

*This is a pre-print version. This paper has been published in: Fairhurst, Jordi (2019). The Ethical Subject and the Willing Subject in the Tractatus: an Alternative to the Transcendental Reading. *Philosophia* 47 (1): 75-95. See: doi.org/10.1007/s11406-017-9938-5. Please only cite the published version.*

The ethical subject and willing subject in the *Tractatus*: an alternative to the Transcendental Reading.

Abstract

The Transcendental Reading of the *Tractatus* argues that Wittgenstein endorses, under the notion of ‘metaphysical subject’, the existence of a willing subject as a transcendental condition of ethics and representation. Tejedor aims to reject this reading resorting to three criticisms. (i) The notion of ‘willing subject’ does not appear explicitly in, nor can it be deduced from, the *Tractatus*, (ii) the metaphysical subject and the willing subject are not synonymous or analogous notions and, finally, (iii) Wittgenstein abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’ at the end of the *Notebooks*. The aim of this article is twofold. Firstly, it analyzes the critique introduced by Tejedor and presents three problems that demonstrate that Tejedor’s critique cannot adequately reject the Transcendental Reading. Secondly, it sets forth an alternative reading of the *Tractatus* that overcomes the issues that stem from the Transcendental Reading. This alternative reading conceives the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject and a willing subject. Additionally, it advances an alternative account of the transcendental character of ethics that does not defend the existence of a transcendental subject as the condition of ethics and representation in the *Tractatus*.

Key Words

Wittgenstein, ethics, ethical subject, willing subject, metaphysical subject, Transcendental Reading.

Introduction

Tejedor (2013) puts forward a critique against what she entitles the Transcendental Reading of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (hereafter, Transcendental Reading). This reading affirms that Wittgenstein endorses in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (hereafter, *Tractatus*), under the notion of ‘metaphysical subject’, the existence of a willing subject that is a transcendental condition of ethics and –depending on the reading– of representation. Tejedor contests the Transcendental Reading of the *Tractatus* and presents three criticisms to reject it. (i) The notion of ‘willing subject’ does not appear explicitly in, nor can it be deduced from, the *Tractatus*. (ii) Wittgenstein does not regard the willing subject and the metaphysical subject as synonymous or analogous expressions in the *Notebooks*. Finally, (iii) Wittgenstein rejects and abandons the notion of a transcendental willing subject at the end of the *Notebooks*.

The aim of this article is twofold. In the first place, it presents three problems in Tejedor’s critique that serve to disprove the validity of her rejection of the Transcendental Reading. In the second place, it sets forth and argues in favor of an alternative reading that conceives the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject and a willing subject, without subscribing to the idea that the metaphysical subject is a transcendental condition of ethics and representation. To achieve the proposed objectives this work is divided into three sections. The first section introduces a basic characterization of the Transcendental Reading and the three criticisms formulated by Tejedor to reject this reading. Section two identifies and exposes three main problems arising from Tejedor’s critique. The first problem concerns the insufficiency of the two reasons presented by Tejedor to support the claim that Wittgenstein abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’. The second problem addresses the insufficiency of the two reasons provided to support the claim that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject in the *Notebooks* are not synonymous. Finally, the third problem tackles the identity that Tejedor incorrectly assumes between the willing subject of the *Notebooks* and the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading. The final section puts forward an alternative reading of the *Tractatus* that conceives the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject and a willing subject. Additionally, it advances an alternative account of the transcendental character of ethics that does not defend the existence of a transcendental subject as the condition of ethics and representation in the *Tractatus*.

1. The Transcendental Reading and Tejedor's criticism

The Transcendental Reading is a widespread view of the *Tractatus* held by authors such as Hacker (1986), Morris (2008), Schroeder (2006) and Stokhof (2002). The main thesis of the Transcendental Reading affirms that 'Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, endorses the notion of a transcendental subject as the condition of genuine religiousness (ethics) and –depending on the reading– representation' (Tejedor 2013, 57)¹. As far as the latter is concerned, some variations of the Transcendental Reading conceive the metaphysical subject as the transcendental condition of representation. 'The soul is the fountainhead of language and representation' (Hacker 1986, 75). Whatever a figure, for instance a proposition, represents is dependent on the will of the metaphysical subject. The metaphysical subject assigns meanings to signs. Without this subject representation would not occur and meanings would not be assigned to signs.

As for the understanding of the metaphysical subject as the transcendental condition of ethics, the Transcendental Reading conceives the metaphysical subject not only as the bearer of ethics, but also as a transcendental condition of ethics. That is, the existence of ethics is dependent on the will of the metaphysical subject. Ethical correctness or ethical incorrectness are made possible and are attained solely by the metaphysical subject. This understanding of the metaphysical subject generally entails drawing comparisons between Wittgenstein's work concerning the will and that of Schopenhauer in *The World as Will and Representation* (1966)².

To argue in favor of their proposal, the Transcendental Reading resorts to Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* and the notion of 'willing subject', conceived as a transcendental willing subject that is the condition of ethics and representation. Specifically, this reading primarily recurs to NB 5.8.16 to sustain its understanding of a transcendental willing subject. Despite the fact that the transcendental willing subject does not appear explicitly in the *Tractatus*, the Transcendental Reading affirms that this subject is retained by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* under a different label: the 'metaphysical subject'. In consequence, Wittgenstein does endorse the notion of a transcendental willing subject as the condition of ethics and representation in the

¹ It should be noted that certain variations exist between the various formulations of this reading. For example, some authors, such as Wiggins (2004), do not conceive the willing subject as a transcendental condition of representation while others, for instance Hacker (1986), do.

² Schroeder (2006) and Stokhof (2002) endorse and defend this comparison.

Tractatus. ‘According to the Transcendental Reading, it is in this light that we should interpret Wittgenstein’s claim, in the *Tractatus*, that: Ethics is transcendental’ (Tejedor 2013, 57)³.

Tejedor rejects the Transcendental Reading, arguing that it misrepresents Wittgenstein’s proposal in the *Tractatus*, as it ascribes ideas from the *Notebooks* to the *Tractatus*. Tejedor resorts to three criticisms in order to question the legitimacy of, and ultimately reject, the Transcendental Reading:

(i) The notion of ‘willing subject’ does not appear explicitly in, nor can it be deduced from, the *Tractatus*.

(ii) The willing subject and the metaphysical subject cannot be taken as synonymous or analogous expressions. Two reasons support this claim: the willing subject and the metaphysical subject possess characteristics that are incompatible with one another, and the lack of evidence that would permit both expressions to be considered as analogous.

(iii) The notion of ‘willing subject’ is abandoned by Wittgenstein at the end of the *Notebooks* and is not retained in the *Tractatus*. Two reasons support this claim: the entries 9.11.16 and 19.11.16, and Wittgenstein’s private correspondence.

The second and third criticisms arise through the inability of the first criticism to reject the Transcendental Reading. ‘It might be objected that, in fact, the evidence is not quite as slim as that. For perhaps Wittgenstein does retain the notion of “willing subject” in the *Tractatus*, only under a different label: “metaphysical subject”’ (Tejedor 2013, 58). Namely, the explicit abandonment of the notion of ‘willing subject’ does not necessarily entail the negation of the existence of the willing subject. Hence, Tejedor resorts to the second and third criticism to refute this possible objection and effectively reject the Transcendental Reading. Tejedor’s rejection of the Transcendental Reading, therefore, relies on all three criticisms.

