannot be done, however, since reality is the totality of facts and all facts could be other than they are. This objection to the solipsist is advanced by Wittgenstein in the following entry:

This is connected with the fact that no part of experience is at the same time a priori.
Whatever we see could be other than it is.
Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is.
There is no a priori order of things. (TLP 5.634)

4.1.3 Deriving what is possible from what is a priori

Wittgenstein argues further that the solipsist is mistaken in speaking as if we could deduce from a tautology or senseless statement (i.e. 'It is impossible to experience that which cannot be experience' – premise [B]) what is and isn't included in the world of all possibilities (i.e. the only self which could ever exist is my self – the other part of premise [H]).

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. (TLP 5.61)
To exclude something from the world of the possible, that is to say ‘The world [of the possible] has this [possibility] in it, and this, but not that’, is not something that can be done. For possibilities are inherent in Tractarian objects, and the totality of Tractarian objects constitutes the limits of the world of the possible, of language and of what can possibly be experienced. Excluding a possibility from the world of the possible would involve excluding certain objects from the list of Tractarian objects. But, since the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in objects are so intimately interconnected that being given one object means being given all objects (TLP 5.524), excluding one or more objects from the world of possibilities would involve altering all objects and thus altering the limits of the world, of language and of what can possibly be experienced. This would, in turn, render language and experience impossible, since, in order to represent the world, linguistic and mental pictures must have a determinate sense. And, as noted before, for them to have a determinate sense, the simple linguistic and mental signs that ultimately make them up must act as the representatives of simple, unalterable and necessary objects. In other words: if the range of objects could be altered, these possibilities and impossibilities would not be determinate, and the very idea of a simple mental or linguistic sign acting as the representative for a simple, unalterable and necessary object would collapse. A simple sign would thus no longer be constrained by the determinate set of possibilities and impossibilities inherent in a particular object.

It is therefore nonsensical in sense 2, to attempt to say that the world of the possible contains certain possibilities but not others. Such a statement cannot be derived from a tautology (or, indeed, from any other kind of statement).

4.2 The two insights of solipsism

According to the Tractatus, solipsism yields two important insights: the first is the insight that ‘the world is my world’ (TLP 5.62); the second is an insight into the metaphysical subject. Let us consider these in turn.

4.2.1 The world is my world

In TLP 5.62, Wittgenstein states that what the solipsist means (i.e. ‘the world is my world’: everything possible can possibly be experienced by me) is essentially ‘correct’. He adds that this
insight is unsayable, but that it shows itself in that 'the limits of language (that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of my world'.

As noted in our discussion of Pears' account, 'language' in 5.62 is not my own private language or the language which is intelligible to me only. It is any possible language, any language which could possibly be intelligible to me and to everyone else (which, of course, includes the language that I use). It will therefore be any language meeting the constraints laid down by Wittgenstein for representation. In turn, we know that the totality of objects limits both any senseful language and all possible states of the world:

Empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects. The limit also makes itself manifest in the totality of elementary propositions. (TLP 5.5561)

Suppose that I am given all elementary propositions: then I can simply ask what propositions I can construct out of them. And there I have all propositions, and that fixes their limits. (TLP 4.51)

This is indeed corroborated by the fact that TLP 5.62 argues that what limits language is also what limits 'my world' and that 'my world' coincides with 'the world' (i.e. with the totality of possible states).

This remark provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism. For what the solipsist means is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest. The world is my world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of language (of that language which alone I understand [of the only language I understand]) mean the limits of my world. (TLP 5.62)

What TLP 5.62 adds to this is the idea that the totality of objects limits not only senseful language and all possible states of the world, but also all that can possibly be experienced by me (i.e. 'my world'). The totality of objects therefore limits, according to Wittgenstein:

i Any possible, i.e. senseful, language, including the one I use (i.e. 'that language which alone I understand' in TLP 5.62).

ii All possible states of the world (i.e. 'the world' in TLP 5.62).

iii Everything it is possible for me to experience (i.e. 'my world' in TLP 5.62).

In TLP 5.62, Wittgenstein is therefore putting forward a clarification of the remark which opens this section of the Tractatus, namely TLP 5.6.

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (TLP 5.6)
For this brief entry encapsulates two key ideas:

i. The totality of objects limits any possible language such as the one I use ('my language') and the world of all possible states (which is the same as the world of everything that can possibly be experienced by me according to TLP 5.62).

ii. There is something about language and the world which means that they can, in some important sense, be said to be 'mine'. This manifests itself in our tendency to speak of 'my language' and of 'my world'.

The view that the totality of objects limits, at the same time, the totality of possible states of the world, any senseful language and all possible experience is now familiar to us. The combinatorial possibilities and impossibilities of objects determine which combinations of objects are possible and which are impossible: objects thus determine which states of the world are genuinely possible. In turn, to say that propositions and thoughts are genuinely representational (and thus senseful) is to say that they are ultimately analysable into simple signs which act as the representatives of objects. Such simple signs would fail to act as the representatives of objects if they didn't comply with the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the latter. Hence, senseful language and senseful thinking (or experience) are limited by the totality of objects.

It is therefore unsurprising to find Wittgenstein arguing, in TLP 5.62, that 'the world is my world' manifests itself in that 'the limits of language (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of my world'. For the idea that everything possible can possibly be experienced by me manifests itself in the idea that the same thing (i.e. the totality of objects) limits both the totality of possible states of the world and any senseful language: since the totality of objects limits both language and everything possible, everything possible can be represented in language; and since language is, as was shown in Part VI, made of propositions, which consists of propositional signs and thoughts (i.e. mental representations, experiences), it must be the case that everything possible can possibly be experienced.

What TLP 5.62 adds to this is the view that language and experience can in some sense be said to be 'mine'. Indeed, this notion of mineness will be shown below to be intimately connected with Wittgenstein's notion of the metaphysical or philosophical subject which is the focus of TLP 5.63 to TLP 5.634.
Before we move on to consider this issue, it is worth noting that the statement 'the world is my world' is nonsensical in sense 1: it mistakenly attempts to put into words a correct insight which can only be shown and it doesn't show clearly that it says nothing. For, indeed, this statement says nothing since, according to the Tractatus, it is true in all possible worlds that everything possible can be experienced by me. 'The world is my world' is thus an elucidation which is nonsensical in the first sense, just like the other propositions of the Tractatus (TLP 6.54).

4.2.2 The metaphysical, first-personal subject

According to Wittgenstein, solipsism yields another fundamental insight: an insight into the first-personal notion of the subject. In order to clarify this point, let us return to TLP 5.631.

