

W Child – Does the *Tractatus* contain a Private Language Argument? – in P. Sullivan and M. Potter (eds.) *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: History and Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 143-169.

Does the *Tractatus* Contain a Private Language Argument?

William Child

It is a central feature of so-called 'new' readings of Wittgenstein that they find in the *Tractatus* an absence of positive philosophical doctrines, a kind of quietism, and an explicitly therapeutic approach that have traditionally been associated with Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Seen from the perspective of a 'new' reader, this reveals 'a novel kind of continuity' in Wittgenstein's thought (Crary 2000: 4). Seen from the perspective of a 'traditional' reader, it involves reading back into the *Tractatus* elements that properly belong to Wittgenstein's later work. I want to explore the justice of this complaint in connection with a recent argument of Cora Diamond's, that the *Tractatus* contains a private language argument: an argument to the effect that private objects in other people's minds can play no role in the language I use for talking about their sensations.¹ The argument Diamond finds in the *Tractatus* is not the private language argument of *Philosophical Investigations*. But the appearance of such an argument in Wittgenstein's early writings, she thinks, brings out important elements of continuity in his work: it challenges the orthodox idea that 'the topic of privacy' is distinctively 'a topic of Wittgenstein's later philosophy', that its appearance in the later work is 'indicative of a shift in Wittgenstein's philosophical interests to topics within the philosophy of mind, not of interest to him in the *Tractatus*', and that 'his treatment of the topic [is] an illustration of the fundamental shifts in his overall philosophical position' (262). And the '*Tractatus* private language argument', Diamond thinks, is important not only for our understanding of the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy but also for the discussion of realism and anti-realism more generally, 'especially as that discussion has been shaped by Michael Dummett' (284).

My paper has three parts. In part 1, I challenge Diamond's interpretation on internal grounds. To find a private language argument in the *Tractatus*, I argue, we would have to read Tractarian doctrines about naming and use in ways that might, indeed, be suggested by Wittgenstein's later writings but which are entirely absent from the earlier work. In part 2, I discuss the account of sensation language that Wittgenstein offered in 1929, and argue that it poses a prima facie challenge to 'new' readings of the *Tractatus*. Part 3 explores the relation between the *Tractatus* and Dummettian realism. I defend Dummett's suggestion that the *Tractatus* embodies a form of semantic realism against Diamond's arguments, and show the helpfulness of Dummett's framework in reflecting on the nature of Tractarian analysis.

1. The '*Tractatus* Private Language Argument'

Diamond argues that the *Tractatus* contains a private language argument, the immediate target of which is a set of views advanced by Russell in the period 1905-1913. Russell held that 'Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted' (Russell 1912: 32). He also held that each of us is acquainted with objects that no-one else can be acquainted with: our own experiences and, possibly, our selves.² So there are propositions about a subject's self and experiences that only she can understand, because they contain constituents with which only she can be acquainted. But even though I cannot understand

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such a proposition about another person's self or experiences, I can identify it by description and may know that it is true: for I can understand a descriptive proposition, composed wholly of constituents with which I am acquainted, which is true or false in virtue of the truth or falsity of the proposition I do not understand. In that way, Russell thought, someone else's private objects can play a role in one's language. For example:

when we say anything about Bismarck, we should like, if we could, to make the judgement which Bismarck alone can make, namely, the judgement of which he himself is a constituent. In this we are necessarily defeated, since the actual Bismarck is unknown to us. But we know that there is an object B, called Bismarck, and that B was an astute diplomatist. We can thus *describe* the proposition we should like to affirm, namely, 'B was an astute diplomatist', where B is the object which was Bismarck... This proposition, which is described and is known to be true, is what interests us; but we are not acquainted with the proposition itself, and do not know *it*, though we know it is true. (Russell 1912: 31)

In this case the private object is Bismarck himself: Bismarck's ego. But, according to Diamond, Russell gives the same treatment to propositions about anything else with which only Bismarck can be acquainted: Bismarck's toothache, for example.³ It is this set of views that is challenged by the private language argument Diamond finds in the *Tractatus*.

In this first part of the paper, I do two main things. First, I examine the case Diamond offers in support of her claim that the *Tractatus* contains a private language argument. She highlights an important difference between Russell's account of quantification and the treatment of general sentences that Wittgenstein offers in the *Tractatus*. But, I shall argue, in claiming that the *Tractatus* treatment of generality entails that private objects in other people's minds can play no role in our language for talking about others' sensations, Diamond imputes to the *Tractatus* a specific conception of use, with a definite epistemic content, that is not actually there; she reads back into the *Tractatus* a conception of use that only surfaces in Wittgenstein much later on. Second, I examine Diamond's account of the kind of positive treatment of claims about others' sensations that, she thinks, is implicit in the *Tractatus*; Tractarian analysis of such propositions, she says, 'involves an early version of the later insistence that where there are symptoms (inductively based justifications for a kind of statement) there must also be criteria (something that would count, non-inductively, as justification)' (281). Here, again, I argue, Diamond interprets the *Tractatus* in a way that makes it seem far more similar to Wittgenstein's later work than it really is — by reading into the *Tractatus* epistemic concerns that have no place there.

I should emphasize at the outset that I am not arguing that, at the time of writing the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein actually envisaged analyzing statements about others' sensations in a way that treated those sensations as private objects. In the first place, there is plainly no explicit account of sensation-language in the *Tractatus*. That is a particular instance of a more general point: that Wittgenstein simply had no views about the specific kinds of analysis that would be appropriate for particular parts of ordinary language. In the second place, insofar as it is reasonable to speculate about the kind of analysis of sensation-language that Wittgenstein might have favoured, had he been pressed to provide one, it seems plausible that he would have opted for something along the lines of the account of thoughts suggested by *Tractatus* 5.542 and the remarks in a much-quoted 1919 letter

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to Russell (WIC 98-9). On this view, thoughts are composed of psychical objects: objects that are straightforwardly open to public, empirical investigation, just as we can investigate the worldly objects with which those psychical objects are correlated. There is no reason why Wittgenstein should not have envisaged extending this treatment from the case of others' thoughts to the case of others' sensations — regarding them not as private objects knowable only by their possessors but as psychical objects whose nature is discoverable by empirical investigation. My case against Diamond, therefore, is not that the *Tractatus* actually envisages an account of sensation-language that treats others' sensations as private objects. It is, rather, that there is nothing in the *Tractatus* to rule out such an account. Diamond sees a private language argument in the *Tractatus*. I argue that her interpretation depends on projecting onto the *Tractatus* views of Wittgenstein's that only appear later on.

1.i Quantification, Naming, Acquaintance, and Use

On Diamond's interpretation, the key to the '*Tractatus* private language argument' lies in the difference between Russell's and Wittgenstein's treatments of generality. A crucial element in Russell's view is the idea that I can grasp a general proposition that is true or false in virtue of the truth or falsity of singular propositions that I cannot understand. For example, I understand the proposition, 'There is something that is a toothache and is had by Bismarck'. That proposition is true (we may suppose) in virtue of the truth of the proposition '*t* is a toothache', where '*t*' is a name for some token toothache of Bismarck's. But I cannot understand the proposition '*t* is a toothache', since I cannot be acquainted with the toothache that is named by '*t*'. What allows me, nonetheless, to understand the general proposition is the fact that I am acquainted with the universal, *toothache*, and that I have 'a *general* grasp of what it is for a property or relation to be instantiated in *some* or *all* cases' (271). Those resources, Russell thinks, allow me to understand the sentence 'there is an object that is a toothache and is had by Bismarck', even though I could never be acquainted with such an object or give it a name. Diamond stresses that on Wittgenstein's account, by contrast, a general proposition cannot have as one of its instances a singular proposition that I cannot understand. To see why, we need to appreciate Wittgenstein's treatment of general sentences.⁴

On Wittgenstein's view, all propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions. And every truth function is representable in terms of a single truth-function, joint negation, which Wittgenstein represents with the symbol, $N: 'N(\bar{\xi})'$, he explains, 'is the negation of all the values of the propositional variable ξ ' (TLP 5.502). And, he says, there are three – ways in which we can specify the propositions that are represented by the variable ξ — the propositions that are jointly negated by the N operation: '1. direct enumeration, in which case we can simply substitute for the variable the constants that are its values; 2. giving a function f_x whose values for all values of x are the propositions to be described; 3. giving a formal law that governs the construction of the propositions' (TLP 5.501). To understand how Wittgenstein proposed to see general propositions as truth-functions of elementary propositions, we need to take the second case. Consider the general proposition, $\forall x \neg f_x$. Wittgenstein's idea is in effect that the construction of that proposition has two stages. The first stage is to describe the propositions to which the N operation is to be applied: in this case, by specifying that the relevant propositions are *all* values of the function f_x . That gives us the propositions ($f_a, f_b, f_c...$). The second stage is to apply the operation of joint negation to those propositions, to yield the complex proposition ($\neg f_a \ \& \ \neg f_b \ \& \ \neg f_c...$). That complex proposition, on

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Wittgenstein's account, captures the content of the general proposition, $\forall x \neg fx$, or equivalently, $\neg \exists x fx$. A second application of the N operation, to the complex proposition that was produced by the first application, will yield the general proposition $\neg \forall x \neg fx$, or $\exists x fx$.