2. Problems in Tejedor’s criticism

Three main problems can be raised regarding Tejedor’s rejection of the Transcendental Reading. The first problem concerns the two reasons introduced to support the claim that

³ Throughout this work further aspects of the Transcendental Reading shall be presented. For more information on the Transcendental Reading see Tejedor (2013, 2015), Hacker (1986), Morris (2008), Schroeder (2006), Stokhof (2002) and Wiggins (2004).

Wittgenstein abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’. The second problem tackles the two reasons introduced to support the claim that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject cannot be taken as synonymous or analogous. The third problem covers the identity between the willing subject of the *Notebooks* and the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading that is incorrectly assumed by Tejedor. These three problems aim to disprove the validity of the critique introduced by Tejedor in order to reject the Transcendental Reading⁴.

2.1. *Abandonment of the willing subject*

Tejedor’s third criticism claims that ‘Wittgenstein has shifted from the reified notion of a transcendental willing subject in the *Notebooks* to a deflated notion of ethical willing in the *Tractatus*, that is to say, he abandons the notion of a ‘willing subject’ (Tejedor 2013, 58). To support this claim she resorts to two different reasons. The first reason concerns ‘two entries that show Wittgenstein as having second thoughts about this notion: *NB* 9.11.16 and *NB* 19.11.16’ (Tejedor 2013, 60)⁵. *NB* 19.11.16 indicates, according to Tejedor, that:

Wittgenstein considers an even stronger suggestion: the suggestion that there may in fact be no reason whatsoever to posit a willing subject. In other words, in *NB* 19.11.16, Wittgenstein is considering abandoning the notion of willing subject in its entirety: he is considering abandoning the notion of a transcendental subject understood as a condition of representation or of ethics. (2013, 60)

It is necessary, nonetheless, to reconsider both questions in *NB* 19.11.16 in order to evaluate the validity of Tejedor’s conclusion. The first question in *NB* 19.11.16 is introduced in order to delve into the reasons that can be provided to affirm the existence of the willing subject. The scope of valid answers that can be provided is dependent on Wittgenstein’s understanding of the will and the willing subject. Will and ethics cannot be found in the world nor are they reflected in it (*TLP*, 6.373, 6.37); no fact that constitutes

⁴ In addition, the alternative reading we set forth in section 3 demonstrates the insufficiency of Tejedor’s first criticism.

⁵ The remarks introduced by Tejedor regarding *NB* 9.11.16 do not present any issues. However, in 2.3 we will show how the remarks introduced by Tejedor in relation to this entry demonstrate an inability by Tejedor to differentiate the willing subject of the *Notebooks* from the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading.

the world enables us to deduce or justify their existence. This is due to the strict division between fact and value. Hence, no proposition, given the picture theory of language defended by Wittgenstein⁶, will provide reasons either in favor of or against the existence of the will. By extension the willing subject, conceived as a limit and not a part of the world, presents a similar problem: nothing in the world nor any proposition can provide reasons either in favor of or against its existence.

The second question in *NB* 19.11.16 is rhetorical and serves to provide an answer to the first question. Tejedor affirms that this second question negates the existence of the willing transcendental subject. However, the rhetorical question ‘Is not *my world* adequate for individuation?’ (*NB*, 19.11.16) can be understood to constitute the affirmation ‘*my world* is adequate for individuation’. The first significant appearance of the idea of ‘*my world*’ can be found in *NB* 12.8.16. ‘The I makes its appearance in philosophy through the world’s being my world’ (*NB*, 12.8.16). This affirmation is linked to Wittgenstein’s understanding of solipsism⁷. Solipsism is conceived as the identification of the self with the whole of its language. The limits of one’s language constitute the boundary of the world. Therefore, the limits of the subject determine the limits of the world, leading to the affirmation that summarizes Wittgenstein’s solipsism: ‘I am my world’ (*TLP*, 5.63).

Since individuation requires solely the understanding of the world as ‘*my world*’ –that is to say, the world is bound by the limitations of my language– it is futile to delve into the world to find reasons to justify the existence of the self. It is sufficient to understand the basic affirmation of Wittgenstein’s solipsism: I am my world. Therefore, an answer has been provided to the initial question posed in *NB* 19.11.16 that does not deny the existence of the willing subject. This entry (i.e. *NB* 19.11.16) does not support the claim that the willing subject is abandoned by Wittgenstein in the *Notebooks*, that is, Tejedor’s third criticism.

The second reason presented by Tejedor resorts to Wittgenstein’s private

⁶ In 2.2 we will outline a basic approach to Wittgenstein’s picture theory of language.

⁷ In this work we will only outline a general characterization of Wittgenstein’s solipsism, presenting the basic elements without intervening in the various existing debates. The basic elements posed can be found in various and divergent works on the topic of solipsism such as Hintikka (1958), Levine (2013), McGinn, (2006) and McGuinness, (2002). Albeit, it is important to introduce a clarification concerning the idea of ‘my language’, following McGuinness (2002, 138). ‘My language’ does not refer to everyone’s personal language. Contrarily, it refers to language as such, that is, the limits of the world are the limits of language as such. Privacy concerning language only hinders Wittgenstein’s argument surrounding solipsism. However, these remarks concerning language do not affect the idea that the I still is the measure of the world: language has to have a center and that center is the I.

correspondence with Engelmann held between 1916 and 1918. Tejedor argues that Wittgenstein, after his stay in Ölmütz, abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’, the transcendental subject as a condition of representation and ethics. The passage that best illustrates this change, according to Tejedor, pertains to a letter written by Wittgenstein to Engelmann in 1918.

If you tell me I have no faith, you are perfectly right, only I did not have it before either. [...] I am clear about one thing: I am far too bad to be able to theorize about myself; in fact, I shall either remain a swine or else I shall improve, and that’s that! Only let’s cut out the transcendental twaddle when the whole thing is as plain as a sock on the jaw. (Monk 1991, 152-153)

Tejedor concludes that ‘Wittgenstein’s reply to Engelmann betrays an important change in Wittgenstein’s attitude to (and tolerance of) the transcendental approach to religion and ethics that has been the focus of so many of his conversations with Engelmann in Olmütz, in the autumn of 1916’ (Tejedor 2013, 61-62). Therefore, Tejedor (2013, 62) affirms that, by the winter of 1917–1918, Wittgenstein had abandoned the transcendental willing subject as a condition of representation and ethics.

Nevertheless, two issues arise with regard to this second reason. Firstly, no quote is supplied that explicitly details Wittgenstein’s abandonment of the willing subject or the transcendental subject. Tejedor provides solely a fragment where Wittgenstein expresses his intention to abandon the ‘transcendental twaddle’. Secondly, Wittgenstein’s rejection of the ‘transcendental twaddle’ is questionable. Wittgenstein explicitly uses of the notion ‘transcendental’ in the *Tractatus* with regards to logic, in *TLP* 6.13, and ethics, in *TLP* 6.421. In both cases the possibility of expressing meaningful propositions is dismissed. However, Wittgenstein does not deny ethics or logic. He merely affirms that they are not facts that can be expressed in meaningful propositions.

These two issues suggest that Wittgenstein’s private correspondence with Engelmann does not necessarily support Tejedor’s claim that Wittgenstein abandons the willing subject, i.e. Tejedor’s third criticism. Ultimately, the two reasons introduced by Tejedor –that is, the entries *NB* 9.11.16 and *NB* 19.11.16 and Wittgenstein’s private correspondence– do not support her third criticism and, therefore, cannot reject the Transcendental Reading.