There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.
If I wrote a book called The world as I found it, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather, of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book. (TLP 5.631)

There is indeed more to this remark than the mere idea that the philosophical subject cannot be encountered in experience. For TLP 5.631 also suggests that the third-personal approach to the world cannot possibly yield the sense of 'mineness' which is the precondition for genuine self-ascriptions of experience. The first-personal, metaphysical subject of experience needs to be posited because only it could be the source of this sense of 'mineness'. It is therefore essential to posit such a subject, if we are to be able to account for the genuine self-ascription of experience.

The I makes its appearance in philosophy through the world being my world (NB 12.8.16)

Let us consider how TLP 5.631 shows this. As we saw before, Wittgenstein tells us in this entry that 'a method for isolating' (i.e. individuating) the self third-personally involves willing something and checking which parts of my body react (i.e. 'are subordinate') to this willing. By doing this, I can individuate my self as an empirical person in the world: I, as an empirical person, am this body connected to this mind by means of this phenomenal will. That this is the body connected to that mind is shown by the fact that these parts of this body react to this mind's will.

However, although this third-personal 'method for isolating' the self succeeds in individuating empirical persons, it cannot, on its own, help me to establish that I am this person. For, in order
to establish this, I already need to know that the mind and the will that this body is reacting to are my mind and my will. Since the mind and the phenomenal will are made up of experiences, this entails that, in order to individuate myself as a person, I already need to be able to ascribe experiences to myself. As noted before, however, if all that we have is the third-personal approach to the self, all apparent first-person ascriptions of experiences would have to be translated into other-ascriptions (the experiences of this or that mind): 'I experience p' would have to be translated into 'A experiences p and A is this person' (individuated by means of the third-personal method). According to Wittgenstein, this could never be, since these other ascriptions fail to capture the essential fact that these are my experiences, the experiences included in my report of the world.

I want to report how I found the world. [...] I have to judge the world, to measure things. (NB 2.9.16) [Note Wittgenstein's italics.]

The third-personal method described above therefore isn't a method for individuating myself as a person: it is only a method for individuating persons, third-personally. Indeed, when one is wholly submerged in this third-personal approach, everything in the world (all minds and bodies) appears to stand on the same, impersonal level.

A stone, the body of a beast, the body of a man, my body, all stand on the same level.
(NB 12.10.16)

The first-personal, metaphysical subject is the precondition of our sense of 'mineness'. Without it, no third-personal method could help me to individuate myself as an empirical person in the world.

A consequence of this is that Pears' account of Wittgenstein's early views on the self-ascription of experience is misleading. For Pears argues that the self-ascription of experience is achieved by pointing alternatively to my body and to my mind, and thereby establishing a link between the two. According to Pears, this is what individuates me as a person in the world, and which thereby makes it possible for me to ascribe experiences to myself. In fact, although such a third-personal method might help to individuate this self as an empirical person, it cannot help to establish that this self is me, that I am this person. It cannot help me realise that the mind and the phenomenal will which make up this person are mine, in the sense of consisting of experiences that I have. No third-personal method for individuating the self could account for genuine self-ascriptions of experience in this way.
In summary, the version of solipsism put forward in p. 159 is also of interest to Wittgenstein because it makes use of, indeed necessitates, the first-personal notion of the subject. That this is an insight revealed by solipsism is made clear by the fact that, according to Wittgenstein, what the solipsist means is 'the world is my world' (*TLP* 5.62) and that:

> The I makes its appearance in philosophy through the world being *my* world (*NB* 12.8.16)

Solipsism shows that certain things cannot be captured by the third-personal approach, and therefore that the first-personal notion of the subject needs to be posited: the thought behind premise (D) of the solipsist's argument cannot, for instance, be expressed by using the third-personal notion of the self.

### 4.3 Wittgenstein's method

As noted above, one of Wittgenstein's aims in this section of the *Tractatus* is to establish 'how much truth there is in solipsism' (*TLP* 5.62), in other words which aspects of this doctrine are correct, and which are incorrect.

Solipsism is correct in that yields two key insights: the first is that everything possible can possibly be experienced by me; the second is an insight into the first-personal, metaphysical, or philosophical notion of the subject. According to Wittgenstein, solipsism is right in positing such a subject because, without it, genuine self-ascriptions of experience would be impossible. The world can be said to be 'my world' (i.e. the world as it is given to *me* in experience) and language to be 'the language that *I* alone understand' only if such a subject is posited. Solipsism goes part of the way to capturing this first-personal, metaphysical notion of the subject, since it draws our attention to the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that it is impossible to experience other people's selves understood in the first-personal sense as subjects (premise [D]). However, solipsism stops short of yielding a wholly accurate insight into the subject because it loses its way when it claims that the only subject that I do experience is my own (premise [E]). Wittgenstein shows us that, in fact, it is just as impossible to experience myself as a subject as it is to experience other selves as subjects. (As we will see below, this doesn't mean, however, that I can have no awareness whatsoever of myself as a subject, according to Wittgenstein.)
Relying on premise (E) is indeed one of the three crucial mistakes of the solipsist. In addition, the solipsist makes the mistakes of trying to infer from a tautological, senseless statement (i.e. 'it is impossible to experience that which cannot be experienced') a view as to what can and cannot be included in the world as the totality of facts (i.e. in reality) and a view as to what can and cannot be included in the world understood as the totality of possibilities. Wittgenstein therefore uses his discussion of solipsism, in part, in order to show us the limits of how sense-less statements should be used in philosophical works.

By 'following out strictly' the implications of solipsism (TLP 5.64) Wittgenstein has succeeded, amongst other things, in mapping the contours of the self. He does this by exploring the peripheries of language. He begins with senseful propositions, such as '[The composite, empirical mind] A believes p' (TLP 5.54 – 5.5422). He then shows us how not to use senseless statements (in this case, the tautology 'it is impossible to experience that which cannot be experienced') in philosophical works (TLP 5.61 and TLP 5.634). He examines statements which are nonsensical in sense 1, such as 'the world is my world' (TLP 5.62). Finally, he exposes statements which can be shown to be nonsensical in the second sense, such as 'I can experience myself as a subject of experience' (cf. TLP 5.633 – 5.634) and 'The empirical self is simple' (TLP 5.54 – 5.5422). This is one of the ways in which the limits of language and thought can be mapped out, according to Wittgenstein. As Williams puts it:

> The limits of language and thought reveal themselves in the fact that certain things are nonsensical. [Williams (1981), p. 146.]

It is by using this method and by focusing on a statement which is nonsensical in sense 1 (i.e. 'the world is my world') that Wittgenstein succeeds in clarifying or providing an elucidation of the first-personal notion of the subject. Providing such elucidations is indeed, according to the Tractatus, the legitimate task of philosophy:

**Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.**

> Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.

A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.

**Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions' [i.e. in senseful propositions about philosophical subjects], but rather in the clarification of propositions.**

> Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct; its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries. (TLP 4.112)

It [philosophy] must set limits to what can be thought; and, in doing so, to what cannot be thought.

> It must set limits to what cannot be thought by working outwards through what

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It [philosophy] will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said. (*TLP* 4.115)

And, as noted above, Wittgenstein regards the whole of the *Tractatus* as consisting of philosophical elucidations which are, in this way, nonsensical in sense 1 (*TLP* 6.54).

It isn’t therefore surprising that Wittgenstein concludes his discussion of solipsism by saying that:

Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way.

What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that ‘the world is my world’. The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not part of it. (*TLP* 5.641)

The philosophical I is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul with the psychological properties, but the metaphysical subject, the boundary (not a part) of the world. The human body, however, my body in particular, is a part of the world among others, among beasts, plants, stones, etc., etc.

Whoever realises this will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body. He will regard the world quite naively as objects which are similar and which belong together. (NB 2.9.10)

For the metaphysical self, the first personal subject, is of great interest to philosophy. And although it cannot be spoken about by means of senseful propositions, it can be spoken about by means of ‘elucidations’ which are nonsensical in sense 1.

The metaphysical subject isn’t introduced, as Hacker argues, because, without it, thought and language would be impossible. The metaphysical subject is not the precondition of experience or language, but the precondition of experience and language being *mine*. Without it, no genuine self-ascription of experience would be possible. Hence, although, without the subject, we would be able to represent the world and to individuate particular persons, *I* wouldn’t be able to individuate *myself* as a person in the world, or to genuinely ascribe experiences to *myself*. I would have no sense of the fact that this is the world *I* experience, or that this is *my* report of the world.

What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that ‘the world is my world’. (*TLP* 5.641)

The I makes its appearance in philosophy through the world being *my* world (NB 12.8.16)

I want to report how *I* found the world. [...]
It isn't therefore surprising that Wittgenstein refers to the philosophical, first personal self as being a *metaphysical* subject. For none of the things we say about objects, facts, and possible states of the world apply to it. Hence, this self is not a person ('the human being'), or a body, or a composite mind ('the human soul with which psychology deals').

5 **Being aware of a subject that cannot be individuated**

The question that needs to be addressed at this point is whether, according to Wittgenstein, it is possible for me to be in any sense aware of myself as a subject. Am I, according to the *Tractatus*, in any way aware of being a subject and not just an object? Clearly, if such an awareness is possible, it will not involve having a representational experience of the subject. For the metaphysical subject is not a complex object, and cannot therefore be encountered in experience. Since the first-personal subject is not a simple object either, however, any awareness I may have of being a subject will not involve the type of non-representational awareness I can have of simples. Being aware of my self as a subject will not involve being non-representationally aware of a simple object.

Being aware of myself as a subject cannot involve *individuating* myself as a subject either. It cannot involve establishing that I am *this* subject. For one of the ways in which the metaphysical subject differs from objects is that the subject cannot be individuated in any way at all (let alone by applying the methods we use in order to individuate things). After all, individuating something involves clarifying in what way that thing differs from other things belonging to its ‘type’: individuating a complex object involves showing how it differs from other complex objects (e.g. showing that the arrangement of its components is different from that of other complex objects); individuating a simple involves showing how it differs from other simples (e.g. showing that, unlike those other simples, this one helps to produce *these* states of the world). Individuating something therefore involves being aware of other things belonging to the ‘type’ to which that which is being individuated belongs. Such an awareness is impossible, however, when dealing with the first-personal, metaphysical subject. We do not have access to various, distinct first-personal stand-points that we could contrast with each other. **My non-representational awareness of being a subject cannot therefore involve having some form of acquaintance with other, distinct**
first-personal standpoints, and concluding that this one, and not the others, is mine. In other words, being non-representationally aware of myself as a subject does not involve the awareness that I am this subject, as opposed to those other ones.

Being non-representationally aware of myself as a subject must therefore simply involve being aware of the fact (in a non-Tractarian sense) that experience is had from the first-personal point of view. It must, in other words, involve recognising (in a non-representational way) that experience has a particular, first-personal ‘form’ (cf. TLP 5.6331) or ‘shape’ (NB 20.10.16). And this non-representational awareness of being a subject must be possible, according to Wittgenstein, if certain unsayably correct elucidations concerning the metaphysical subject are to succeed in showing anything to us. The statement ‘I am a subject, as well as an object of experience’ (which is nonsensical in sense 1 and can be regarded as an elucidation of the first-personal notion of the subject) would not be able to perform its function of showing anything to me, if I lacked the ability to be non-representationally aware of myself as a subject.

6 Some final considerations

Having clarified this, let us consider again some of the most puzzling remarks of the Notebooks.

Is belief a kind of experience?
Is thought a kind of experience?
All experience is world and does not need the subject.
The act of the will is not an experience. (NB 9.11.16)

What kind of reason is there for the assumption of a willing subject?
Is not my world adequate for individuation? (NB 19.11.16)

The point of NB 9.11.16 is, by now, clear: experience—that is, mental representation—does not require a subject of any sort in order to be possible. Empirical thought can on its own, without the need for a subject, effect the required connection between language and the world. But what is Wittgenstein trying to say in NB 19.11.16?

Coyne argues that this entry shows that Wittgenstein had decided, at the end of the Notebooks, that no metaphysical subject of any sort needed to be posited. And it might be that Wittgenstein entertained, at this point, a notion resembling that of the subject-less perspective posited by

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181 This idea is indeed partly expressed by premise (E) of the solipsist’s argument (‘It is impossible to experience other people’s selves’).

Coyne and Pears. However, if he did entertain this idea at the end of the *Notebooks*, then he must have discarded it by the time he wrote the *Tractatus*. For *TLP* 5.641 clearly shows that Wittgenstein posits some type of metaphysical subject in the *Tractatus*. This much is clear therefore: however we interpret *NB* 19.11.16, Wittgenstein’s remarks in this passage cannot be viewed as evidence for the fact that no metaphysical subject is posited in the *Tractatus*.

In fact, *NB* 19.11.16 demonstrates that Wittgenstein’s thoughts were not yet fully formed when he wrote the *Notebooks*. Note, for instance, how awkward is the claim that ‘my world is adequate for individuation’. For, whether ‘my world’ here means the world as it can possibly be experienced from the point of view of the first-personal metaphysical subject or the world as it can possibly be experienced from the subject-less perspective posited by Pears and Coyne, it cannot be correct to say that ‘my world’ can be individuated (i.e. ‘is adequate for individuation’). Strictly speaking, individuating the world would involve saying that ‘my world’ is the world viewed from this particular first personal stand-point, as opposed to that one. And, for this to be possible, we would need to be able to individuate this first-personal subject (or in Pears’ and Coyne’s interpretation, the subject-less perspective) which, as demonstrated above, cannot be done. Strictly speaking, therefore, ‘my world’ cannot be individuated.