The feature of this account that Diamond highlights is that, according to Wittgenstein, 'a quantified sentence is a construction from singular sentences' (270). The idea of construction needs to be handled with care — though the idiom of 'construction' is drawn from Wittgenstein himself (e.g. 5.503). In the case of the proposition ($\neg fa$ & $\neg fb$), the complex proposition is constructed from elementary propositions in a straightforward sense; we take two elementary propositions that are, as it were, already to hand and construct a complex proposition by conjoining them. But in the case of a general proposition, we need not be in a position to specify the relevant propositions in any way other than as all values of the function fx . So the manner in which a general proposition is a construction from elementary propositions is different from the manner in which a proposition like ($\neg fa$ & $\neg fb$) is such a construction — in a way that corresponds to the difference between Wittgenstein's first and second ways of describing the propositions to which the N operation is to be applied. But as long as we bear that difference in mind, there is no harm in employing the 'construction' idiom, as Diamond does. Now Diamond emphasizes that a crucial feature of Wittgenstein's account of the construction of complex propositions from elementary propositions is that, if I am to understand a non-elementary proposition, then the elementary propositions that go into its construction must themselves be propositions that I understand: they must be made up of names that I understand, or could understand. That is obvious in the case where a complex proposition is constructed from elementary propositions that are given by direct enumeration: I cannot understand ($\neg fa$ & $\neg fb$) unless I understand fa and fb . But it is equally true, Diamond thinks, for the case where a general proposition is constructed by successive applications of the N operator to *all* values of a given propositional function fx : the instances of a general proposition that I understand must be elementary propositions that I can in principle understand. And that rules out the possibility that I could understand a general proposition about toothaches that had, as one of its instances, a singular proposition about Bismarck's toothache that I could not understand. On Wittgenstein's account, therefore, I cannot use general sentences to identify by description an object that Bismarck can name and I cannot. So, *pace* Russell, private objects in others' minds can play no role in my language — by figuring in the truth conditions of my claims about others' sensations.

I agree with Diamond that, in the *Tractatus*, if there are objects that I cannot name, they can play no role in my language. But that will only show that private objects in others' minds can play no role in my language if we assume that I cannot have names for such objects. If we reject that assumption and allow that I *can* give names to others' private objects, there will be no barrier to allowing that propositions about others' experiences are true or false in virtue of the presence or absence of private objects in their minds. So if there is a private language argument in the *Tractatus*, it depends on the principle that it is impossible for one person to have names for other people's private sensations. What might explain or justify that principle? There are two obvious possibilities. First, one might claim that someone can only name an object if she is acquainted with it — in Russell's sense of acquaintance. Since one cannot be acquainted with others' private objects, it would follow immediately that one cannot have names for others' private objects. Second, one might claim that which objects are referred to by the names in one's language is determined by our use of those names, and then argue that we cannot use a name in a way that makes it function as a

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representative of another person's private sensation. Some interpretations of the *Tractatus* suggest the first route. Diamond's reading pursues the second route. But, I shall argue, neither is supported by the text of the *Tractatus*.

In early readings of the *Tractatus*, it was often assumed that objects were sense-data and consequently that naming an object would require Russellian acquaintance with it. On this interpretation, the *Tractatus* will have the same reason as Russell for holding that one cannot give a name to a private object in someone else's mind: that one cannot be acquainted with such an object. The idea that Tractarian objects are sense-data is not as popular as it once was. But we can still ask whether there is anything to be said for the idea that Tractarian naming requires something like Russellian acquaintance. An argument for that idea would involve two claims: that understanding a name requires knowing (kennen) its meaning (Bedeutung); and that knowing (kennen) the Bedeutung of a name is or involves being acquainted with it. But against that argument, I would respond that, while the *Tractatus* does say that understanding a name involves knowing its referent, it does not say or imply that knowing the referent of a name requires acquaintance with the referent. I will expand on both points.

TLP 3.263 tells us that '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 (Bedeutungen) of those signs are already known (kennen).' Since the primitive signs are names, that gives firm support to the claim that understanding a Tractarian name requires knowing (kennen) its referent. But does knowing (kennen) the referent of a name require acquaintance with it? Nothing in the *Tractatus*, I think, suggests that it does.

In the first place, we know that Wittgenstein himself preferred to translate 'kennen' as 'know' rather than 'be acquainted with' in the passages that talk about knowing (kennen) an object.⁵ Second, 2.0123 tells us that 'if I know [kennen] an object I also know [kennen] all its possible occurrences in states of affairs'; 2.01231 adds that 'if I am to know [kennen] an object, though I need not know [kennen] its external properties, I must know [kennen] all its internal properties'. But both remarks are hard to make sense of if knowing an object is conceived in terms of Russellian acquaintance. How could mere Russellian acquaintance with an object automatically bring with it knowledge of all its possible occurrences in states of affairs — knowledge of its internal properties? And how could one be acquainted with an object without knowing any of its external properties? Third, and relatedly, it is worth remarking that, in Russell, the idea that a subject is *acquainted with* an object has, as it converse, the idea that the object is *given to* the subject.⁶ Now in the *Tractatus*, the remarks just quoted about knowing (kennen) an object are immediately followed by this: 'If all objects are given, then at the same time all *possible* states of affairs are also given' (2.0124). That juxtaposition makes it plausible to think that, for Wittgenstein too, knowing an object goes hand in hand with the object's being given to one. In that respect, his view parallels Russell's. But now consider 5.524: 'If objects are given, then at the same time we are given *all* objects.'⁷ If Wittgenstein had Russell's conception, on which an object's being given is a matter of acquaintance, it would be impossible to make sense of that remark: Russellian acquaintance with objects does not and could not bring with it acquaintance with *all* objects. That strongly suggests, again, that Wittgenstein has a quite unRussellian conception of what it is to know an object: knowing (kennen) an object is not acquaintance.⁸ There is, I conclude, no reason to think that the *Tractatus* holds that one can have a name for an object only if one is acquainted (in Russell's sense) with that object.

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Diamond herself explicitly rejects the idea that the connection between Tractarian names and objects is effected by a mental act in favour of the view that 'what objects we are thinking about is something that is shown in the language we use' (274).⁹ So, when she takes it for granted that I cannot name others' private sensations, she is not depending on the impossibility of my being acquainted with such objects. What, then, is she depending on? Why can't the language I use show that the objects I am thinking about include others' private objects — just as, presumably, it might show that the objects I am thinking about include ones that are unknowably distant in time or space, or that they are infinitely many in number?¹⁰ The answer is that Diamond has a particular conception of the *use* of language, from which it follows that other people's private objects are irrelevant to the use I make of my language: 'Objects known only to Bismarck', she writes, 'play no role in the language which I use in everyday life in talking about Bismarck and things in his mental life' (275). But what reason is there to think that the conceptions of *use* and of *playing a role* that are implicit in that claim are conceptions to which Wittgenstein was already committed in the *Tractatus*?

When Wittgenstein later turned his attention to the question, how we communicate with one another about sensations, he certainly did construe 'use' in a way that led him to conclude that, if we construe sensations as private objects, then others' sensations will drop out as irrelevant to our use of sensation language (PI §293). But that is not the only way of construing 'use'. Someone who disagrees with the arguments Wittgenstein offers in *Philosophical Investigations* may agree with the principle that words have the meanings they do because of the use we make of them; she may simply disagree about how we should construe 'use'.¹¹ Now the *Tractatus* clearly maintains that there is a close association between meaning and use: 'In philosophy', it tells us, 'the question "What do we actually use this word or this proposition for?" repeatedly leads to valuable insights' (6.211); 'In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense' (3.336); and 'If a sign is *useless*, it is meaningless' (3.328). But those are very general claims. By themselves, they tell us very little about the kinds of meanings our words can or do have. If we are to accept Diamond's interpretation, we need to be convinced that, at the time of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein already had the conception of use that is required to make a private language argument go through: a conception on which a *state of affairs* can be relevant to my use of a sentence only if I can recognize whether or not that state of affairs obtains, and on which an *object* can be relevant to my use of a word only if I can recognize the presence or absence of that object. But for that to be true, the *Tractatus* would need to forge a much closer tie between the notion of use and epistemic notions such as justification, evidence, and recognition than it actually does. Without that, there is nothing in the *Tractatus* to show that we cannot use names that refer to others' private objects. My complaint, then, is that Diamond's reading imputes to the *Tractatus* a notion of use that carries a much greater and more definite epistemic weight than anything that is actually to be found there.