2.2 *The willing subject and the metaphysical subject*

The second main problem in Tejedor's rejection of the Transcendental Reading concerns her second criticism, that is, that Wittgenstein does not regard the willing subject and the metaphysical subject as synonymous or analogous expressions in the *Notebooks*. Tejedor introduces two different reasons in order to support this claim. The first reason rests on the consideration that both subjects possess characteristics that are incompatible with one another. On the basis of *TLP* 5.641 Tejedor (2013, 59) affirms that it is possible for philosophy to speak of the metaphysical subject. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein, in the *Notebooks*, negates the possibility of speaking of the willing subject. Tejedor, therefore, argues that 'The claim that the metaphysical subject "really" ("*wirklich*") can be talked about [...] is totally mysterious if we understand "metaphysical subject" to be referring to the willing subject from the *Notebooks*' (Tejedor 2013, 59-60).

Due to the incompatible characterization of both subjects with one another concerning the possibility of expressing them in meaningful propositions Tejedor concludes that both subjects cannot be understood as synonymous or analogous. 'If the metaphysical subject were indeed the willing subject from the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein should, at the very least, admit, in *TLP* 5.641, that the metaphysical subject cannot be talked about' (Tejedor 2013, 59). In Tejedor's estimation this admission does not occur and, consequently, identifying both subjects would be deeply puzzling and generate inconsistencies that cannot be resolved.

The problem, however, lies in the characterization of the metaphysical subject provided by Tejedor. The correct method in philosophy is to 'say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science –i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy' (*TLP*, 6.53)⁸. Wittgenstein's picture theory of language asserts that any picture –i.e. thought, meaningful propositions and iconic representations– must share its logical shape with the world. All pictures, therefore

- i) are either determinately true or determinately false [bivalence]
- ii) are both capable of being true and capable of being false $\frac{[T]}{[F]}$ [bipolarity]
- iii) are informative about the reality [informativeness]

⁸ In the present study the notions *sagen* (6.53), *sprechen* (6.423) and *rede/reden* (5.641) are ultimately understood as interchangeable.

iv) ultimately decompose into elementary propositions that are logically independent from each other [logical independence] and that are made up exclusively of simple names [simplicity of meaning] (Tejedor 2013, 66)

The meaning of all propositions, as of all other pictures, stems from what it represents, the possible state of the world that it conveys (*TLP*, 2.221). Additionally, it must be possible to determine the truthfulness or falseness of all propositions, since they aim to represent the world truthfully. Its truthfulness or falseness depends on the concordance between the meaning expressed in the proposition and reality, that is, between the representation and what is represented (*TLP*, 2.222).

However, it is impossible to express meaningful propositions with regards to the metaphysical subject. It does not constitute a legitimate use of language. The metaphysical subject, a limit of the world, does not appear in the world and nothing in the world allows us to infer its existence (*TLP*, 5.633)⁹. The metaphysical subject is a point without extension that does not have any reference in the world. Hence, any proposition concerning the metaphysical subject is not in accordance with the basic conception of language and picturing that Wittgenstein sets out in the *Tractatus*. Any proposition concerning the metaphysical subject, even if legitimately construed, lacks sense since it cannot give meaning to some of its constituents. Specifically, the ‘metaphysical subject’, conceived as a limit of the world, lacks a referent in the world that will determine its meaning. Any proposition concerning this subject cannot convey a possible state of affairs of the world nor is it possible to determine its truthfulness or falseness as it cannot be confirmed or refuted by experience.

Therefore, it is possible to contest Tejedor’s claim that philosophy can legitimately speak about the metaphysical subject. The correct method for philosophy, as stated in *TLP* 6.53, is to say nothing except that which can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science. All propositions of philosophy lack sense (Williams 1981, 146), they attempt to express that which cannot be said (Morris 2008, 338). *TLP* 6.53 constitutes an admission by Wittgenstein that the metaphysical subject cannot be legitimately expressed in meaningful propositions. Consequently, Tejedor’s first reason does not support the claim that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject cannot be identified –i.e.

⁹ Wittgenstein introduces the analogy of the eye in *TLP* 5.632, 5.633 and 5.6331 in order to clarify his understanding of the metaphysical subject. The metaphysical subject stands in relation to the world, as does the eye in relation to the visual field. ‘You do not see the eye. And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye’ (*TLP*, 5.633).

Tejedor's second criticism. The metaphysical subject and the willing subject both possess characteristics that are compatible with one another.

The second reason presented by Tejedor to support her second criticism resorts to the lack of evidence in the *Notebooks* in favor of the claim that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject are synonymous or analogous. Nonetheless, an analysis of Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* can allow for the understanding of both subjects as synonymous. Wittgenstein, in addition to the metaphysical subject and the willing subject, presents another two notions that are regarded as synonymous: the subject and the I¹⁰.

The subject is conceived as a limit, not a part, of the world that cannot be adequately expressed in meaningful propositions (*NB*, 2.8.16, 5.8.16)¹¹. This subject is not the empirical human being that is studied by psychology; it is the I of philosophy¹². The subject is not an empirical object in the world that we can see and nothing in the world allows us to infer its existence. Additionally, the subject is conceived as the bearer of good and evil, that is to say, the bearer of ethics (*NB*, 2.8.16, 5.8.16). Nonetheless, good and evil are also dependent on the will (*NB*, 21.7.16)¹³. The will is understood as 'an attitude of the subject to the world. The subject is the willing subject' (*NB*, 4.11.16). Consequently, good and evil enter through the subject –the willing subject– and are dependent on his attitude to the world, i.e. his will. Good will entails happiness while bad will entails unhappiness.

This basic characterization of the subject is essential in order to understand the relation that can be established between the metaphysical subject and the willing subject in the *Notebooks*. A basic approach to this relation can be outlined as follows. In the first place, the subject is explicitly identified, in *NB* 4.11.16, with the willing subject insofar the will is an attitude that the subject has towards the world. Therefore, if the metaphysical subject is identified explicitly with the subject, the I, it is possible to establish a nexus between the metaphysical subject and the willing subject resorting to the I. This identification between the metaphysical subject and the I is explicitly introduced by Wittgenstein in *NB* 2.9.16, and implicitly in *NB* 4.8.16 when resorting to the analogy of

¹⁰ Both notions are also understood as synonymous by Tejedor (2015, 58–59).

¹¹ This characteristic is also present in the metaphysical subject and the willing subject, as shown above.

¹² To clarify this characterization of the I Wittgenstein resorts to the analogy of the eye in *NB* 12.8.16. The I stands in relation to the world, as does the eye in relation to the visual field. You do not see the eye and nothing in the visual field allow you to infer its existence.

¹³ Wittgenstein in *NB* 5.8.16 goes as far as affirming that the existence of the I is dependent on the will.

the eye –primarily introduced with respect to the I– to account for where the metaphysical subject must be situated¹⁴. Consequently, it is possible to relate the willing subject and the metaphysical subject resorting to the I, the subject.