Indeed, the *Tractatus* clearly argues that it is impossible to individuate ‘my world’. The world is the world of the possible, and everything possible can be experienced by me. It is impossible, however, to step outside this world in order to compare it to (and thereby distinguish it from) any other (i.e. different) world of the possible. For this would entail that there are possibilities which are not included in this (i.e. our) world of the possible, which would, in turn, entail that Tractarian objects are not necessary and persistent, but alterable. In such a case, as Wittgenstein’s argument for simples shows, sense would not be possible. If other possibilities could be discovered in some other world of the possible, language and experience would be impossible.

The fact that Wittgenstein’s views on this issue were not yet fully formed at the time he wrote the *Notebooks* shows itself again in the following entries:

> There really is only one world soul, which I for preference call my soul and as which alone I conceive what I call the soul of others. (*NB* 23.5.15)

> Is this the solution to the puzzle why men have always believed that there was one spirit common to the whole world?

> And in that case it would, of course, also be common to inanimate things.

> This is the way I have travelled. Idealism singles human beings out from the world as if they were unique, solipsism singles me alone out, and at last I see that I
too belong with the rest of the world, and so on the one side nothing is left over, and on the other side there remains something really unique, the world. Thus idealism leads to realism if it is strictly thought out. (NB 15.10.16)

The Notebooks’ remarks on the ‘world soul’ reflect an initial resistance on Wittgenstein’s part to the idea that the metaphysical subject cannot be individuated in any way at all. It is as if he had come, by this stage, to realise that the subject could not be individuated personally, but had not yet whole-heartedly embraced the idea that it couldn’t be individuated at all (but that it nevertheless needed and could be posited). This is reflected in his tendency to speak of ‘only one world soul’ (NB 23.5.15), as if the metaphysical subjects could be counted, and in his way of presenting this soul as spreading over the whole world (being ‘common to the whole world’ — NB 15.10.16), almost as if extension could apply to it. The doubt raised in NB 19.11.16 most probably expresses his increasing awareness of the fact that there was something unsound about this earlier notion of the world soul. Indeed, the second sentence of this entry indicates that Wittgenstein’s concern was connected with the issue of individuation.

What kind of reason is there for the assumption of a willing subject? Is not my world adequate for individuation? (NB 19.11.16)

The fact that no mention is made of this world-soul in the Tractatus, together with TLP 5.641, show that Wittgenstein finally came round to the idea that the metaphysical subject needed to be posited, in spite of the fact — or, rather, precisely because — it could not be individuated in any way at all. Note indeed that Wittgenstein replaces the claim that ‘on the one side nothing is left over’ in NB 15.10.16, with the claim that ‘The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension’ (my italics) in TLP 5.64.

Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality coordinated with it. (TLP 5.64) [My italics]

For it is indeed the latter which is correct. The first-personal subject, just like sensations in the Philosophical Investigations, is ‘not a something, but not a nothing either!’ (PI §304): neither the metaphysical subject of the Tractatus, nor sensations as portrayed in the Investigations, are object-like (and, in this sense, ‘a something’). But this does not mean that they can be discarded: it doesn’t mean that they are ‘a nothing’. The subject needs to be posited if genuine first-person ascriptions of experience are to be possible, and sensations need to be posited because it is beyond question that we experience them. Hence, both the subject as portrayed in the Tractatus

185 For these points on Wittgenstein’s later treatment of sensations, see Budd (1981) ch. III, pp. 46 – 76.
and sensations as portrayed in the *Investigations*, are 'not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either' (*PI* §304).

In fact, Wittgenstein's earlier treatment of the subject has so many points in common with his later treatment of sensations that the latter could be regarded as an outgrowth of the former. The first-personal subject of the *Tractatus*, like sensations in the *Investigations*, is not object-like.

> It [the sensation] is not a *something* (*PI* §304)

No reports can be given of it, and it cannot be said to be experienced, encountered or observed in the way that ordinary objects are. Again, as with sensations, the subject cannot be individuated on criterial grounds as objects can, but it nevertheless needs to be posited.

> What I do is not of course to identify my sensation by criteria, but to repeat an expression. (*PI* §290)

> It [the sensation] is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! (*PI* §304)

> To use a word without justification does not mean to use it without a right. (*PI* §289)

If the subject could be individuated in this way, it wouldn't be a genuine first-personal subject, just like as sensations, if they could be picked out by means of criteria (as ordinary, external objects are), wouldn't genuinely belong to the language-game of the mental (i.e. of the inner).

What differentiates the *Investigations* from the *Tractatus*, is, of course, the notion of language-games, and the parallel rejection of the 'myth of the given'. For Tractarian objects are precisely the 'given' in this sense. Tractarian objects are what they are independently of us. The logic inherent in them determines what can possibly be said and thought. Whether something is a senseful (i.e. logical) thought or statement is determined by the very nature of these objects. The pre-conceptual and pre-linguistic possibilities inherent in objects thus determine what can and cannot be sensefully thought and said. In this sense, the 'given' determines thought and language in the *Tractatus*.

The reason why Wittgenstein could not have developed, by working within the Tractarian system, the account of sensations he later developed in the *Investigations* is that sensations in the *Tractatus*, as opposed to the metaphysical subject, are part of experience and therefore object-like: they are part of what can be said to be observed, or encountered in experience, and thus stand on the same level as all other objects and facts.
It is interesting to note, however, that, in his post-TRACTarian period, Wittgenstein chose to concentrate almost exclusively on the issue of sensations and experience, and said comparatively little about the subject. Since the first-personal subject of the Tractatus was never object-like in the first place, Wittgenstein may have felt that his earlier account of the ‘I’ wasn’t, in its essence, affected by his later abandonment of the ‘myth of the given’ and his parallel introduction of the notion of language-games. He may have felt that his earlier treatment of the first-personal subject remained, in essence, correct.

7 Conclusions

According to Wittgenstein, what the solipsist means is ‘the world is my world’. This idea yields, he argues, two crucial insights: the first is that everything possible can possibly be experienced by me; the second is that there has to be a metaphysical, first-personal subject if we are to be able to speak of the world, experience and language being ‘mine’ and thus to ascribe experiences to ourselves. However, on the way to these insights, the solipsist makes three important and interesting mistakes: the first is that of thinking that she or he can experience themselves as a subject; the second is that of thinking that it is possible to derive from tautological statements conclusions about what exists in reality; the third is that of thinking that it is possible to derive from such statements conclusions about what is possible.