There is a general lesson. It is agreed on all sides that the *Tractatus* is not concerned with epistemology: it contains no theory of perception, for example, and no account of ostensive definition; and it says explicitly that theory of knowledge has no special or foundational place in philosophy (4.1121). Those who think that the *Tractatus* bases a theory of thought and language on a realist ontology see this lack of interest in epistemology as going hand in hand with Wittgenstein's agnosticism about the nature of objects. On this view, an account of the epistemological underpinnings that link our thought and language to objects would be needed for a complete

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understanding of the relation of thought and reality. But since Wittgenstein has no idea what kinds of things objects will turn out to be, he is not in a position to give such an account; and since he does not regard the nature of objects as a *philosophical* question at all, he does not think it is philosophy's business to do so. Those who read the *Tractatus* in less realist ways offer a different account.¹² On their view, the absence from the *Tractatus* of any account of acquaintance or ostensive definition is not a gap in Wittgenstein's overall view; it is, instead, a positive feature of his understanding of the relation between thought and reality. For, on this interpretation, the link between names and objects is determined not by acquaintance but by our use of propositions. But those who offer such an account cannot stop at that point. For we do not understand the suggestion that meaning is determined by use unless we have some account of what use is: of what aspects of our use of propositions go to determining their meaning. If it is claimed that specific consequences flow from this account of meaning (for example, that we cannot use words in such a way that they refer to private objects' in others' minds), that claim needs to be justified by an account of use that shows how those consequences follow. And where the consequences have an epistemic dimension (as they do in the case of Diamond's private language argument), the account of use must have an epistemic dimension too. The surprising implication would then be that the *Tractatus* does, after all, contain or imply a definite epistemology — albeit an epistemology that is allied to an account of use, rather than to an account of acquaintance or ostensive definition.¹³ An alternative would be to hold that the *Tractatus* gives us only the outline of an account of meaning — an outline that needs to be filled in with a specific account of use before we can draw any conclusions about the meanings of the words of our ordinary language. Either way, though, we face a challenge if we accept this kind of use-based account of the relation between names and objects in the *Tractatus*: How exactly is use to be understood? In what ways, if any, is use constrained by epistemology? And what is the textual justification for these claims about use?

1.ii Criteria, Symptoms and Truth-Conditions

I have urged that we should not read the concerns of Wittgenstein's later philosophy back into the relation between use and meaning in the *Tractatus*. The same point applies when we turn to consider what positive account of propositions about others' sensations would be consistent with the *Tractatus*.¹⁴ Here, Diamond argues that Tractarian analysis of such propositions 'involves an early version of the later insistence that where there are symptoms (inductively based justifications for a kind of statement) there must also be criteria (something that would count, non-inductively, as justification)' (281). Consider the proposition 'Bismarck's toothache is getting worse'. This is not itself an elementary proposition, since it stands in logical relations to other propositions that do not contain it: for example, the proposition 'Bismarck does not have toothache'. So it must be analyzable. And 'what shows us how to analyze the sentence will be pursuing further the sentence's inferential relations'. Diamond proceeds:

Suppose we think that Bismarck's behaviour gives us grounds, but merely inductive grounds, for inferring that his toothache is getting worse. . . . Well, what is it that the behaviour gives us inductive evidence for? What would show us that *THAT* is the case? If such-and-such behaviour is mere inductive evidence, then *something else* has to be what it is evidence *for*: there has to be something else that would, if it were established, constitute grounds for

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inferring that the toothache is getting worse (280).

'The stage is set' she thinks, for a view on which propositions about others' mental states are analyzable in terms of non-inductive behavioural grounds for asserting them.

It is true that, if something is inductive evidence for the claim that Bismarck's toothache is getting worse, there must be something else that the evidence is evidence for. But how should we interpret this point? The basic idea concerns truth-conditions: if there is inductive evidence that Bismarck's toothache is getting worse, there must be something that would *constitute* Bismarck's toothache's getting worse — something that would *make it true* that Bismarck's toothache is getting worse. But Diamond reads the point in an epistemic way; 'there has to be something', she writes, 'which would, if established, count as non-inductive *grounds for holding* that it is getting worse' (280, my emphasis).¹⁵ It is this epistemic reading of the point that leads Diamond to say that the *Tractatus* contains 'the view that a process *in someone else's mind* stands in need of outward criteria' (281), and that the *Tractatus's* 'conception of logical analysis' embodies a critique of philosophical realism because it 'involves a tie between what our non-elementary sentences say is so, and sentences capable of serving as grounds for taking those sentences to be true or false' (286). But there is no basis in the text or context of the *Tractatus* for this interpretation.

The *Tractatus* does use the word 'grounds' in giving an account of the relation between a non-elementary proposition and the elementary propositions that figure in its analysis: in the terminology of the *Tractatus*, the '*truth-grounds* [Wahrheitsgründe] of a proposition [are] those truth-possibilities of its truth-arguments that make it true' (5.101). And Wittgenstein applies the notion of truth-grounds in explaining inferential relations (5.12) and in explaining probability (5.15). But that notion of a ground has nothing to do with evidence. Giving the truth-grounds of an ordinary proposition is a matter of spelling out what has to be the case for it to be true. There is no suggestion that the truth-grounds of a proposition function as evidence for asserting the ordinary proposition.¹⁶

Contrary to Diamond's account, therefore, there is nothing in the *Tractatus* conception of analysis that suggests any particular way of analyzing propositions about others' sensations. In particular, there is nothing to suggest an account that exploits anything like Wittgenstein's later conception of criteria: non-inductive grounds for assertion that are built into the meanings of the relevant terms. The lesson, once more, is that we should not read Wittgenstein's later views back into the doctrines of the *Tractatus*.

2. The *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's 1929 theory of sensation language

Whatever may be implicit in the *Tractatus*, the *Tractatus* itself contains no actual account of sensation language. But there is an account in the writings and conversations from 1929. Does reflection on the 1929 account tell us anything about the *Tractatus*? I shall argue that the 1929 account of sensation language appears to give a role to others' private objects that is *prima facie* puzzling if we read the *Tractatus* in the way advocated by 'new' or 'resolute' readings of the sort championed by Diamond and others. If the *Tractatus* already contains the views that 'new' readings attribute to it, how well can we make sense of what Wittgenstein says about sensations in 1929? The discussion of that question certainly does not lead to a knock-down argument against Diamond,

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or anyone else. But it does pose a puzzle that 'new' readings need to address.

I start with a statement of the 1929 theory:

We could adopt the following way of representing matters: if I, LW, have toothache, then that is expressed by means of the proposition 'There is toothache'. But if that is so, what we now express by the proposition 'A has toothache', is put as follows: 'A is behaving as LW does when there is toothache'. Similarly we shall say 'It is thinking' and 'A is behaving as LW does when it is thinking'. (You could imagine a despotic oriental state where the language is formed with the despot as its centre and his name instead of LW.) It's evident that this way of speaking is equivalent to ours when it comes to questions of intelligibility and freedom from ambiguity. But it's equally clear that this language could have anyone at all as its centre.

Now, among all the languages with different people as their centres, each of which I can understand, the one with me as its centre has a privileged status. This language is particularly adequate. How am I to express that? That is, how can I rightly represent its special advantage in words? This can't be done. For, if I do it in the language with me as its centre, then the exceptional status of the description of this language in its own terms is nothing very remarkable, and in the terms of another language my language occupies no privileged status whatever. —The privileged status lies in the application, and if I describe this application, the privileged status again doesn't find expression, since the description depends on the language in which it's couched. And now, which description gives just that which I have in mind depends again on the application. (PR 88-9)

The point made in the second paragraph is repeated in the parallel account in *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*:

All these languages can be translated into one another. Only what they have in common mirrors anything.

Now it is noteworthy that *one* of these languages has a distinctive status, namely that one in which I can as it were say that I feel *real* pain.