In the second place, two arguments can be provided in favor of understanding the will as an attitude that pertains to the metaphysical subject. On the one hand, the subject, the I, can be happy or unhappy. ‘The mark of happiness cannot be a physical one, but a metaphysical one’ (*NB*, 30.7.16) and is dependent on the will, the attitude of the subject to the world. The metaphysical subject is identified with the I, thus the metaphysical subject can be happy or unhappy. *Ergo*, the metaphysical subject must possess will, since it plays a crucial role in determining happiness or unhappiness. On the other hand, good and evil are not found in the world, they enter through the subject, the I. The metaphysical subject is identified with the I, hence good and evil also enter through him. Good and evil are dependent on the attitude of the subject towards the world, i.e. the subjects will. *Ergo*, it can be affirmed that the metaphysical subject possesses will, an attitude to the world. Both arguments demonstrate that the will is an attitude that can be ascribed to the metaphysical subject. Consequently, insofar as the will is an attitude held by the metaphysical subject towards the world, the metaphysical subject can be conceived as a willing subject.

Finally, it is viable to contest Tejedor’s claim that both the willing subject and the metaphysical subject do not appear alongside each other in the same entries (Tejedor 2013, 59). Due to the identification of the metaphysical subject with the I, the former appears, implicitly through the I, in the same entries as the willing subject –for example in *NB* 5.8.16.

In sum, it is possible to establish an identification between the willing subject with the metaphysical subject in the *Notebooks* –or, at the very least, establish a relation between them both– by means of the subject, the I. Ultimately, the two reasons introduced by Tejedor –that is, that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject possess characteristics that are incompatible with one another and the inexistence of evidence that would permit both expressions to be considered as analogous– to support her second criticism present a series of problems that affect their legitimacy. Therefore, both reasons are insufficient to support the claim that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject cannot be understood as synonymous or analogous in the *Notebooks*.

¹⁴ Furthermore, the I and the metaphysical subject are also regarded as synonymous in *TLP* 5.641.

2.3. *The willing subject and the transcendental willing subject*

The two main problems outlined in 2.1 and 2.2 demonstrate that Tejedor cannot adequately argue in favor of her second and third criticism. Both criticisms cannot contend and reject the possible objection of the Transcendental Reading, i.e. that the explicit abandonment of the notion of ‘willing subject’ does not necessarily entail the negation of this subject in the *Tractatus*. Consequently, Tejedor’s first criticism cannot reject the Transcendental Reading since its legitimacy is dependent on the rejection of the possible objection of the Transcendental Reading, that is to say, it depends on the legitimacy of the second and third criticism.

One final problem implicitly affects the totality of Tejedor’s critique of the Transcendental Reading. The Transcendental Reading conceives the willing subject of the *Notebooks* as a transcendental willing subject condition of ethics and representation. Tejedor adopts this understanding and assumes that the notion of ‘willing subject’ of the *Notebooks* is synonymous to the transcendental willing subject as a condition of ethics proposed by the Transcendental Reading¹⁵. Therefore, an essential task when criticizing and rejecting the Transcendental Reading is overlooked: it is necessary to determine if Wittgenstein endorses the notion of a willing subject understood as a transcendental willing subject condition of ethics and representation¹⁶. The importance of this task stems from the fact that Wittgenstein never utilizes the expression of ‘transcendental willing subject’ nor does he explicitly characterize the willing subject as a transcendental condition of ethics or representation. It is uncertain whether Wittgenstein endorses the idea that the willing subject is a transcendental condition of ethics and representation. To sustain this characterization of the willing subject as a transcendental willing subject the Transcendental Reading primarily resorts to *NB* 5.8.16:

The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists.

¹⁵ During certain segments of this article we have maintained this identification between the willing subject of the *Notebooks* and the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading in order to convey the problems in Tejedor’s work. Nevertheless, the present study does not defend nor endorse this identification.

¹⁶ This task requires a specific investigation that goes beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, a basic problem in the understanding of the willing subject as a transcendental willing subject as proposed by the Transcendental Reading will be presented further on. In addition, a possible objection against the Transcendental Reading on the basis of *NB* 9.11.16 will be introduced.

If the will did not exist, neither would there be that center of the world, which we call the I, and which is the bearer of ethics.

What is good and evil is essentially the I, not the world.

The I, the I is what is deeply mysterious! (*NB*, 5.8.16)

However, the subject and the willing subject are not understood as a transcendental condition of representation or of ethics. The I is conceived solely as the bearer of ethics and the will is an attitude that the subject has towards the world. This does not entail that the existence of ethics and the will is dependent on the subject. *NB* 5.8.19 does not demonstrate that Wittgenstein endorses the idea of the willing subject as a transcendental condition of ethics and representation.

This identification between the willing subject of the *Notebooks* and the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading assumed by Tejedor generates two kinds of problems in her work. In the first place, there is a series of minor issues concerning Tejedor's use of the expression 'transcendental willing subject' and attributing it explicitly to Wittgenstein¹⁷. This problem is solvable and does not affect the legitimacy of her criticism, as it solely requires avoiding the explicit attribution of the notion of 'transcendental willing subject' to Wittgenstein.

In the second place, Tejedor does not differentiate her defense of the claim that Wittgenstein abandons the notion of 'willing subject' in the *Notebooks* from her rejection of the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading. Both tasks are illegitimately interwoven and presented concurrently. Consequently, some of the reasons that Tejedor presents to argue in favor of the claim that Wittgenstein abandons the willing subject are inadequate since they question the legitimacy of the identification between the willing subject of the *Notebooks* and the transcendental willing subject posed by the Transcendental Reading.

For instance, Tejedor resorts to *NB* 9.11.16 to support her claim that Wittgenstein abandons the notion of 'willing subject'. From *NB* 9.11.16 Tejedor draws the conclusion that mental representation does not require the willing subject 'since experience is a type of thought, of mental representation (or picture) for Wittgenstein' (Tejedor 2013, 60)¹⁸. This conclusion is correct. However, it fails to support the claim that Wittgenstein rejects

¹⁷ For some clear-cut cases see Tejedor (2013, 1, 55, 59, 60, 62). Furthermore, the abstract of Tejedor's work already encounters the problem posed: 'I argue that the notion of willing subject as a transcendental condition is abandoned by Wittgenstein in the *Notebooks*' (Tejedor 2013, 55).

¹⁸ A conclusion that partially rejects the proposal of the Transcendental Reading.

the notion of ‘willing subject’. The problem lies in the fact that Tejedor introduces *NB* 9.11.16 in conjunction with *NB* 19.11.16 to claim that Wittgenstein abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’. *NB* 9.11.16 simply cannot corroborate the abandonment of the willing subject and proves the importance of the differentiation introduced above. *NB* 9.11.16 allows for arguments against the proposal of the willing subject as a transcendental condition for representation, as defended –in some variations– by the Transcendental Reading. However, it does not demonstrate that Wittgenstein abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’.

Consequently, Tejedor’s rejection of the understanding of the willing subject as a transcendental condition of ethics and representation concurrently entails, erroneously, the claim that Wittgenstein abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’. All three of Tejedor’s criticisms are affected by the erroneous assumption of the identification between the willing subject of the *Notebooks* and the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading.

In conclusion, it is necessary to distinguish the willing subject of the *Notebooks* from the transcendental willing subject condition of ethics and representation proposed by the Transcendental Reading. The importance of this distinction resides in that it is possible to argue in favor of the existence of the willing subject without subscribing to the idea that this subject is a transcendental condition of ethics and representation, as proposed by the Transcendental Reading. The rejection of the Transcendental Reading does not necessarily entail the rejection of the existence of a willing subject, as Tejedor assumes in her work.