‘The world is my world’ both in that everything possible can be experienced and in that some of these experiences can be said to be mine. This manifests itself in the fact that the world of all possible states coincides perfectly with what I can possibly represent in experience and language. There is no part of the world which cannot possibly be represented by me. ‘The world is my world’ thus entails that the world as I can possibly experience it has ‘no neighbor’.

‘But aren’t you forgetting something [...]? Almost the world behind the mere words?’ But here solipsism teaches us a lesson: It is that thought which is on the way to destroy that error. For if the world is idea it isn’t any person’s idea. (Solipsism stops short of saying this and says that it is my idea.) But then how could I say what the world is if the realm of ideas has no neighbor? What I do comes to defining the word ‘world’. (NLPESD, p. 297)

Which is why Wittgenstein says that:

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*This is also why he would later choose to concentrate, not on a version of solipsism focusing primarily on the subject, but on one focusing primarily on the nature of experience: sense-data solipsism. See NLPESD.*
The world and life are one. (*TLP* 5.621)

Physiological life is of course not 'Life'. And neither is psychological life. Life is the world. (*NB* 24.7.16)

I am my world. (The microcosm.) (*TLP* 5.63)

'Life' in *TLP* 5.621 and *NB* 24.7.16 is neither physiological life nor psychological life because it isn't the life which is experienced by any body or mind in particular. It is not 'the world as I [actually] found it' but my world, the world as it can possibly be experienced from the first personal standpoint by me or anyone else. It is this world which coincides with the totality of possible states. The I, understood as the totality of all possible first-personal experiences, is the microcosm (*TLP* 5.63). In turn, this totality of possible representational facts (of possible experiences) is a subset of the totality of possible facts, of possible states of the world. It is a subset of the macrocosm.
Part VIII: Conclusion

The objects posited by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* play a pivotal role. On the one hand, they possess a distinct form and a content which allow them to produce, by combining exclusively with each other, a reality made of space, time and material properties. On the other, they must be indefinable, necessary simples, if senseful language is to be possible. Because of this, simple objects cannot be said to possess a metaphysical status: they are prior to perception and cannot therefore be regarded as qualified particulars. The material or phenomenal points which are the simplest entities stipulated in the metaphysical debate on the external world are not therefore suitable candidates for Tractarian simples.

The constraints imposed by Wittgenstein on simples give rise to an extremely original account of language and the mind. Propositions are ultimately analysable into simple names acting as the representatives for simple objects by virtue of the intrinsic intentionality of thought. These simple names not only render determinate sense possible, but also render illogical language impossible. A proposition which does not comply with the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in simple objects is not a genuine proposition, and does not represent anything. Hence, it is impossible genuinely to represent something which contradicts the laws of logic. The *Tractatus* account of language turns on the idea that, as soon as simple representational units (whether they are simple signs or ordinary words) acquire a meaning, the propositions produced by them will be senseful. This is the very heart of Wittgenstein's Picture Theory: language is determined by the world.

Wittgenstein's views on representation instruct his account of the mind. The mind is a composite cluster of thoughts, or mental pictures of the world. It is impossible therefore to think illogically. To think illogically would be to have a mental representation of the world which contradicted the possibilities and impossibilities inherent in simple objects, and which would, as a result, represent nothing at all. Our views on the mind must reflect this fact, and it is therefore nonsensical in sense 2 to speak of a simple thinking or representing self, whether this self is viewed as located in the world or as belonging to its limits. Thinking ensures, on its own, the connection between language and reality.
The move towards a metaphysical subject is not therefore motivated by the idea that language and experience would be impossible without a transcendental self, but by the fact that we could have no genuine sense of ‘mineness’ without such a subject. The first-personal subject is the pre-condition for genuine self-ascriptions of experience, and must therefore be posited in spite of the fact that it cannot be individuated – or, rather, precisely because of this.

It is worth ending this discussion by replying to the question which was left open in Part IV, namely that of Wittgenstein's position on the debate as to the metaphysical nature of the external world.

Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality coordinated with it. (TLP 5.64)

Solipsism coincides with realism in that the world as the totality of facts does not contain a first personal subject as the one required by solipsism. This does not mean, however, that Wittgenstein endorses realism as being the doctrine which puts forward the correct metaphysical account of the nature of the world. For realism, like solipsism, attempts to impose a restriction on what can be said to exist within the world as the totality of facts, and on what is involved in perceiving this world. Such restrictions are not licit, however, since they would involve excluding simples from the world of the possible and thus altering the limits of this world. If this could be done, both linguistic representation and experience would become impossible.

Wittgenstein's position is therefore the very antithesis of that which fuels the metaphysical debate on the nature of reality. Reality, for Wittgenstein, is the obtaining of certain possibilities, and we are not allowed to exclude any of these a priori. So it is as nonsensical (in sense 2) to say, for instance, that only phenomenal things could possibly exist as it is to say that I am the only possible subject of experience. For all we know is that simple objects are capable of producing a reality made up of space, time and material properties, and that this reality can be experienced by us. There is no a priori reason, however, why the property of being material should be given pre-eminence over phenomenal properties. All that we can experience could be other than it is.
Appendix: The textual evidence against Hacker

In order for Hacker's interpretation to be validated, we would need to find conclusive evidence to the effect that Wittgenstein posits, in the *Tractatus*, a simple self located at the limits of the world, that this self is regarded by him as being the precondition of representation, and that one of its crucial roles is that of connecting linguistic and mental signs to simple objects. In fact, however, no such evidence can be found, either in the *Tractatus* or in the *Notebooks*.

1 The ambiguity of the *Tractatus* remarks on the self

The problem with the *Tractatus* evidence is that all of its remarks concerning the self can be given equally plausible, conflicting interpretations. Hence, they cannot on their own be regarded as *conclusively* supporting Hacker's account of the connection between language and reality (or anyone else's, for that matter). Let us briefly consider these remarks.\(^\text{185}\)

Let us start with *TLP* 5.6.

