

The Self in the

indexicals and is the proper subject matter of psychology.² The metaphysical subject is not to be confused with this empirical conception of the self: the psychological self is in the world, but the metaphysical self, being the limit of the world, cannot also be a part of it. It is this conception of self with which philosophers must deal.

What is the metaphysical subject? Wittgenstein writes at 5.62:

This remark provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism. For what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest. The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language*

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| 1. The limits of <i>my</i> language <i>mean</i> (<i>bedeuten</i>) the limits of <i>my</i> world. | TLP 5.6 |
| 2. The limits of <i>the</i> world <i>are</i> the limits of logic. | TLP 5.61 |
| 3. (<i>Any</i>) everyday language is in perfect logical order. | TLP 5.563 |
| 4. If any language is in perfect logical order, then <i>my</i> language is in perfect logical order. | 3 |
| 5. If the limits of the world are the limits of logic, then the limits of any language are the limits of the world. | 2, 3 |
| 6. But since <i>my</i> language is logically identical to <i>all</i> languages, <i>my</i> language means the limits of <i>the</i> world. | 4, 5 |
| 7. So <i>the</i> world is <i>my</i> world. | 1, 6 |

What we are to understand is that since logic is the limit of the world, by which is meant that logic is the limit of the ways in which things could be, that limiting role is connected to language. According to Wittgenstein's conception of language, a meaningful proposition, one with a sense, has its sense in virtue of sharing a logical form with the fact that it expresses.³ What this means is that an atomic proposition has the sense that it does - expresses the fact that it does - in virtue of consisting of simple names standing for simple objects such that the arrangement of the simple names is identical to the arrangement of the simple objects, the *fact*, that is being represented. Names are proxies for Tractarian objects, such that the combinations that names can enter into in forming atomic propositions are just the combinations that the objects for which they stand can enter into in

at risk of incoherence, a *mere* representation. Were the self a mere object of experience, then either it would be an object merely of *its* experience, or an object for the experience of another. But in the latter case, we have simply posited another self, for which the same question can be asked, regressively. And in the former case, what sense is to be made of an object which is both a mere object of experience, as well as the subject of experience? That would be like saying, to adapt an example of Wittgenstein's, that the eye was not only in the visual field, but was merely a perceptual experience itself. Thus, at risk of incoherence, the solipsistic self must be something more than a mere representation if it is to serve its role as the locus of all representation.

Insofar as my statement of the thesis appears to make the metaphysical subject something private, identifying it with the *res cogitans*, this kind of solipsism is *Cartesian solipsism*. It is not what Wittgenstein intends:

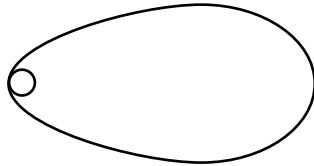
There is no such thing as the subject which thinks and entertains ideas.⁶

I take it that Wittgenstein here means the subject that is within the domain of philosophy, as opposed to the psychological subject. And if that is right, then this proposition is a simple denial of Cartesian solipsism, which conflates the two. But is there an argument to support this rejection?

2. Against Cartesian Solipsism

Consider a statement of Cartesian solipsism: I am the only subject, and the world is a representation for me *alone*. A recurring theme in Wittgenstein's Tractarian thought is that what can be an object of thought must

be found? You will say that this is exactly 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 seen by an eye. For the form of the visual field is surely not like this:



way that the world is, and that how the world is can be expressed by propositions which will be true or false. On Wittgenstein's view, this is just the implication of linguistic solipsism - the world is, in fact, a particular way, and the way that it is is the way it is represented for the metaphysical self, and expressed by propositions with determinate sense. Where realism and linguistic solipsism differ is that the former claims that the world is independent of my language. In a sense, the linguistic solipsist does not deny this, for the world is independent of my language, where the 'my' there is an indexical referring to the psychological subject. But what the linguistic solipsist does deny is that there is a way of conceiving of the world *sub specie aeternitatis* - from a point of view independent of my language — a *perspectiveless* perspective.

The linguistic solipsist claims that the world consists of what is repre-

of reality that I was incapable of representing propositionally, nor that I could come across a proposition that I could not understand.⁸ Wittgenstein explains this by holding that there is a general propositional form, a form such that any symbol satisfying that form expresses a proposition, and every proposition can be expressed by a symbol satisfying that form.⁹ Thus every aspect of the world is representable by a proposition, and every proposition expresses a possible fact. But if the world is independent of my representational abilities, why should this be so? That the world conforms to the general propositional form *shows* that the world is a represented world, that language and the world are inseparable.

What saves this thesis from being a form of anti-realism is that the general form of the proposition is to be understood as *necessarily* the form that any proposition must satisfy. This means that the world, while represented, could not have been represented other than it is, for to attempt to conceive of it as such would be to attempt to conceive of a world from a perspective other than my own, which is incoherent. Similarly, the thesis does not constitute a form of realism since there is no conceiving of the world independently of my perspective. Thus, in the *Tractatus*, neither realism nor anti-realism is denied or asserted; the distinction is, instead, rendered inert.