3. The metaphysical subject as an ethical subject and a willing subject: an alternative to the Transcendental Reading

Section 2 demonstrates that the three criticisms introduced by Tejedor are insufficient in order to reject the Transcendental Reading. Nonetheless, we do not aim to defend the Transcendental Reading in this work, as shown briefly in 2.3. On the contrary, our aim is to set forth an alternative reading that conceives the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject and a willing subject, without subscribing to the main thesis defended by the Transcendental Reading. Furthermore, this alternative reading seeks to overcome several problems posed by Tejedor. Previously the three main criticisms introduced by Tejedor

to reject the Transcendental Reading have been considered. Nonetheless, there are two other minor problems that she advances against the Transcendental Reading that must be resolved. On the one hand, she considers that the contents of the *Notebooks* distort Wittgenstein's proposal in the *Tractatus*. Therefore, solely the contents of the *Tractatus* will be taken into account here. On the other hand, it is necessary to advance an alternative account of the transcendental character of ethics specified in *TLP* 6.421 that does not generate the issues that stem from the Transcendental Reading and their proposal of a transcendental subject as a condition of ethics.

In order to advance our alternative reading, initially, we will outline the understanding of the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject. Subsequently, we will study the possibility of conceiving the metaphysical subject as a willing subject. Finally, we will introduce the main differences between the Transcendental Reading and the alternative reading proposed in order to demonstrate the advantages of the latter. Additionally, we advance an alternative account of the transcendental character of ethics that does not defend the existence of a transcendental subject as the condition of ethics and representation in the *Tractatus*, thus avoiding the issues that stem from the Transcendental Reading.

3.1. *The ethical subject*

It is a wildly held view that the propositions concerning ethics in the *Tractatus* presuppose the existence of an ethical subject¹⁹. Nonetheless, there is disagreement concerning which subject should be recognized as such. The first option available in the *Tractatus* is the empirical subject. However, conceiving the empirical subject as an ethical subject is problematic due to the incompatible characterization that Wittgenstein offers of the empirical subject and ethics with one another. The empirical subject is conceived as a part of the world that can be adequately expressed in meaningful propositions and, therefore, lacks ethical value. Meanwhile, ethics is conceived as transcendental: it lies outside of the world and cannot be expressed in meaningful propositions. This difference between the empirical subject and ethics stems from Wittgenstein's strict distinction between fact and value.

¹⁹ It could be argued that Wittgenstein sets forth an ethical approach that lacks any form of subject, as Wiggins (2004) does briefly. Nonetheless, this reading would require specifying why Wittgenstein does not resort to impersonal forms during the propositions concerning ethics in the *Tractatus*.

Conceiving the empirical subject as an ethical subject, consequently, generates certain contradictions in Wittgenstein's work. It places ethical value in the world, eliminating the necessary distinction between fact and value. Hence, ethics would lose *all its value* (*TLP* 6.41). Moreover, it grants the possibility of speaking about ethics resorting to the empirical subject. Propositions such as 'the empirical subject is ethically happy or ethically unhappy' could be formulated, despite the fact that Wittgenstein argues against the possibility of expressing value in meaningful propositions. A clear-cut case that exemplifies this problem is introduced in *TLP* 6.423. Wittgenstein denies the possibility of speaking about the ethical will 'in so far as it is the subject of ethical attributes' (*TLP*, 6.423). The ethical subject, insofar it is related to ethics, cannot be a part of the world and, by extension, cannot be legitimately put into words. Therefore, conceiving the empirical subject as an ethical subject entails a contradiction: it is both possible and impossible to express meaningful propositions concerning ethics.

Furthermore, the incompatible characterization of the empirical subject and ethics with one another generates further issues in the proposal of the empirical subject as an ethical subject. Firstly, it is necessary to account for how the empirical subject can be ethically good or bad, despite no real value residing within the limits of the world. That is to say, that no describable state of affairs can be ethically good or bad (Wittgenstein 1965, 6). The second issue concerns the view of the world *sub specie aeterni*, that is, viewing the world 'as a whole—a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical' (*TLP*, 6.45). 'To understand our position in the world we must view it *sub specie aeternitatis*—as a limited whole. That is to say, no part of the world is privileged or preferred to another. [...] One's life is seen as if from *beyond*' (Hughes 2009, 57). These remarks cannot refer to the empirical subject, as it would imply that the empirical subject could see the world as a limited whole while, simultaneously, lying within the limits of the world.

In sum, conceiving the empirical subject as an ethical subject generates a series of inconsistencies and contradictions within Wittgenstein's proposal that lack a solid explanation. These problems primarily arise due to the distinction between fact and value, which results in an incompatible characterization of the empirical subject and ethics with one another. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce an alternative account of the ethical subject that solves the problems presented.

The *Tractatus* provides us with two main alternatives. On the one hand, we can merely resort to the 'happy man' that is introduced in *TLP* 6.43. This approach is

presented by commentators such as Mulhall (2007), who defends a resolute reading of the *Tractatus*. Nonetheless, this entails avoiding any substantial understanding of an ethical subject or a willing subject in the *Tractatus*. On the other hand, an alternative held widely among Wittgenstein's interpreters (Morris (2008), Christensen (2011), Schroeder (2006) and Stokhof (2002)) consists in resorting to the metaphysical subject introduced in the *TLP* 5.632–5.64. Nonetheless, there are discrepancies regarding how we must conceive the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject. We argue in favor of an alternative reading that conceives the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject, while not resorting to the contents of the *Notebooks* and avoiding the commitments sustained by the Transcendental Reading. This reading is implicitly present in varying degrees in authors such as Christensen (2011) and Huges (2009). However, it lacks a systematical and substantial proposal concerning the understanding of the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject.

The metaphysical subject is not the empirical subject, it “does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world” (*TLP*, 5.632)²⁰. In order to clarify the understanding of the metaphysical subject Wittgenstein resorts to the analogy of the eye. The metaphysical subject stands in relation to the world, as does the eye in relation to its visual field. “You do *not* see the eye. ^{[[]]}And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye” (*TLP*, 5.633). The metaphysical subject cannot appear or be encountered in the world and nothing in the world allows us to infer its existence. It is a point without extension that does not have any referent in the world.

The non-existence of the metaphysical subject within the limits of the world has two main consequences in Wittgenstein's proposal. First, it is not possible to express meaningful propositions regarding the metaphysical subject. Second, “to acknowledge the I here in a nonpsychological sense means to consider it as something which is not subject to scientific theorizing and which is not objectively given as part of the world” (Sluga 1996, 328). Thus, it is not possible to provide any knowledge, theory or truthful propositions regarding the metaphysical subject. The metaphysical subject is not a human being, a human body or human soul; it is the philosophical self, a non-psychological approach to the self (*TLP*, 5.641). However, this does not entail endorsing Sluga's (1996, 329) understanding of this subject as a mental sphere (see 3.3) or the Transcendental Reading's thesis that the metaphysical subject is a transcendental condition of

²⁰ Furthermore, “the relation of Wittgenstein's philosophical self to the everyday self of which we commonly speak remains unspecified” (Sluga 1996, 330).

representation (see 3.3).

This characterization of the metaphysical subject is compatible with Wittgenstein's understanding of ethics. The metaphysical subject is a limit, and not a part, of the world that cannot be legitimately expressed in meaningful propositions. This affords the possibility of conceiving the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject. However, it is necessary to specify how we conceive the ethical subject.