If I am A, then I can, to be sure, say 'B is behaving as A does when he feels pain', but also 'A is behaving as B does when he feels pain'. One of these languages has a distinctive status, namely the one whose centre I am. The distinctiveness of this language lies in its application. It is not expressed. (WVC 49-50)

Wittgenstein says that the language with me as its centre has a 'privileged', 'distinctive' or 'exceptional' status; it has a 'special advantage'; it is 'particularly adequate' for describing or expressing my own experience. But the privileged status of this language cannot itself be expressed in language. Instead, it 'lies in the application' of language. Wittgenstein is here committed to the idea that there really is something — a special advantage to the language with me as its centre — which cannot be expressed in language but lies in the application of the language. Though he does not use the words 'show' and 'say', he could just as well have put the point he is making in those terms: there is a special advantage to the language with me as its centre; we cannot *say* what the

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special advantage is — it cannot be 'rightly represent[ed] . . . in words'; but its advantage is *shown* by the application of the language. And this use of the say/show distinction seems entirely serious. Wittgenstein is saying that there really is something privileged or distinctive about the language with me as its centre, which we cannot express in language but which comes out in the application of language. There is no hint that these remarks are not meant literally; so that, for example, Wittgenstein means only that we find it seductive to think that the language with me as its centre has a privileged status that lies in its application, but that, on further reflection, we can see that the seductive thought is just a mistake. On the contrary, all the indications are that, in these passages from 1929, when Wittgenstein is explaining, applying and developing his earlier views, he is making a straightforward use of the distinction between saying and showing. Those who argue that the *Tractatus* intends no serious use of that distinction owe us an account of these passages; if Wittgenstein never thought that there was anything that could be shown but not said, what is he doing here with the distinction between what can be 'represented in words' and what 'lies in the application of the language'?

That is one way in which the 1929 account of sensation language poses a challenge for 'new' readings of the *Tractatus*. I turn now to the detail of the 1929 account.

2.i The role of private objects in the 1929 account

What exactly is the account of sensation language that Wittgenstein proposes in 1929? It is natural to read the passages I have quoted as starting with the idea that sensations are private objects: objects that are accessible only to the subject, with identity conditions that are independent of any links to behaviour or external context. On this interpretation, the issue addressed in the 1929 discussion is how, on that assumption, we should account for the meanings of sensation words. And the proposal is in effect that each of us has two sensation-languages: a purely introspective, private sensation language for our own use; and a public sensation-language with which we can communicate about sensations, our own and other people's. So my word 'toothache', say, has two different meanings. In its communicative use, 'toothache' has a purely behavioural meaning; in this sense, 'the word "toothache" means the same in "I have toothache" and "He has toothache"' (PR 91). But my word 'toothache' can also be used with another sense, to pick out 'what is *primary*' in my experience (PR 91): the experiential datum itself. Used in that sense, my word cannot intelligibly be applied to anyone else; nor can its meaning be understood by anyone else. Thus, when Wittgenstein says that I understand all the different languages with different people as their centres, he is referring only to the public meanings of words in these languages: when Jones says 'There is toothache' or 'Brown is behaving as Jones does when there is toothache', I understand the public meaning of what he says; but his words also have a private meaning which I cannot understand. On this interpretation of the 1929 account, the solipsist who tries to capture the distinctiveness of his own pains by saying 'only I feel *real* pain' (see WVC 50), or 'only I really have *sense-data*' has a genuine insight: the words 'real pain' and 'sense-data' on his lips really do have meanings on which they are applicable to him and no-one else. But, on Wittgenstein's view, that very fact makes the insight inexpressible. For if the proposition 'Other people have sense data' is unintelligible, he thinks, then the propositions 'Other people do not have sense data' and 'Only I have sense data' are unintelligible, too: 'In the sense of the phrase "sense data" in which it is inconceivable that someone else should have them, it cannot, for this very reason, be said that someone else does not have

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them' (PR 90). So the solipsist's genuine insight is something that can only be shown, not said.¹⁷

If this two-level reading of the 1929 account is correct, then private objects in other people's minds have an important role to play in Wittgenstein's account. For the account depends on the idea that each of us has her own private sensations, sensations with which other people cannot be acquainted. Admittedly, others' private sensations play no role in the meanings of terms in my own sensation language: for my word 'toothache', in its third-person application, gets its meaning not by attachment to others' private sensations but by association with behavioural dispositions. Nonetheless, other people's private sensations do play an essential role in the philosophical account of sensation language: it is a central part of that account that each person has a private language in which they can talk about their own private sensations; and if I can understand the philosophical account, I must understand the idea that other people have private sensations. But how can I understand that idea; how am I to make sense of the claim, 'each person refers directly to her own private sensations'? If I use the term 'private sensation' with the meaning it has in my own private language, then a private sensation is something that only I can have; in that sense, the phrase 'other people's private sensations' makes no sense. If I use the term 'private sensation' with its communicative meaning, on the other hand, its meaning is explained in terms of behaviour. In that case, what I mean when I say 'other people refer to their own private sensations' is, more or less, that other people use sensation words in ways that are tied up with their own behavioural dispositions. But (on the current interpretation) that is not at all what Wittgenstein is proposing.

We face a dilemma. If the two-level interpretation of Wittgenstein's 1929 account is right, then Wittgenstein has a definite philosophical view of the workings of sensation language. But if sensation language does work in the way that he is suggesting, that philosophical view will itself be impossible to state. One way of reacting to that dilemma is to regard it as a *reductio* of the two-level interpretation. On this view, the idea that we can understand a philosophical theory, even though we can find no intelligible way of stating it, is a delusion: if our attempts to state a theory turn out to issue in nonsense, then we cannot rescue that theory by claiming that the nonsense is illuminating nonsense and that, though the attempt to state the theory makes no literal sense, it succeeds in pointing to a deeper 'truth'. That will be the reaction of someone who reads the 1929 discussions in the spirit of 'resolute' readings of the *Tractatus*. On this view, however the 1929 writings and conversations are to be understood, they cannot be advancing a philosophical view on which each person has a private sensation language in which she uses words to refer to her own private objects.¹⁸

A different way of reacting to the dilemma is to hold that something like the two-level interpretation really does make best sense of the 1929 writings and to insist, therefore, that others' private objects do play a crucial role in Wittgenstein's account of sensation language. If we take this line, we must explain how we are supposed to understand the account, given that it cannot be stated. And the obvious suggestion will be that, when we attempt to state the account, we are trying to say something that can really only be shown in the language. In support of that suggestion, we can note the apparently serious use of the notion of showing in the statement of the 1929 theory, which I highlighted above. We can also note how plausible the interpretation is in its own right. Wittgenstein says explicitly that there is a use of the term 'sense datum' in which I can talk about what is *primary* in experience, and in which it is inconceivable that someone else should have sense data (PR 90-91). There seems no plausibility in the suggestion that Wittgenstein's point is supposed

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to apply only to himself; on the contrary, the idea seems to be that for each person there will be a use of the term 'sense datum' which that person can employ in talking about what is primary in her experience, and in which it is inconceivable that anyone else should have sense data. And if that is right, it follows immediately that Wittgenstein is committed to recognizing the existence of senses of the term 'sense datum' that he himself cannot understand.

I acknowledge that the bearing of these considerations on the *Tractatus* is indirect. In particular, I am not claiming that Wittgenstein's 1929 discussions contain an account of sensation language of the kind which Russell had advocated some twenty years earlier and which, according to Diamond, was rejected in the *Tractatus*. But I do claim that the most plausible reading of the 1929 account is strikingly 'irresolute' in at least two respects. First, it makes serious use of the idea that something that cannot be represented in language (namely, the privileged status of the language with oneself as its centre) can nonetheless be shown by the application of language. Second, it promotes a philosophical view of sensation language that assigns a crucial role to others' private objects, a role that it is impossible to articulate in language. If that is right, then it puts some pressure on the kind of 'resolute' reading of the *Tractatus* that has been promoted by Diamond and others. For if Wittgenstein was steadfastly 'resolute' in the *Tractatus*, is it credible that he would in 1929 have offered a view of sensation language that is 'irresolute' in the way I have described?