*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (TLP 5.6)*

Hacker takes this remark to mean that, according to Wittgenstein, there must be a unified self for representation to be possible.\(^\text{186}\) "The limits of my language" and "the limits of my world" coincide in that the same thing limits both language and the world as it can be given in experience (i.e. in mental representation), namely the transcendental, representing self: only this self can effect the connection between (linguistic or mental) simple signs and simple objects. In contrast, according to Pears, what limits both language and the world is simply the range of objects encountered by me in my lifetime.\(^\text{187}\) The inclusion of the prefix "my" in *TLP* 5.6 is simply there to indicate that experience is perspectival. No unitary self can be found, either in the world or at its limits, according to the *Tractatus*, because such a self would lack any real individuation, and would thus fail to be anything at all. Coyne, Child and Sluga agree with Pears on this, albeit not always for the

\(^{185}\) Note that, although Pears' views will be mentioned in this Appendix, they will only be discussed in detail in Part VII of the thesis.


same reasons.\textsuperscript{188}

In \textit{TLP} 5.62, Wittgenstein tells us that:

\begin{quote}
This remark provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism.
For what the solipsist \textit{means} is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest.
The world is \textit{my} world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of \textit{language} (of that language which alone I understand [or: of the only language I understand]) mean the limits of \textit{my} world. (\textit{TLP} 5.62)
\end{quote}

This is taken by Hacker and O'Brien to mean that Wittgenstein essentially agrees with the tenets of transcendental solipsism.\textsuperscript{189} Pears, in contrast, argues that Wittgenstein's aim in this entry is to undermine transcendental solipsism. Solipsism is "correct" for Wittgenstein only in the sense that it nevertheless offers an important insight: the idea that experience is intrinsically perspectival, but that this perspective cannot be represented in experience.\textsuperscript{190}

Consider, in turn, \textit{TLP} 5.5421:

\begin{quote}
There is no such thing as the soul - the subject, etc... - as it is conceived in the superficial psychology of the present day.
Indeed a composite soul would no longer be a soul. (\textit{TLP} 5.62)
\end{quote}

According to Hacker's interpretation, this shows that a composite soul located in the world could never play the role required of it by representation. Hence, Wittgenstein rejects empirical solipsism, though only to espouse a transcendental brand of this doctrine.\textsuperscript{191} In contrast, Pears takes this section to mean that all notions (whether empirical or transcendental) of a simple, thinking or representing self are ultimately empty.\textsuperscript{192}

In \textit{TLP} 5.621, 5.63, 5.632, 5.633, 5.6331, and 5.634 Wittgenstein argues that:

\begin{quote}
The world and life are one. (\textit{TLP} 5.621)
I am my world. (The microcosm.) (\textit{TLP} 5.63)
There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.
If I wrote the book called \textit{The world as I found it}, I should have to include a report of my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not etc... this being the method of isolating the subject, or rather, of showing that in an important sense there is no subject, for it alone could \textit{not} be mentioned in that book. - (\textit{TLP} 5.631)
\end{quote}

The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world. (TLP 5.632)

Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?
You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye.
And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is being seen by an eye. (TLP 5.633)

For the form of the visual field is clearly not like this (TLP 5.6331)

Eye

This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is at the same time a priori.
Whatever we see could be other than it is.
Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is.
There is no a priori order of things. (TLP 5.634)

According to Hacker, these remarks show that a simple, representing self cannot be in the world, but that such a self does belong, according to Wittgenstein, to the limits of the world. In addition, TLP 5.634 shows that, although no part of experience can be a priori, it is a priori that it is my experience, namely the experience of the transcendental self. In contrast, Pears argues that these remarks are used by Wittgenstein to show that no simple (empirical or transcendental) self can be posited, because such a self could never be individuated. Similar accounts are advanced by Coyne and Child, though again not for exactly the same reasons.

Consider now TLP 5.64:

Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality coordinated with it. (TLP 5.64)

For Hacker, solipsism coincides with realism in that the transcendental self of solipsism has been pushed to the limits of the world, and cannot thus be located within it. Transcendental solipsism is however superior to realism in that its account of what takes place at the limits of the world is essentially correct (even though it cannot be said). Pears argues, in contrast, that transcendental solipsism is rejected by the Tractatus: the reason why solipsism and realism coincide is that the former turns out ultimately to be empty, since the self of solipsism cannot be individuated in any

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TLP 5.641 can also be given conflicting interpretations:

Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-
psychological way.
What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that “the world is my world”.
The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body,
or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject,
the limit of the world - not part of it. (TLP 5.641)

Hacker understands this entry as meaning that philosophy is correct in trying to give us an
insight into the transcendental representing self. The mistake made by philosophers, in particular
solipsists, is only that of thinking that such an insight could ever be put into words. Pears, in
contrast, argues that the metaphysical subject of these passages refers simply to the impersonal
perspectivalness of experience.

Finally, consider TLP 6.431:

So too at death the world does not alter, but comes to an end. (TLP 6.431)

Hacker’s view is here that, since the unified, transcendental self is a presupposition of the world
as given in representation, such a world would end if this self died. In contrast, Pears argues
that Wittgenstein’s remarks on death are primarily aimed at drawing our attention to the impersonal,
perspectival limits of experience. Child too holds that nothing in these remarks needs to be
regarded as evidence for the positing of a transcendental subject in the Tractatus.

2 The textual evidence from the Notebooks

Given that the Tractatus fails to settle the issue of whether a transcendental self needs to be
posited, according to Wittgenstein, in order for representation to be possible, it is essential to
turn to the Notebooks. And here, two further difficulties emerge. The first is that of finding
Notebooks remarks which are free from the ambiguities of the Tractatus. The second is that of

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197 See Pears (1987) p. 188.
201 See Pears (1987) p. 177, ff. 81.
ascertaining whether the unambiguous remarks of the Notebooks (if such remarks can indeed be found) express views that hadn't been discarded by Wittgenstein by the time he came to write the Tractatus.

The Notebooks certainly posits, at least to begin with, a metaphysical self or subject, namely the "willing subject".

The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists. If the will did not exist, neither would there be that centre of the world, which I call the I, and which is the bearer of ethics. (NB 5.8.16)

It is this willing subject that Hacker believes to be the metaphysical self of the Tractatus, the self which is the external, transcendental precondition of representation:

It is plausible to suppose that Wittgenstein conceived of the correlation of names and the objects that are their meanings (Bedeutungen) as effected by acts of meaning (meinen), i.e. meaning this object by such and such a name. The directedness of symbols is derived from the mental acts that one performs in using symbols.\textsuperscript{201}

For it is probable that he had himself conceived of meaning something by a sign as an act of will performed not by the empirical self... but by the metaphysical self, the willing subject.\textsuperscript{202}

Hacker therefore argues that the metaphysical self mentioned in TLP 5.641 is the willing subject of NB 5.8.16, and that this willing subject is (in addition to being the precondition of ethics) the transcendental representer which effects the connection between language and reality. When considering the Notebooks, we therefore need to ascertain both:

i. Whether this willing, metaphysical subject is posited by Wittgenstein as being both the bearer of ethics and the precondition of representation, and, if so,

ii. Whether Wittgenstein still held this view by the time he came to write the Tractatus.