Wittgenstein "sees ethics as being connected to a subject's conception of her life or of the world in which this life is situated" (Christensen 2011, 798)²¹. This subject is the ethical subject. It possesses value and it can be subjected to ethical evaluation, i.e. deemed ethical or unethical. Since value cannot lie within the limits of world, the ethical subject must be a limit, and not a part, of the world in order to avoid any contradictions in Wittgenstein's proposal. The evaluation of the ethical subject as ethical or unethical is dependent on two key aspects in Wittgenstein's proposal: the correct view of the world that is linked to the understanding of the will, and the resolution of the riddle of life. The adequate completion of these two aspects by the ethical subject entails being ethically correct and leads, therefore, to ethical reward. Contrarily, the non-completion of these two aspects entails being unethical or ethically wrong and leads to ethical punishment. Therefore, ethical correctness and incorrectness depend on the ethical subject's understanding of, and attitude towards, the world.

In consequence, the connection between ethics and the subject need not take the particular form partially presented by Christensen who argues that the "connection between ethics and the subject considered as will, as the ability to act –the subject seen as agent" (Christensen 2011, 803). Although the will does play a fundamental role in Wittgenstein's understanding of ethics, the connection between ethics and the subject does not necessarily entail considering this subject as will. The ethical subject that underlies the *Tractatus* is not conceived as will here. Nonetheless, this does not result in the denial of a willing subject in the *Tractatus*, as we will argue in 3.2.

This ethical subject cannot be identified with the empirical subject. Conversely, we defend an alternative reading that conceives the metaphysical subject as the ethical subject posed. Both subjects are characterized as limits of the world, thus maintaining the basic distinction between fact and value. Furthermore, conceiving the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject resolves the problems presented previously concerning the

²¹ Christensen seems to relate the metaphysical subject to ethics. Nonetheless there is no proposal or use of the notion of 'ethical subject'.

empirical subject. Firstly, ethical reward and ethical punishment are no longer tied to a subject situated within the limits of the world nor can they appear in the world, thus conserving their ethical value. Secondly, viewing the world *sub specie aeterni* as a limited whole is no longer problematic. The metaphysical subject cannot reside within the limits of world, hence it cannot encounter itself in the world. Lastly, conceiving the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject accounts for certain topics that Wittgenstein introduces with regards to the metaphysical subject that are reintroduced during the propositions concerning ethics in the *Tractatus*. For instance, the notion of ‘visual field’ that is presented in the analogy of the eye in order to clarify Wittgenstein’s understanding of the metaphysical subject is reintroduced in *TLP* 6.4311 when dealing with problems concerning life and death. Additionally, one of the main issues that arises from Wittgenstein’s understanding of the metaphysical subject is the concern for skepticism. In *TLP* 6.51 this concern for skepticism is reintroduced with regards to the resolution of the riddle of life.

3.2. *The willing subject*

Contrary to the ethical subject presented in 3.1, there is a lack of commentators arguing in favor of the existence of a willing subject in the *Tractatus* without resorting to the *Notebooks* or subscribing to the Transcendental Reading. An alternative reading is therefore needed. We argue in favor of an alternative reading that conceives the metaphysical subject as a willing subject, whilst avoiding the contents of the *Notebooks* and the commitments of the Transcendental Reading. In order to provide this alternative account of the metaphysical subject as a willing subject firstly it is necessary to outline the characterization of the ethical will and the willing subject. Wittgenstein primarily characterizes the will in *TLP* 6.43²².

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

In short the effect must be that it becomes an altogether different world. It must, so to speak, wax and wane as a whole.

²² The characterization of the will presented is a basic approach following the works of McGuinness (1966, 305–328), Morris (2008) and Mulhall, (2007, 221–247) that suffices for the completion of the task established; that is, determining the relation between the metaphysical subject and the will and if this subject can be conceived as a willing subject. For further information on this issue see the works referenced.

The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man. (*TLP*, 6.43)

The totality of facts that determine the world are completely independent of the will (*TLP*, 6.373, 6.374). The good and bad exercise of the will can only legitimately transform the limits of the world, that is, the way we conceive the world. Bad will entails being in confrontation with or frustrated by some specific fact that occurs in the world and results in unhappiness. Conversely, good will entails understanding that the occurrences of the world possess no ethical value and that they are not dependent on the will, i.e. the will cannot change them. Good will changes the limits of the world and allows for a correct view of the world and, by extension, happiness²³.

Wittgenstein's proposal of the will presupposes the existence of a subject: the willing subject. We propose conceiving this subject as the subject that possesses will in an ethical sense, not as a transcendental condition of ethics. The willing subject alters the limits of the world, making the world wax and wane as a whole, and attains happiness or unhappiness –ethical reward or ethical punishment respectively. “The ethical reward and punishment, arises from this relation between the subject and her actions” (Christensen 2011, 804). Christensen uses “the word 'action' for an event that is connected to the will” (Christensen 2011, 804). Nonetheless, it is essential to understand that the notion of ‘action’ does not present its ordinary meaning. Wittgenstein's analogy of the eye can clarify this understanding of the willing subject and the will conceived as an action.

The willing subject stands in relation to the world, as does the eye in relation to its visual field. The eye can observe the occurrences that take place in its visual field, but it cannot directly interact with these occurrences to change how they take place. Nonetheless, it is possible to alter the way in which these occurrences are conceived and perceived. Comparatively, the willing subject cannot alter the facts that take place in the world. However, this subject can alter the limits of the world, how he conceives those facts, and he carries out this alteration with his will. This constitutes the action of the willing subject, an action that does not lie within the limits of the world; on the contrary, it alters these limits and the understanding of the world.

This alteration of the limits of the world leads either to a happy world or to an unhappy world. Both these worlds are essentially different and are dependent on the will

²³ This article will not delve into the will conceived as a phenomenon, since Wittgenstein in *TLP* 6.423 establishes that it is a subject that concerns to psychology, and not ethics. Moreover, it seems that the empirical subject is better related to the will conceived as a phenomenon studied by psychology, since Wittgenstein regards the empirical subject as a study matter for psychology (*TLP*, 5.641).

of the willing subject. Nonetheless, this difference is not a fact that can be described with meaningful propositions, it is a difference that does not lie within the limits of the world. Therefore, as a consequence of the understanding of the ethical will and the happiness and unhappiness associated with it, the willing subject must be conceived as a limit, and not a part, of the world. If this subject were not a limit of the world it could not alter the limits of the world nor be associated with happiness and unhappiness, as it would contradict Wittgenstein's distinction between fact and value.

Due to the understanding of the willing subject presented and the approach to the will as the subject of ethical attributes (*TLP*, 6.423), the issues that stem from conceiving the empirical subject as an ethical subject must be extended to the possibility of conceiving the empirical subject as a willing subject. This understanding would eliminate the necessary distinction between fact and value, undermining Wittgenstein's ethical proposal. We argue in favor of an alternative reading that conceives the metaphysical subject as a willing subject, due to both subjects being conceived as limits of the world. This provides clarity and content to the uncertainty that Huges singles out when stating "the metaphysical "I" is synonymous with some notion (as yet unclear) of the will" (Huges 2009, 56).

It is the metaphysical subject, therefore, that possesses the will in an ethical sense and alters the limits of the world, attaining happiness or unhappiness. Furthermore, the "contrast between 'the will as the subject of the ethical' and 'the will as a phenomenon' is reminiscent of a similar contrast [...]: The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology speaks, but the metaphysical subject, the limit — not a part of the world. (5.641)" (Morris 2008, 323)²⁴.