In fact, Diamond's own remarks about the *Tractatus's* treatment of sensation language face a direct version of the same challenge; for they attribute to the *Tractatus* a view of sensation language that is 'irresolute' in exactly the same way as the account that I have attributed to *Philosophical Remarks*. According to Diamond, the '*Tractatus* private language argument' rules out construing talk about *other people's sensations* in terms of reference to private objects in their minds. But it leaves in place the idea that we should construe a person's talk of *her own sensations* in terms of her reference to private objects in her own mind (see Diamond 268, 283). On Diamond's reading of the *Tractatus*, however, the suggestion that each person's first-person uses of sensation words refer to private objects that cannot be referred to by anyone else – including us, the philosophers offering this account – ought to be rejected as unintelligible. For, *ex hypothesi*, we can make no sense of this talk of others' private objects. And if cannot understand this talk of others' private objects, we cannot understand the view of the first-person use of sensation words that Diamond says Wittgenstein accepted in the *Tractatus*. But a guiding principle of Diamond's reading of the *Tractatus* is that we should not attribute to Wittgenstein views which, by the standards of the *Tractatus*, would make no literal sense. Diamond's own interpretation of Wittgenstein's view of sensation language, however, seems to do precisely that.

2.ii A deflationary interpretation of the 1929 account?

Suppose someone rejects the interpretation of the 1929 account that was explored in the previous section. What alternative might she offer?

It might be suggested that we should read the 1929 account of sensation language in essentially the same deflationary way as we read certain comments in *Philosophical Investigations*. In PI §403, Wittgenstein writes:

If I were to reserve the word 'pain' solely for what I had hitherto called 'my pain', and others 'LW's pain', I should do other people no injustice, so long as a notation were provided in

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which the loss of the word 'pain' in other connexions were somehow supplied. Other people would still be pitied, treated by doctors and so on. It would, of course, be *no* objection to this mode of expression to say: 'But look here, other people have just the same as you!'¹⁹

We can fill out this suggestion in a way that emphasizes the parallel with Wittgenstein's 1929 discussion. Suppose each of us uses the word 'pain' only in the first-person case; in the third-person case, we replace the word 'pain' with the phrase 'A is behaving as I behave when there is pain'. Each of these languages has the same expressive power as our ordinary language; we understand them all equally well. In *Philosophical Investigations*, the point of this thought-experiment is that the difference between the different languages is purely notational; as long as the non-standard notation suggested in §403 is used in a way that preserves all the ordinary links with external circumstances, bodily injury, behavioural manifestations, sympathetic reactions, medical treatment and so on, there will be no substantive disagreement between someone who uses the non-standard notation and someone who uses our ordinary notation.²⁰ And when he makes this point in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein is obviously not committing himself to treating anyone's sensations as private objects: the argument starting at §243 has ruled out treating one's own sensations as private objects; the argument of §293 has ruled out treating others' sensations as private objects.

Now on the deflationary interpretation of Wittgenstein's 1929 discussion, we should read the 1929 account in exactly the same way as we read the discussion in *Philosophical Investigations*. On this view, the account does not start from the idea that each of us makes direct, introspective reference to our own sensations; and the point of introducing the notation 'A is behaving as LW behaves when there is toothache' is not to offer an explanation of how, given that starting point, it is possible for us to talk about others' sensations — an explanation that works by analyzing or explicating the meaning of 'A has toothache' in terms of behaviour. Rather, Wittgenstein is simply accepting our sensation language as given, taking it for granted without explanation that we do succeed in communicating with one another about the character of our sensations, and arguing, as he does in PI §403, that we could use a different notation without loss. Indeed (on this interpretation) the point Wittgenstein makes in PI §403 is precisely anticipated in *Philosophical Remarks*:

The two hypotheses that other people have toothache and that they behave just as I do but don't have toothache, possibly have identical senses. That is, if I had, for example, learnt the second form of expression, I would talk in a pitying tone of voice about people who don't have toothache, but are behaving as I do when I have. (PR 93)

But this is an implausible interpretation. In the first place, even if we want to maximize the closeness of Wittgenstein's 1929 account to the mature view contained in *Philosophical Investigations*, it is hard to believe that the alternative notation he suggests — 'A is behaving as LW behaves when there is toothache', and so on — is intended *merely* as a variant way of talking about sensations. On the contrary, the alternative notation seems evidently intended as an attempt to articulate the use of sensation language in a particularly revealing way; it is an attempt to show what is 'logically essential' to the representation of toothache — which, on the 1929 theory, is a particular connection to behaviour.²¹

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The deflationary interpretation reads back into the 1929 discussion features of Wittgenstein's mature treatment of sensation language that had still to be worked out. But it seems implausible that Wittgenstein had really freed himself, as early as this, of the idea that sensation terms get their meanings in the first-person case by direct attachment to the introspectible character of sensations. The 1929 material certainly contains early versions of some of the views Wittgenstein worked out later on. For example, there is a critique of the claim that I can grasp what it is for someone else to have toothache by starting with my knowledge of what it is for me to have toothache and appealing to the formulation, 'when I say he has toothache, I mean he now has what I once had' (PR 91; cf. PI §§350-51). There is a critique of the tendency to treat the proposition 'I cannot feel your toothache' as a statement of empirical fact rather than a logical truth (PR 90; cf. PI §253). There is a critique of the tendency to model mental phenomena on physical phenomena, and to treat having an experience on the model of awareness of an object (PR 88, 94). And there is an attempt to make use of the link between having a sensation and behaving in certain ways, and of the resemblances between different people's sensation-behaviour, to understand our capacity to communicate about sensations. But this is evidently a first shot. There is no sign in 1929 of many of the key elements of the later view: for example, the suggestion that sensation terms are acquired in the first-person case not by introspection but as a learned addition to natural expressive behaviour. And there is certainly no sign in 1929 of the argument against private ostensive definition, which was developed only in 1936. For the deflationary interpretation to be plausible, the 1929 account would need to contain not just early signs of Wittgenstein's later views, but the later views themselves. But it clearly does not do that.

If the deflationary reading were right, that would show that the 1929 account of sensation language made no use at all of the idea of sensations as private objects. That would remove the sense of tension I have suggested between the 1929 account and the 'resoluteness' that 'new' readers ascribe to the *Tractatus*. But if I am correct in rejecting the deflationary reading, the tension remains.²²

3 The *Tractatus* and Dummettian Realism

Fifty years ago, Michael Dummett famously suggested that *Philosophical Investigations*, with its 'doctrine that the meaning is the use', 'contains implicitly a rejection of the classical (realist) Frege-*Tractatus* view that the general form of explanation of meaning is a statement of the truth-conditions' (1959: 185). On Dummett's view, a central element in the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy is the transition from a realist view of meaning in the *Tractatus*, where the meaning of a proposition is explained in terms of its truth-conditions, to a form of anti-realism in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, where the meaning of a proposition is explained in terms of the conditions that would justify its assertion. That view of Wittgenstein's development has received occasional endorsement.²³ But those who have quoted Dummett's view have more often taken issue with it. What has attracted most disagreement is the suggestion that the later Wittgenstein advances some form of anti-realism; there has been less dissent from Dummett's suggestion that the *Tractatus* advances a form of semantic realism.²⁴ So it is a notable feature of 'new' readings of Wittgenstein that they challenge Dummett's realist interpretation of the *Tractatus*, as well as his anti-realist interpretation of the later Wittgenstein.²⁵ But while many critics have castigated Dummett's account

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of Wittgenstein's development, few have paused to consider the details of what Dummett actually says. Diamond is a welcome exception to that tendency. So it is worth examining her discussion to see how convincing a case has been offered against Dummett's perspective on the *Tractatus*.

As we have seen, Diamond argues that there is a private language argument in the *Tractatus*. And, she suggests, that fact helps to show that Dummett has mislocated the *Tractatus* in relation to realism and anti-realism: 'Dummett reads Wittgenstein as having put forward global realism in the *Tractatus*' (284), she writes; but reflection on the private language argument in the *Tractatus*, and on the Tractarian conception of logical analysis, shows that in fact the *Tractatus* is significantly anti-realist. I shall argue that Diamond's criticisms are misplaced; they misunderstand Dummett's discussion of realism and its relation to the *Tractatus*. Furthermore, I show, Dummett's discussion of realism and anti-realism still provides an illuminating tool with which to reflect on the *Tractatus* and to understand its conception of meaning and analysis.