II. The Self of the *Investigations*

In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein extends his conception of the nature of language from that of mere fact-stating to include such activities as commanding and questioning. Additionally, a number of Tractarian theses are given up, not least of all that of the general form of the proposition. Once this thesis in particular has been given up, however, we appear to have no means of preventing a slide into anti-realism, for now there is no reason at all to suppose that *my* perspective on the world is the only *possible* perspective on it. Rather than there being a single language obeying *a priori* logical restrictions and which marks the limit of the world, the door is open for the admission of many possible languages, many possible ways that the world might be represented. What then is to prevent linguistic solipsism from collapsing into Cartesian solipsism, to prevent an identification of the metaphysical self with the *res cogitans*? If *the* logical foundations of language no longer secure a mind-independent reality, how can I make the inference from *my* world to *the* world?

Two interconnected arguments are used in the *Investigations* to prevent

just this slide. The first is the private language argument, which secures the impossibility of a language which is only mine, thus blocking Cartesian scepticism. I won't discuss this here. The second is the introduction of the notion of a form of life, which, I think, secures the inference, if not from *my* language to *the* world, at least from *my* language to *our* world, where we are a *we* just in case we share a form of life. This means that while the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* blocks Cartesian solipsism, he does not block a more general form of anti-realism, which allows that the world could be differently represented to beings whose form of life was not ours.

Wittgenstein explicitly claims that the possibility of a language entails the possibility of a form of life for which that language is a language:

...to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life.¹⁰

The idea here is that a language (which, for Wittgenstein, is now to be conceived of as consisting of more-and-less loosely interlinked language games) must be tethered to a particular form of life, that to conceive of an activity in which beings communicate, no matter how simplistically,¹¹ is to conceive of those beings as involved in a complex system of interconnected activities, ends (very broadly construed) and behaviours such that the particular activity of communicating is seen as enmeshed within that system. *That* these beings communicate thus-and-so is because their language is (and must be if it is to be language at all) fitted to their form of life; if I am to understand their language, I must share their form of life. That is what Wittgenstein means when he writes:

If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.¹²

There are two parts of this discussion which require explanation. First, it is assumed, without argument, that the lion and I do not share a form of life, but in order to determine this we would have to know how to individuate forms of life. Second, what argument is to be made for the conclusion that to understand a language, one must share a form of life with the speaker of that language?

Addressing the second first: I take it that Wittgenstein does not have in mind that, for instance, a French person and I do not share a form of life since understanding French is simply a matter of my learning it. Of course, it may be that I cannot fully understand the French language without proper training in the nuances of French society and culture, for there may be French language games which have no correlate in English. But in the case of the lion the implication is that I could not understand a talking lion *at all*, that I could never come to learn his language. So it cannot be that

Wittgenstein means by 'language' a particular human language, in which case the contrast between me and the lion would be just like the contrast between me a French person. Rather, he must have in mind by 'language' something like 'the human language' or 'the language of a human form of life'.

If I am right, then, just as in the *Tractatus* *my* language and *your* language are both instances of *the* language, so that *my* world is *your* world, and both are *the* world as represented by the metaphysical subject, so too in the *Investigations* does Wittgenstein conceive of a particular language being an instance of, or an embellishment upon, a core language tethered to a form of life. That core language is fitted to the form of life of the speakers of a particular language, and that form of life is shared with the speakers of any other language that they could come to understand. It is that the French person and I have something in common, a form of life and a core language fitted to it, which enables us, eventually, to understand one another. And it is this conception of a core language which is relevant to the notion of a form of life.

If this conception of a core language is the correct one, we are still left without an explanation of why it should be the case that in order to share a core language we must share a form of life. This is the respect in which I think that the metaphysical subject and a form of life serve the same theoretical role. Remember that the role of the metaphysical subject was to stand in common to all speakers of language as that which represents the world, thus ensuring that we share a world, the world as represented from a single universal perspective. In the *Investigations*, while I think it is our sharing a form of life which ensures that we share a world, I think that the direction of explanation is reversed, for it is not

assumption that a core language will reflect in its grammar and logic various features of an individual's representation of the world, that where two communities differ as to their representational capacities, and thus to their forms of life, they will have incommensurable core languages. To put it slightly metaphorically, their languages will be responsive to the very different worlds that they occupy. Since the lion (I take it that Wittgenstein is not making a *claim* about lions, but using the lion as a mere example) and I do not share a form of life, we occupy quite differently represented worlds; were the lion to have a language, it could never be one that I could understand, for in order to do so I would have to occupy the lion's perspective, become an inhabitant of his world. But since we do not share representational capacities, such a shift in perspective is not possible.

I said that the Tractarian view eradicated the distinction between realism and anti-realism as it rendered moot the question of there being perspectives other than my own. But since the view of the *Investigations* that I have proposed advocates the possibility of there being radically incommensurable perspectives upon the world, it is anti-realist. Of course, it does not follow that the question of anti-realism is one that can be meaningfully posed, for just as the world of the *Tractatus* is one limited by the metaphysical self, the world of the *Investigations* is limited by my form of life. Any attempt to say what another language, another form of life, an alien perspective, might be like, collapses into incoherence. And of what we cannot speak, we must pass over in silence.

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