Conceiving the metaphysical subject as a willing subject, firstly, does not generate any contradictions concerning the alteration of the limits of the world since the metaphysical subject is a limit, not a part, of the world. Secondly, the metaphysical subject is not a part of the world, therefore happiness and unhappiness do not manifest themselves in the world nor can they be expressed in meaningful propositions. The distinction between fact and value is not eliminated and happiness and unhappiness retain their ethical value. Finally, conceiving the metaphysical subject as a willing subject grants the possibility of resorting to the analogy of the eye in order to clarify Wittgenstein's understanding of the will. As shown in 3.1 Wittgenstein reintroduces certain notions

²⁴ It is important to reiterate that the alternative reading we have presented does not endorse the commitments that Morris presents when subscribing to the Transcendental Reading.

concerning this analogy during the propositions that concern ethics. It is possible, therefore, to resort to the analogy of the eye as a means to clarify basic elements of Wittgenstein's understanding of ethics and the will.

Nonetheless, the notions of ethical subject and willing subject are not taken here as strictly synonymous or interchangeable; this also extends to the I of solipsism and the I of philosophy. The issue lies in the fact that all these notions characterize a subject that is a limit of the world, that is, the metaphysical subject. They single out various differing characteristics of this subject. For instance, it is the I of solipsism or the subject that possesses ethical will. The specific characteristics that are introduced by each notion with regards to the understanding of the metaphysical subject are essential and must be maintained differentiated in order to single out some of the defining aspects of the metaphysical subject. It is only possible to argue that the ethical subject, the willing subject, the I of solipsism and the I of philosophy are linked insofar as they all characterize the metaphysical subject. Utilizing these notions as synonymous or interchangeable can generate issues when characterizing Wittgenstein's proposal.

3.3. *An alternative to the Transcendental Reading*

At this point it might be objected that our alternative reading does not present any significant difference or improvement with respect to the Transcendental Reading. Both readings argue in favor of the existence of a willing subject in the *Tractatus* and conceive the metaphysical subject as a willing subject. However, there are a series of elementary differences that separate both readings and that, simultaneously, demonstrate the advantages of the alternative reading set forth.

Firstly, a distinction exists between both readings concerning the works of Wittgenstein that are taken into account for the proposal of the willing subject. The Transcendental Reading argues that the willing subject that Wittgenstein endorses in the *Notebooks* is retained in the *Tractatus* under a different label: the metaphysical subject. The characterization of the willing subject, therefore, is dependent on Wittgenstein's proposal in the *Notebooks*, and not the contents of the *Tractatus*. This entails a commitment to the continuity in Wittgenstein's thought from the *Notebooks* to the *Tractatus*, at least regarding ethics. However, this commitment requires pertinent justification in order to account for why certain entries from the *Notebooks* concerning ethics are not retained by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, while other entries from the

Notebooks do appear explicitly in the *Tractatus*. Without the required justification one could object, as Tejedor (2013) does, that the contents of the *Notebooks* distort Wittgenstein's proposal in the *Tractatus*.

To avoid this objection, our alternative reading does not resort to the contents of the *Notebooks* to argue in favor of a willing subject in the *Tractatus*. The characterization of the willing subject in 3.2 solely resorts to Wittgenstein's account of the will in an ethical sense presented in the *Tractatus*. No entries are drawn from the *Notebooks* in order to characterize the willing subject. Thus, it is possible to avoid Tejedor's objection concerning the distortion of the contents of the *Tractatus*. Conceiving the metaphysical subject of the *Tractatus* –or the willing subject posed in 3.2– as synonymous to or interchangeable with the willing subject of the *Notebooks* is not required for our alternative reading²⁵. This reading, unlike the Transcendental Reading, does not affirm that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, under the label of metaphysical subject, retains the willing subject from the *Notebooks*.

Secondly, the characterization of the metaphysical subject and the willing subject presented by the Transcendental Reading differs from the characterization offered in 3.1 and 3.2. A defining aspect of the metaphysical subject and the willing subject, according to the Transcendental Reading, is that these subjects are conceived as transcendental conditions of ethics and –in some variations– of representation. That is, the existence of ethics and representation is dependent upon the metaphysical subject conceived as a transcendental willing subject. As stated previously, our alternative reading does not defend the existence of a transcendental subject as a condition of ethics and of representation. It is uncertain whether Wittgenstein endorses a transcendental willing subject in the *Notebooks*, as shown briefly in 2.3. Additionally, the *Tractatus* does not present any indication in favor of the understanding of the metaphysical subject as a transcendental condition of ethics and of representation. Wittgenstein does not employ the notion of 'transcendental' alongside the metaphysical subject in the *Tractatus* and there is no explicit admission of endorsing the understanding of the metaphysical subject as a transcendental condition of ethics and representation. Furthermore, there is no clear indication that Wittgenstein implicitly endorses this understanding of the metaphysical subject.

On the one hand, there is no substantial content in the *Tractatus* that allows for

²⁵ Hence why the alternative reading posed in section 3 does not take into consideration the relation established in 2.2 between the metaphysical subject and the willing subject in the *Notebooks*.

arguments in favor of the existence of a transcendental subject condition of representation. Authors, such as Hacker, argue that ‘the soul is the fountainhead of language and representation’ (Hacker 1986, 75). Whatever a figure –proposition or thought– represents is dependent on the will of the metaphysical subject, that is, the metaphysical subject is a transcendental condition of representation. However, a series of issues emerge from Hackers understanding of the metaphysical subject. Representation is dependent on logic. Wittgenstein’s picture theory argues that it is essential that a representation and what it represents must share the same logical form. If this condition is not fulfilled, no representation can be satisfactorily carried out. Therefore, logic is a transcendental condition of representation. “Logic is what is presupposed in any meaningful representation, and that is, within a Tractarian framework, any meaningful sentence” (Christensen 2011, 801).

It may be argued that, despite the transcendental character of logic, whatever a figure represents is still dependent on the will of the metaphysical subject²⁶. However, further issues stem from this understanding of the metaphysical subject conceived as a transcendental condition of representation. Firstly, it is unclear that the metaphysical subject carries out the assignment of representations. Hacker argues that it is a ‘mental act (albeit of a transcendental self, not of the self that is studied by psychology) that injects meaning or significance into signs’ (Hacker 1986, 75). However, mental acts cannot be attributed to the metaphysical or a transcendental self. Mental acts, such as thoughts, are facts that are dealt by psychology. In *TLP* 5.5421 Wittgenstein argues that propositions such as ‘A thinks p’ are meaningful propositions, propositions of psychology. The metaphysical subject is the I of philosophy, a limit of the world that cannot be studied by natural science. Therefore, mental acts cannot be attributed to the metaphysical subject, nor can this subject be regarded as a mental sphere as Sluga (1996, 329) claims. Conversely, mental acts, such as thoughts, are better understood in relation to the empirical subject. Secondly, even if the meaning of any sign is dependent on the mental act of a metaphysical subject, further problems surface regarding the possibility of a private or personal language. As shown previously, in the *Tractatus* ‘my language’ does not refer to everyone’s personal language (see note 6). On the contrary, it refers to

²⁶ Christensen seems to endorse this understanding of the subject, arguing that we “cannot speak of representation of the world without including an idea of the subject” (Christensen 2011, 803). Nonetheless, it is uncertain that this entails endorsing the commitment of the Transcendental Reading of conceiving the subject as a transcendental condition of representation.

language as such. For example, the limits of the world are the limits of language as such, not the limits of my specific language. Hence the meaning or significance of signs cannot depend on the assignation carried out in single mental acts by a metaphysical subject.