3.i The *Tractatus* and Bivalence as a Criterion for Realism

Diamond starts with what she calls 'a very simple point'. Russell's 'metaphysical and epistemological views . . . make him a realist in a familiar philosophical sense . . . He is a realist about other people's private objects' (284). Wittgenstein is opposed to Russell's treatment of talk about others' sensations. 'In a straightforward sense', she says, 'the *Tractatus* is therefore anti-realist, at any rate about other people's private objects' (284). And, she thinks, it is anti-realist *in Dummett's sense*. In support of this last claim, she quotes Dummett's observation that 'the colourless term "anti-realism". . . denotes not a specific philosophical doctrine but the rejection of a doctrine' (Dummett 1991: 4, quoted by Diamond at 284). Since the *Tractatus* rejects Russell's realism about others' private objects, Diamond argues, it counts as anti-realist by that Dummettian standard. But of course, when Dummett says that the term 'anti-realism' denotes the rejection of a doctrine, he is not talking about the rejection of just *anything* that might be called 'realism'; he means the rejection of the specific doctrine that he calls 'realism'. So to see whether the view of sensation-language that Diamond finds in the *Tractatus* really is a form of anti-realism in Dummett's sense, we need to be clear about what it takes for a view to be a form of realism in Dummett's sense.

For Dummett, a dispute between realism and anti-realism can arise whenever, as we usually conceive things, statements of some class may be true or false even though we have no way of establishing their truth or falsity. The realist takes the notion of truth as fundamental for semantics and explains the meanings of statements of the disputed class in terms of the conditions that must obtain in order for them to be true. The anti-realist takes some aspect of the use of a statement as fundamental — standardly, the notion of what justifies or warrants asserting that statement — and explains the meanings of statements of the disputed class in terms of that.²⁶ This way of characterizing the dispute between realist and anti-realist leads naturally to another: that realists affirm the principle of bivalence for statements of the disputed class (the principle that every statement is determinately either true or false) whilst anti-realists repudiate the principle.²⁷

Now on this way of seeing things there is, Dummett insists, a crucial distinction between *anti-realism* and *reductionism*.²⁸ Behaviourism, for instance, is a reductionist view; it reduces the truth of statements about sensations and mental states to the truth of statements about behaviour.²⁹ But a position can be reductionist without being anti-realist; as long as the reductionist accepts the principle of bivalence for statements of the disputed class, her position will be both

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reductionist and realist. Thus, a behaviourist will be a realist if she maintains that, for any significant statement about a person's mental state, there is some class of true statements about the person's actual or possible behaviour that makes the original statement true or false.

We are now in a position to evaluate Diamond's claim that the *Tractatus* contains an important element of anti-realism, in Dummett's sense. Suppose Diamond is right that the *Tractatus* would analyze propositions about others' toothaches in terms of propositions about their behaviour. Whether this position is a form of realism or a form of anti-realism will depend on whether or not Wittgenstein accepts bivalence for propositions about others' toothaches. That, in turn, will depend on the question, whether he accepts bivalence for the propositions about behaviour in terms of which the original propositions are analyzed. And he surely does accept bivalence for those propositions; for it is a fundamental feature of the *Tractatus* that bivalence holds for every proposition whatsoever. That is explicit at many places: for example, in the claims that 'A proposition must restrict reality to two alternatives: yes or no' (4.023) and that 'A picture agrees with reality or fails to agree; it is correct or incorrect, true or false (2.21). But Wittgenstein's commitment to bivalence can be spelled out in more detail. An elementary proposition 'asserts the existence of a state of affairs' (4.21). And 'a state of affairs ... is a combination of objects' (2.01). So the state of affairs exists, and the elementary proposition is true, if objects are combined in the relevant way; the state of affairs does not exist, and the elementary proposition is false, if objects are not combined in the relevant way. Given that, how could bivalence fail for an elementary proposition?³⁰ It cannot fail because of vagueness or indeterminacy; the sense of an elementary proposition is determinate. Nor can an elementary proposition be meaningful yet fail to be true or false because it contains an empty name: an 'elementary proposition' that contained an empty 'name' would have no sense at all. Bivalence, then, holds for elementary propositions. But every proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. And a proposition that is composed by truth-functional combination from elementary propositions each of which is either true or false must itself be true or false also. So bivalence holds for every proposition, whether elementary or not. Thus, even if the *Tractatus* does repudiate Russell's particular kind of realism about statements concerning others' sensations, that has no tendency to show that it embodies any kind of Dummettian anti-realism. If bivalence is the touchstone of realism, then the *Tractatus* is resolutely realist.

There is another respect in which Diamond thinks the *Tractatus* is anti-realistic by Dummett's own standards. Realists hold that understanding a statement consists in knowing what has to be the case for it to be true. Dummett challenges the realist to explain how we can know what has to be the case for a given statement to be true in a case where we are incapable of recognizing that condition as obtaining or not. He considers the suggestion that our grasp of truth-conditions in such a case can be explained by analogy with our grasp of truth-conditions in simpler cases, where we can directly recognize a statement's truth or falsity. On this view:

We come to understand the condition for the truth of [statements of the disputed class] via a conception of an ability to determine their truth or falsity effectively and directly, an ability which we do not ourselves possess, but of which we conceive by analogy with those abilities we do have... [For example] we understand statements about other people's mental states by appeal to the conception of a capacity to inspect the content of a mind, arrived at by analogy with our capacity to inspect the contents of our own minds. (1991: 344-5)

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Diamond suggests that Russell's account of our talk of others' sensations involves a manoeuvre of just this sort.³¹ On Russell's view, I cannot directly recognize the truth or falsity of the statement that Jones is in pain. But I can recognize the truth or falsity of the claim that I am in pain. By analogy with that, I can form a conception of Jones's capacity to recognize the truth or falsity of the statement that he is in pain. And that, in turn, gives me a conception of what makes the statement that Jones is in pain true. On Diamond's interpretation, the *Tractatus* rejects this Russellian use of analogy — for it rejects the idea that one can generalize from an object that one can name (one's own pain) to an object that one cannot name (Jones's pain). Since the use of analogy, she thinks, is integral to Dummett's account of 'what realism is' (285), of 'what a realistic theory of meaning involves' (284), Diamond again concludes that the *Tractatus* is, by Dummett's own lights, a form of anti-realism. But her argument misstates the place of analogy in Dummett's discussion. Dummett does not say that the appeal to analogy is part of 'what a realistic theory of meaning involves'. He offers it, rather, only as one of three possible realist responses to the challenge of explaining our grasp of what it is for a statement to be true.³² So even if Diamond is right to say that the *Tractatus* rejects this use of analogy, that does nothing to show that the *Tractatus* is significantly anti-realist in Dummett's sense.

3.ii The *Tractatus* and global realism

According to Diamond, 'Dummett reads Wittgenstein as having put forward global realism in the *Tractatus*' (284). It is true that Dummett regularly cites the *Tractatus*, alongside the works of Frege and Davidson, as a clear case of a theory on which 'the general form of explanation of meaning is a statement of . . . truth-conditions', realistically-conceived (1959: 185; cf. 1991: 304; 1976: 34). But we should be careful about the idea that Dummett sees *anyone* as a *global* realist or anti-realist. Pursuing this point in the light of some of Dummett's more recent formulations focuses attention on an interesting issue about realism and the *Tractatus* conception of analysis.

In Dummett's view, even Frege, 'an archetypal realist', is not a realist about absolutely every class of statement. For, rejecting the ultra-realism of Meinong, Frege gives an anti-realist account of statements containing empty terms: 'According to this, such terms do not denote anything; the sentences in which they occur express intelligible propositions (thoughts in Frege's terminology), but these propositions are neither true nor false' (1991: 325; cf. 1982: 269-70; 1993a: 468). Dummett's reason for classifying Frege as an anti-realist concerning statements about non-actual objects is straightforward: Frege rejects bivalence for such statements. Now Russell also rejects Meinongian realism. But he does so in a way that maintains bivalence for statements of the disputed class by interpreting the apparently singular terms in such statements not as empty singular terms but instead as descriptions. So if we are to classify Russell as an anti-realist concerning statements about non-actual objects — as Dummett thinks we should — we cannot count bivalence alone as the criterion for an account's being realistic; we must also look at how the account succeeds in respecting bivalence. Thus: 'Integral to any given version of realism are both the principle of bivalence for statements of the disputed class, and the interpretation of those statements at face value, that is to say, as genuinely having the semantic form that they appear on their surface to have' (1991: 325).³³

What does this imply for the *Tractatus*? Wittgenstein praises Russell for 'perform[ing] the service of showing that the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one' (4.0031;

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cf. 4.002). And he echoes a central point of Russell's theory of descriptions: when a proposition of ordinary language contains a term that seems to function by referring to a complex, and the complex does not exist, the proposition will not be nonsensical but simply false (3.24; cf. 2.0201; NB 93, 101). Accordingly, the *Tractatus* agrees with Russell that, at the level of complete analysis, the apparently singular term for the complex is analysed away; bivalence is preserved by giving an analysis on which the apparently singular term turns out not to be a genuinely singular term. By Dummett's revised criterion, therefore, we must count Wittgenstein, like Russell, as an anti-realist concerning statements about complexes that do not exist. So it is wrong to think, as Diamond does, that Dummett sees the *Tractatus* as embodying a form of global realism.