The Notebooks entries which mention the will, the willing subject, the metaphysical subject, the soul, the "I", etc. are those dated: 27.4.15; 11.6.16; 5.7.16; 8.7.16; 13.8.16; 23.5.15; 21.7.16; 2.8.16; 4.8.16; 5.8.16; 7.8.16; 11.8.16; 12.8.16; 2.9.16; 12.10.16; 15.10.16; 17.10.16; 20.10.16; 4.11.16; 9.11.16; and 19.11.16.

\textsuperscript{201} See Hacker (1993) p.43.

\textsuperscript{202} See Hacker (1993) p.43.
In the first five entries (NB 27.4.15; 11.6.16; 5.7.16; 8.7.16; 13.8.16), Wittgenstein’s remarks concerning the will and the subject are unambiguously made in the context of a discussion focusing exclusively on ethics (i.e. the meaning of the world or life, happiness and unhappiness, good and evil, etc.) or on aesthetics (which, Wittgenstein tells us, is analogous to ethics - see TLP 6.421 and NB 24.7.16). They therefore unambiguously fail to connect the notion of the subject to the issue of representation and cannot be used as evidence for Hacker’s interpretation. Out of the remaining sections, 5.8.16; 4.8.16; 7.8.16; 11.8.16; 12.8.16; 12.10.16; 17.10.16; 20.10.16 and 4.11.16 fail again to explicitly connect the notion of the subject to that of representation, although no explicit link to ethics is made here either. Four of the remaining eight sections could be seen as relating the notion of the self to that of representation. These are the entries dated 23.5.15, 15.10.16, 2.9.16, and 2.8.16.

Let us consider 23.5.15 first:

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. [Cf. TLP 5.6]
There really is only one world soul, which I for preference call my soul and as which alone I conceive what I call the soul of others.
The above remark gives the key for deciding the way in which solipsism is a truth. [Cf. 5.62] I have long been conscious that it would be possible for me to write a book: “The world as I found it”... [Cf. TLP 5.631]

This entry could be taken to support Hacker’s view in that it suggests that, by “the limits of my language” and of “the limits of my world”, Wittgenstein had in mind, at least at this stage in the Notebooks, some kind of a transcendental self: a “world soul, which I for preference call my soul”. However, this, in and of itself, does not provide conclusive evidence for the view that this soul is the precondition of representation. Wittgenstein could simply be saying here that, although representation is possible without such a self, we nevertheless have an awareness of there being a self or an “I”, an awareness which surfaces in the tendency we have to speak of “my language” and “my world”. This idea will be explored in Part VII.

Let us now consider the entry dated 15.10.16, which is explicitly referred to by Hacker in Insight and Illusion:205

What cannot be imagined cannot be even talked about.
Things acquire “significance” only through their relation to my will.
For “Everything is what it is and not another thing”...
But can I infer my spirit from my physiognomy?... But it is clear that the causal nexus is not a nexus at all.
Now is it true (following the psycho-physical conception) that my character is

expressed only in the build of my body or brain and not equally in the build of the whole rest of the world?... [Wittgenstein then gives a tentative answer to this: there is only "one spirit common to the whole world"]:]

And in that case it would, of course, also be common to lifeless things too.

This is the way I have travelled: Idealism singles men from the world as unique, solipsism singles me alone out, and at last I see that I too belong with the rest of the world, and so on the one side nothing is left over, and on the other side, as unique, the world. In this way idealism leads to realism if strictly thought out. [Cf. TLP 5.64]

The last paragraph of this entry is a rephrasing of TLP 5.64, except that, in the Tractatus section, no mention of idealism is made - only of solipsism and of realism.206

Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality coordinated with it. (TLP 5.64)

The second sentence of this entry could, again, be taken to constitute evidence in support of Hacker’s view. Wittgenstein’s claim that “Things acquire ‘significance’ only through their relation to my will” could indeed be taken to mean that objects only become the meanings of names (and thereby acquire “significance”), in virtue of the fact that the will of the metaphysical self effects the required connection between them and their corresponding simple names. Since the first sentence of this entry explicitly mentions the issue of what can be “talked about”, it could indeed be argued that Wittgenstein had in mind the issue of representation when he wrote this section. However, if this is what Wittgenstein meant here, then this was a very odd way of putting it. For, strictly speaking, it isn’t objects which need to acquire “significance” (i.e. meaning) for representation to be possible, but names (TLP 3.203 and TLP 3.221). Indeed, it could be that, by “significance”, Wittgenstein wasn’t referring to representational or linguistic meaning at all, but to ethical or aesthetic meaning. For this is, strictly speaking, the only kind of “meaning” that the world and simple objects (respectively) can have, for Wittgenstein (see, for instance, NB 8.7.16). Note therefore that Wittgenstein’s point here could be that my awareness of there being an “I” which is “my self” surfaces when I realise that the world can be given ethical meaning, and that objects can be given aesthetic meaning. In such a case it would be the ethical and aesthetic “experiences”, which being transcendental, are not representational, which would give me a sense of self, not the fact that representation is impossible without such a self.207

Consider now the entry dated 2.9.16208

206 Wittgenstein probably felt that no mention of idealism was necessary after all, since the point could be equally well made by referring exclusively to solipsism and realism.
207 This is indeed Coyne’s view. See Coyne (1986).
208 As far as I am aware, Hacker does not himself use this entry as evidence for his interpretation.
Here we can see that solipsism coincides with pure realism, if it is strictly thought out. The I of solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point and what remains is the reality co-ordinated with it. [Cf. *TLP* 5.64]

What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world! I want to report how I found the world. What others in the world have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world.

I have to judge the world, to measure things. The philosophical I is not the human being, not the human body or the human soul with the psychological properties, but the metaphysical subject, the boundary (not part) of the world. The human body, however, my body in particular, is part of the world amongst others, among animals, plants, stones, etc. [Cf. *TLP* 5.641]

Whoever realises this will not want to procure a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body. He will regard humans and animals quite naïvely as objects which are similar and which belong together.

On the one hand, this passage could be taken to support Hacker’s interpretation in that it suggests, that, although solipsism and realism ultimately coincide (since no self is located within the world), nevertheless a certain (i.e. transcendental) notion of the “I” remains significant for Wittgenstein. Hence, this entry could be taken as an endorsement of Hacker’s view that, for Wittgenstein, transcendental solipsism is correct in its positing of a simple self at the limits of the world, and that the reason why it is correct is that only such a self could provide the transcendental precondition for representation. Note indeed that Wittgenstein’s claims that “I want to report how I found the world” and that “I have to judge the world, to measure things” (my italics) could be regarded as referring to the issue of representation. However, note that the last paragraph of *NB* 2.9.16 connects what has come before to the issue of *ethics*, not to that of representation. The view that we, as facts in the world, have the same value as other facts in the world, namely, no value at all in and of ourselves, is indeed a key to Wittgenstein’s conception of ethics. This entry could thus be taken to mean that we, as empirical minds in the world, are under the impression that the world can only be represented by means of a self, but that, in fact, this impression is mistaken. Representation doesn’t require such a self: indeed our awareness of self doesn’t originate from the fact that representation would be impossible without it but from our “experience” of the ethical.

Consider now the entry dated 2.8.16, to which Hacker explicitly refers again:

*For it is probable that he [Wittgenstein] had himself conceived of meaning something by a sign as an act of will performed not by the empirical self... but by the metaphysical self, the willing subject (NB p.80).* 29

In 2.8.16 (*NB* p.80), Wittgenstein indeed tells us that:

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As the subject is not part of the world but a presupposition of its existence, so good and evil are predicates of the subject, not properties in the world. [My italics.]

On the surface, this appears to support Hacker's interpretation. For one possible way to read this passage is as follows: the transcendental subject is the "presupposition of the existence" of the world in that the world is the world as it can possibly be given in mental representation (i.e. in experience), and the metaphysical self is the precondition of representation. Notice, again, however, that this isn't the only way in which this remark could be taken. For indeed, this entry could be understood as meaning that the transcendental self qua bearer of ethics is a "presupposition of the existence" of the world. This would make sense if Wittgenstein believed that ethics was, in some way, a precondition of the world. That he was indeed thinking along these lines in the Notebooks is shown by the entry dated 24.7.16:

Ethics does not treat the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic. [My italics]

Note moreover that, in NB 2.8.16, Wittgenstein fails again to explicitly connect his view that the self is a precondition of the world to the issue of representation. Indeed, he immediately follows his claim that "the subject is not part of the world but a presupposition of its existence" with a remark on ethics: "so good and evil are predicates of the subject, not properties in the world".²²⁰ Because of this, this passage can again not be regarded as providing conclusive evidence for Hacker's interpretation.

Further doubts are shed on Hacker's view that the willing subject is both the bearer of ethics and the precondition of Tractarian representation, by the three remaining entries of the Notebooks (namely those dated 21.7.16, 9.11.16, and 19.11.16). Let us consider these in turn.

What is the situation of the human will? I will call will first and foremost the bearer of good and evil...
But can we conceive of a being that isn't capable of will at all but only of Idea (of seeing for example)? In some sense this seems impossible. But if it were possible then there could also be a world without ethics. (NB 21.7.16)

Two important (though not conclusive) clues are offered in this entry. The first is that, for Wittgenstein, the will is "first and foremost the bearer of good and evil" (my italics). In other words, for him, the will is "first and foremost" the ethical will. This isn't conclusive, however, in that it could be his view that, although the will is "first and foremost the bearer of good and evil",

²²⁰ An alternative way of arguing for the idea that these remarks of the Notebooks need not be seen to entail that Wittgenstein posits a transcendental self is put forward by Child. See Child (1996) p. 148.
it nevertheless also plays another role: that of making representation possible by connecting simple names to their bearers. Hence, it could be that, although the will is "first and foremost the bearer of good and evil", it is also the pre-condition of representation. The second clue comes in the next section of NB 21.7.16:

But can we conceive of a being that isn't capable of will at all but only of Idea (of seeing for example)? In some sense this seems impossible. But if it were possible then there could also be a world without ethics. (NB 21.7.16)

Wittgenstein argues here that it may be possible for a being to be incapable of will whilst, nevertheless, being capable of Idea. As an example of Idea, Wittgenstein gives us visual perception, which is, as we saw above, a kind of experience in the sense of mental representation. That such a being might be capable of representation (here mental representation) in spite of his having no will, implies that the will is not regarded by Wittgenstein as a pre-condition for representation. The problem with this is, however, that Wittgenstein then goes on to say "In some sense this seems impossible.", and fails to tell us exactly why such a thing would be impossible. Again, the ambiguity of the text makes it impossible to reach a definitive conclusion on this issue.

One entry of the Notebooks, namely that dated 9.11.16, does, however, provide a strong reason to doubt Hacker's view that the willing subject is the pre-condition of representation.

Is belief a kind of experience?
Is thought a kind of experience?
All experience is world and does not need the subject.
The act of the will is not an experience. [My italics.]

As we saw at the beginning of Part VI, it is most likely that Wittgenstein would answer the two questions of this entry affirmatively, and would thus be arguing that belief and thought are types of representational experiencing. Indeed, Hacker agrees with the view that both perceptions and other types of thoughts are representational experiences in this sense:

There is no empirical soul-substance thinking thoughts, there are only thoughts. The self of psychology is a manifold, a series of experiences, a bundle of perceptions in perpetual flux. (...) All that empirical psychology needs to say about the psyche can be said.211 [My italics]

Given this interpretation of "belief" and "thought", NB 9.11.16 appears to suggest that representation (in particular mental representation, i.e. experience in this sense) does not require any type of subject - not even the willing subject located at the limits of the world. In other words, Wittgenstein

very much appears to be saying here that, although there may be reasons to posit a willing subject at the limits of the world, such a subject cannot be regarded as the precondition of representation. Hence, the "act of the will" carried out by such a subject would be, not the act of connecting names to objects, but something else, possibly the act of taking a certain ethical attitude towards the world.

There is indeed no convincing reason to suppose that the subject mentioned in this entry is not the metaphysical subject, but the empirical, thinking subject, which was rejected by Wittgenstein in *TLP* 5.54-5.5423. For, indeed, the last entry in which Wittgenstein explicitly discusses the empirical, i.e. thinking, subject, is *NB* 5.8.16.

> The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists. [...] What is good and evil is essentially the I, not the world.

That this willing subject is not empirical but metaphysical is clearly shown by *NB* 2.8.16:

> Good and evil enter only through the subject. And the subject is not part of the world, but a boundary of the world.

Then, in the entry dated 4.11.16 (three entries before *NB* 9.11.16, which we are currently discussing) Wittgenstein says:

> The subject is the willing subject.

All of this strongly points to the fact that the subject mentioned in *NB* 9.11.16 isn't just the empirical subject, but the metaphysical subject located at the limits of the world. If this is indeed the case, then Wittgenstein's claim in *NB* 9.11.16 that:

> All experience is world and does not need the subject.

should be taken to mean that experience (i.e. mental representation) does not require any type of subject, whether empirical or metaphysical. This is indeed corroborated by the fact that the entry which immediately follows *NB* 9.11.16 explicitly mentions the willing subject:

> What kind of reason is there for the assumption of a willing subject?
> Is not my world adequate for individuation? (*NB* 19.11.16)
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