It might be argued, however, that by the revised criterion the *Tractatus* is not simply anti-realistic about this limited class of statements but comes close to advancing a *global* form of anti-realism. The argument starts from the working assumption that no singular term of ordinary language is a Tractarian name — a term that, at the level of complete analysis, directly designates an object.³⁴ Suppose that assumption is correct. And suppose that an analysis only meets Dummett's condition of 'construing apparent singular terms at face value' if it treats the singular terms of ordinary language as singular terms at the level of complete analysis. Then the *Tractatus* will be profoundly anti-realist; for, on these suppositions, it will fail to construe *any* apparently singular term at face value. But that is surely not what Dummett intended; even if he does not think that the *Tractatus* is globally realist, he surely does not think it is globally anti-realist. Can we apply the revised criterion for realism in a way that does not have this surprising result?

One form of analysis envisaged in the *Tractatus* is the analysis of propositions about complexes into propositions about their constituents. In *Philosophical Investigations* §§60-63 Wittgenstein uses that form of analysis as a model in his critical discussion of philosophical analysis. His example there is a proposition that includes a description: 'The broom is in the corner'. But suppose I give my broom a proper name: 'Broom'. And suppose that Tractarian analysis reveals that propositions containing the ordinary proper name 'Broom' are to be analyzed in terms of propositions containing the Tractarian names 'A' and 'B', which denote, respectively, the brush and the broomstick. And suppose analysis stops there. So our analysis of the proposition 'Broom is in the corner' will be this: 'A is in the corner & B is in the corner & A is attached to B'. Part of the point of this analysis is to show how the original proposition can have a sense even in a situation where the complex that the proper name 'Broom' seemed to denote does not exist. In that respect, this Tractarian analysis shares the aim of a Russellian analysis. But Russell's analysis proceeds differently: it does not invoke singular terms standing for parts of the broom; instead it relies on quantification. Suppose the ordinary proper name 'Broom' is equivalent to the description, 'The broom whose name is "Broom"'.³⁵ Then Russell's analysis will come out like this: 'There is a broom whose name is "Broom" & There is only one broom whose name is "Broom" & That broom is in the corner'. Is the difference between these two kinds of analysis significant when we come to apply Dummett's revised criterion for realism?

A hard-line application of the criterion would suggest not. On the face of it, the name 'Broom' is a singular term. So treating the sentence 'Broom is in the corner' at face value requires treating 'Broom' as a singular term. And neither Wittgenstein's analysis nor Russell's does that. From this point of view, any difference between the two analyses is irrelevant. But we might argue that respecting surface structure is a matter of degree, and that the Tractarian analysis stays closer

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to the surface of the original proposition. The name 'Broom' does not occur at the level of complete analysis. But there is a sense in which, at least in the case where the broom exists, the *Tractatus* does represent the ordinary proper name 'Broom' as functioning by denoting an ordinary object, the broom. The analysis reveals how the name 'Broom' is attached to a complex thing by way of having an analysis into simpler elements that denote the parts of that thing. On Russell's view, by contrast, there is no referential relation at all between the term 'Broom', or any part of its analysis, and the object, Broom, or any part of it. So, in cases where Tractarian analysis proceeds in the way we have been discussing, it is arguably in keeping with the spirit of Dummett's revised criterion to classify the *Tractatus* account as a form of realism — or at least, as closer to realism than Russell's position.

We cannot conclude that the result of Tractarian analysis will in general be something that qualifies as a form of realism by Dummett's revised criterion. For there may be cases where analysis proceeds differently: not by anatomizing the referential relations between apparently singular terms of ordinary language and their referents but by revealing that there are no such referential relations at all. If Tractarian analysis does turn out to include cases like that, then for those classes of propositions, the *Tractatus* should be counted anti-realistic. But, as Wittgenstein emphasizes, it is impossible to tell in advance how analysis will proceed. So if we adopt Dummett's revised criterion, the question, how far the *Tractatus* implies a realist account of the propositions of our ordinary language and how far it implies an anti-realist account can be answered only by considering in detail, for each area of discourse, what would be involved in a Tractarian analysis of that area. Given Dummett's insistence that the issue between realism and anti-realism can only be settled piecemeal, that is just what we should expect.³⁶

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NOTES

¹ This argument is presented in 'Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in his Box? The Private Language Argument in the *Tractatus*' (Diamond 2000). All page references to Diamond in the text and notes refer to this paper.

² Sense-data, for Russell, are not themselves private objects. A sense-datum is the object that a subject is aware of – and Russell regarded it as 'a theoretic possibility' for the sense-data perceived by one person also to be perceived by another person (1913: 34). But he also held that, as well as experiencing a sense-datum, I can experience my experiencing of that sense-datum: 'my seeing the sun', or 'my desiring food', he writes, are 'object[s] with which I am acquainted' (Russell 1912: 27). And, he thought, 'it is obvious' that it is only our *own* experiencings that we can experience in this way, not other people's (Russell 1912: 27). Now for Russell, these experiencings are not private objects in exactly the sense involved in the private language argument of *Philosophical Investigations*. For the target of that private language argument is the view that sensations are 'logically' private objects. And Russell regarded it as an *empirical* fact, rather than 'a matter of a priori necessity', that the only experiencings we can experience are our own (1913: 34-5). So there is a case for thinking that it is just a mistake to see Russell's view as one on which others' sensations are private objects in any recognizably Wittgensteinian sense. But for present purposes I shall accept this part of Diamond's interpretation in order to focus on what she says about the *Tractatus*.

³ Diamond writes: 'I want to emphasize that, although Russell's example is the self, his discussion of it is meant to apply to everything with which other people are directly acquainted, and with which we ourselves cannot be acquainted' (266).

⁴ The summary account that follows is mine, rather than Diamond's.

⁵ See his comments on the translation of 2.0123 (LO 59).

⁶ See, for example, 'The Relation of Sense-data to Physics' (1914: 7), where the question whether *sensibilia* can exist without being *given* is treated as equivalent to the question, whether *sensibilia* can exist without anyone being *acquainted with* them.

⁷ 'Given' ('gegeben') appears eight times in the index of the *Tractatus*. In each of those occurrences, something's being *given* is associated with generality.

⁸ Peter Sullivan drew my attention to the contrast between Russell's association between acquaintance with an object and the object's being given and Wittgenstein's association between knowing an object and its being given. A similar point is made by Hidé Ishiguro: 'Such claims [as TLP 2.0124 and 5.524] would be nonsense if we were to understand the given as something that we are immediately aware of, or anything like Moore or Russell's sense-data, or even objects of phenomenological reflection' (Ishiguro 2001: 40).

⁹ For Diamond's rejection of the mental act model, see 290, n. 33. See also the comments about understanding at 273.

¹⁰ For Wittgenstein's acknowledgement that there may be infinitely many objects, see TLP 4.2211: '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.'

¹¹ For discussion of this point, and other relevant issues, see Craig (1982).

¹² For accounts of this sort, see for example Ishiguro (1969), McGuinness (1981), Goldfarb (unpublished).

¹³ These remarks are directly relevant to McGuinness's reading, as well as to Diamond's. He writes that in the *Tractatus* 'the use of language shows that something is taken as a true elementary

proposition, in that the other things that are then unhesitatingly said reflect its being so taken. Put mentalistically this means that we base inferences on it.' And, he says, 'what a proposition means and whether it is true depends (a) on its multiplicity . . . (b) on the relation that it has to the propositions that are or would be unhesitatingly accepted as true in the language' (1985:101). McGuinness finds an 'implicit verificationism' (1985: 102) in this account. But that claim needs justification; for there is no reason why 'unhesitating acceptance' must be understood in a way that involves some kind of verificationism.

¹⁴ As I said above, I think it plausible that, had Wittgenstein considered how to treat claims about others' sensations within the framework of the *Tractatus*, he would have opted for an account similar to that which he suggests for thoughts. But I put that aside for the purposes of investigating Diamond's suggestion.

¹⁵ Note the slippage, in the displayed quotation in the previous paragraph, from the constitutive formulation, 'if such-and-such behaviour is mere inductive evidence [that Bismarck's toothache is getting worse], then something else has to be *what it is evidence for*', to the epistemological formulation, 'there has to be something else that would, if it were established, constitute *grounds for inferring* that the toothache is getting worse'.

¹⁶ Having advanced her positive suggestion about the treatment of sensation language in the *Tractatus*, Diamond herself goes on to make the point that the kind of 'grounds' that are revealed by Tractarian analysis of a sentence 'need not . . . have any connection with what, in our actual practice, we really do count as grounds for accepting that sentence as true' (281). As far as I can see, that acknowledgement completely undercuts the suggestion that the *Tractatus* contains something that is in any way at all a precursor of the later treatment of mental language in terms of symptoms and criteria.

¹⁷ It is interesting to compare this 'two-level' reading of Wittgenstein's 1929 view with the accounts offered by Schlick and Carnap in writings of a similar period (see Schlick 1949, originally published in 1935; Carnap 1995, originally published in 1932). Something like the two-level view figures in both Schlick and Carnap. But, as I read them, the two-level view figures only as something to be rejected. Thus, Schlick thinks there are in fact 'uniform one-to-one correspondence[s]' between subjective experiences on the one hand and physical states or events on the other. Because of those correspondences, he thinks, we can translate first-person claims about experience into physical language without loss. But suppose there were no such uniform connections. On that supposition, 'there would be a world of feeling which could not be talked about in the physical language. . . [A]ll that I could communicate would be expressible in [the physical] language. . . [But] in addition to it there would be a private language in which I could reflect about the world of feeling' (1949: 405). But in Schlick's view, that is only how things would be given counterfactual suppositions; it is not how things actually are. Similarly, Carnap describes a view from which it would follow that protocol language (the 'language of direct experience' or 'phenomenal language' (1995: 44)) 'could be applied only solipsistically [and] there would be no intersubjective protocol language' (1995: 80). But he says explicitly that that is not his view. (If I understand him correctly, I differ here from Pears. He writes that 'it is a corollary of [Schlick's and Carnap's] theory that the content of experience remains necessarily incommunicable, but [that] this does not matter, because if the content of experience does vary from one person to another, the variation will necessarily remain undetectable' (Pears 1988, 303) As I read Schlick and Carnap, they think that, given the correlations that actually obtain between subjective experiences and physical states, the content of experience is not in fact incommunicable).

¹⁸ I consider in the next section what positive interpretation of the 1929 discussions we might offer if we take this 'resolute' view.

¹⁹ See also the discussions at BB 59 and 66 of the suggestion that other people might give me a special place in the notation.

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²⁰ In *Philosophical Investigations*, this point is used to argue that the differences between solipsists, idealists and realists are, similarly, merely notational. (I disagree here with the reading offered by David Bell (1996), which sees PI §403 as expressing Wittgenstein's own adherence to a kind of solipsism.)

²¹ For the idea that one way of representing the facts may be more perspicuous than another, because it 'show[s] clearly what [is] logically essential to the representation', see PR 88.

²² In a recent paper (published after this chapter was written), David Stern has offered an account of the 1929 account of sensation language that is broadly in line with the 'deflationary reading' I have described (see Stern 2010). In particular, he stresses the continuity between the strategy Wittgenstein pursues in exploring an alternative form of sensation language in PR 88-9, and the strategy pursued in PI §403. (It should be stressed that the focus of Stern's deflationary reading of the 1929 account is the development of Wittgenstein's view of sensation language; Stern is no defender of a 'new' or 'resolute' reading of the *Tractatus* (on which, see Stern 2004, 40-55)). I hope to respond to Stern's discussion in future work.

²³ Notably from Saul Kripke (1982: 71-8).

²⁴ Though some critics have explicitly disagreed with this part of Dummett's account, too; see, e.g., Hacker 1986: 62-4.

²⁵ See, e.g., Cray, who emphasizes that 'the standard narrative about the development of Wittgenstein's thought' (2000: 2), of which Dummett is regarded as a prime exponent, is to be rejected in its entirety.

²⁶ As Dummett explains, an anti-realist may *present* her theory of meaning as a theory of truth-conditions. For, having defined the meanings of statements of the disputed class in terms of the conditions that would warrant asserting them, she may use the equivalence between 'P' and 'P is true' to define a notion of truth in terms of the notion of warranted assertability. She can then present her theory as one that explains meaning in terms of the conditions for a statement to be true, in the sense that she has defined. What is distinctive of a realist theory of meaning, therefore, is not merely that it presents meaning in terms of truth-conditions; it is that it takes the notion of truth as primitive in explaining meaning. (For discussion of this point, see Dummett 1991: 318; 1978: xxii-xxiii.)

²⁷ Diamond notes one way in which Dummett's more recent writings modify the bivalence criterion for realism. On the modified view, what makes a position anti-realistic is not that its adherents actually do repudiate bivalence but that they ought to do so, given the nature of their position: 'the criterion for having an anti-realist position becomes that of occupying a position that undercuts the ground for accepting bivalence' (1993a: 467). We shall see below a second way in which the recent writings modify the bivalence criterion.

²⁸ For what follows, see Dummett 1982; 1993a; 1991: ch. 15.

²⁹ Reductionism in this sense does not require an equivalence in meaning between the original statement and a statement, or class of statements, of the reductive class; see, e.g., Dummett 1991: 322-3.

³⁰ This puts the case for bivalence in a way that emphasizes the ontological comments at the beginning of the *Tractatus*. It does not follow that we must see Wittgenstein's commitment to bivalence as being *grounded in* a substantial ontology. We could equally well see it as an independently-motivated commitment, which Wittgenstein then expresses in ontological terms. For this view of things, see e.g. McGuinness: 'Wittgenstein's remarks about facts are ... merely a way of

asserting the principle of bivalence, *for which no ground can be given*. The ontological or realist myth of *TLP* is apparently an attempt to give such a ground but it suffers from the *Selbstaufhebung* – the self-cancelling character – of the whole of *TLP*' (1985: 102).

³¹ Indeed, Dummett himself mentions Russell in connection with this use of analogy (1991: 346).

³² The other two responses that Dummett considers are: (i) that 'the practice of reasoning in accordance with the canons of classical logic' in the disputed area itself 'constitute[s] a grasp of a notion of truth satisfying the principle of bivalence' (1991: 342), and (ii) that the practice of reasoning classically 'warrants the ascription to a speaker of a grasp of that notion, without the need for further explanation or justification' (1991: 343).

³³ See also his (1993a: 468): 'the true criterion for a realist interpretation of any given class of statements ... includes construing apparent singular terms occurring in them at face-value, to be explained in terms of their referring to elements of the domain of quantification'. This revision, as Dummett observes, has the effect of bringing his criterion for realism into closer contact with 'the intuition that realism has to do with the existence of objects' (ibid.). It might be thought that, if we adopt this revised criterion for realism, we give up the idea that there could be a position that was both reductionist and realist. For (to take one example) it is natural to think that phenomenalism, which reduces statements about physical objects to statements about experiences, cannot treat what appears to be a singular term referring to a physical object as a genuine singular term; the only genuinely singular terms, it may seem, will be those that refer to individual experiences. So, according to this line of thought, if we adopt Dummett's revised criterion for realism, phenomenalism inevitably becomes a form of anti-realism. But Dummett disagrees. In his view, whether a phenomenalist is a realist or an anti-realist depends on whether or not 'he denie[s] that the notion of reference, as applied to names of material objects, play[s] any role in the account of how a statement containing such names [is] to be determined as true or as false. Whether he could be said to deny this would depend upon the details of his translation into the sense-datum language...: specifically, on whether, in the process of translation, a name for a material object would be replaced by a term for some complex of sense-data, or whether it would be dissolved altogether so that no corresponding term remained in the sense-datum sentence' (1982: 253). So in Dummett's view, it remains possible for a position to be both reductionist and realist, even when we strengthen the criterion for realism in the way discussed.

³⁴ This can be no more than a working assumption since Wittgenstein gives no examples of names or objects. But there are clear indications that he expects the logical form and the simple elements revealed by analysis to be remote from those that ordinary language seems to have (see, e.g., WVC 41-2).

³⁵ For the suggestion that we might analyse ordinary proper names in this way, see Russell (Russell 1912: 32), where he offers 'the man whose name was *Julius Caesar*' as a possible analysis of the name 'Julius Caesar'.

³⁶ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Stirling conference on 'The *Tractatus* and its History' in September 2005, and at the Universities of Oxford and Warwick. I am grateful to the participants on those occasions, to the Editors of this volume, and to OUP's anonymous reader, for very helpful comments. I am also grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for an award under the Research Leave Scheme, which enabled me to complete the paper.