On the other hand, there is no substantial content in the *Tractatus* in favor of conceiving the metaphysical subject as a transcendental condition of ethics, hence why the Transcendental Reading resorts the *Notebooks*. There is no explicit recognition by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* of the existence of a transcendental subject condition of ethics. The notion of transcendental is only explicitly employed when stating that ethics is transcendental. Nonetheless, affirming that ethics is transcendental does not entail nor suggest that the transcendental character of ethics refers to a transcendental willing subject condition of ethics that does not explicitly appear in the *Tractatus*.

Thirdly, in order to avoid the Transcendental Reading's understanding of the transcendental character of ethics, it is necessary to set forth an alternative account. One possibility is to resort to the understanding posed by Diamond (2000), who defends a resolute reading of the *Tractatus*. Diamond argues that the transcendental character of ethics is not 'concerned with the activities of some transcendental subject' (Diamond 2000, 168). Conversely, what transcendental 'means in the *Tractatus* is that the "sign" for whatever is called transcendental is the general form of a proposition, not some particular proposition or set of propositions that says something in particular' (Diamond 2000, 168). Diamond's account, however, merely singles out the 'sign' of the transcendental character of ethics and logic. It does not provide any further understanding of how this transcendental character must be conceived²⁷. We argue in favor an alternative reading that conceives the transcendental character of ethics resorting to the transcendental character of logic: it is a condition for the existence of the world. The metaphysical subject is solely the bearer of ethics and the will –that is, an ethical subject and a willing subject–, not a transcendental condition of ethics. Hence, our alternative reading provides an understanding of the transcendental character of ethics that is consistent with the understanding of the transcendental character of logic and that, concurrently, does not entail a commitment to the main thesis of the Transcendental Reading.

In summary, the alternative reading put forward demonstrates the possibility of conceiving the metaphysical subject as an ethical subject and a willing subject, without

²⁷ Furthermore, this work does not endorse the resolute reading of the *Tractatus*. We endorse the proposal developed by Cheung (2008) concerning the propositions of the *Tractatus*.

subscribing to the main thesis of the Transcendental Reading or resorting to the contents of the *Notebooks*. It overcomes the issues stemming from the Transcendental Reading and, simultaneously, resolves the various problems that Tejedor raises to defend the impossibility of a willing subject in the *Tractatus*. Furthermore, an adequate revision of the three criticisms introduced by Tejedor –i.e. a revision that takes into account the various problems posed in section 2– does not negate nor reject our alternative reading. In addition, this alternative reading demonstrates that Tejedor’s first criticism –that is, that the *Tractatus* does not sanction the deduction of the existence of a willing subject– is also insufficient. Finally, we have set forth an alternative way of ‘accounting for the religious and ethical dimension of the *Tractatus* that does not present Wittgenstein as endorsing this notion of willing subject as transcendental condition’ (Tejedor 2013, 62). Definitively, this work demonstrates that the rejection of the Transcendental Reading does not entail the impossibility of an alternative reading that argues in favor of an ethical subject and a willing subject in the *Tractatus*.

Conclusion

The present work has shown, on the one hand, that the three criticisms introduced by Tejedor in order to reject the Transcendental Reading present three main problems that affect their legitimacy. Firstly, the two reasons that Tejedor introduces –that is, the entries *NB* 9.11.16 and *NB* 19.11.16 and Wittgenstein’s private correspondence– to support the claim that Wittgenstein abandons the notion of ‘willing subject’ are problematic. Secondly, the two reasons –that is, that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject possess characteristics that are incompatible with one another and the inexistence of evidence that would allow for both expressions to be considered as analogous– introduced by Tejedor to support the claim that the willing subject and the metaphysical subject cannot be taken as synonymous or analogous are problematic. Finally, Tejedor incorrectly assumes the identification between the willing subject of the *Notebooks* and the transcendental willing subject proposed by the Transcendental Reading. This assumption generates problems throughout all three of Tejedor’s criticisms. The three problems posed demonstrate that Tejedor’s critique requires a thorough revision in order to be considered a valid rejection of the Transcendental Reading.

On the other hand, we have set forth an alternative reading that conceives the metaphysical subject of the *Tractatus* as an ethical subject and a willing subject, without

subscribing to the main thesis of the Transcendental Reading or resorting to the contents of the *Notebooks*. This proposal overcomes the issues stemming from the Transcendental Reading and resolves various problems that Tejedor poses to defend the impossibility of a willing subject in the *Tractatus*. In addition, this alternative reading advances an account of the transcendental character of ethics that does not postulate nor require the existence of a transcendental subject condition of ethics and representation, as defended by the Transcendental Reading. Conversely, the transcendental character of ethics is understood resorting to the transcendental character of logic: it is a condition for the existence of the world.

Reference list

- Cheung, L. K. C. (2008). 'The Disenchantment of Nonsense: Understanding Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*'. *Philosophical Investigations*, 31 (3), 197–226.^[L]_[SEP]
- Christensen, A. S. (2011). 'Wittgenstein and Ethics'. In Kuusela, O. & McGinn, M. (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein* (pp. 796-817). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diamond, C. (2000). 'Ethics, imagination and method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*'. In Crary, A. & Read, R. (eds.). *The New Wittgenstein* (pp.149-173). Oxford: Routledge.
- Hacker, P. M. S. (1986). *Insight and Illusion Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hintikka, J. (1958). 'On Wittgenstein's "solipsism"'. *Mind*, 67, 88–91.
- Huges, L. (2009). 'If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. (TLP 6.41)'. In Arnsward U. (ed.). *In Search of Meaning: Ludwig Wittgenstein on Ethics, Mysticism and Religion* (pp.51-66). Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing.
- Levine, J. (2013). 'Logic and Solipsism'. In Sullivan, P., & Porter, M. (eds.) *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: History and Interpretation* (pp. 170-238). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McGinn, M. (2006). *Elucidating the Tractatus: Wittgenstein's Early Philosophy of Logic and Language* (pp. 255-277). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McGuinness, B. F. (1966). 'The Mysticism of the *Tractatus*'. *The Philosophical Review*, 75, 305–328.

- McGuinness, B. F. (2002). *Approaches to Wittgenstein: Collected papers*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Monk, R. (1991). *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of a Genius*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Morris, M. (2008). *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. New York: Routledge.
- Mulhall, S. (2007). ‘Words, Waxing and Waning: Ethics in/and/of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*’. In Kahane, G., Kanterian, E., & Kuusela, O. (eds.). *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters* (pp. 221–247). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schopenhauer, A. (1966). *The World as Will and Representation: Volume 1*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Schroeder, S. (2006). *Wittgenstein: The Way Out of the Fly-Bottle*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Sluga, H. (1996). “‘Whose house is that?’ Wittgenstein on the self”. In Sluga, H. & Stern, D. G. (eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (pp.320-353). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stokhof, M. (2002). *World and Life as One. Ethics and Ontology in Wittgenstein’s Early Thought*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Tejedor, C. (2013). ‘The Earlier Wittgenstein on the Notion of Religious Attitude’. *Philosophy*, 88, 55–79.
- Tejedor, C. (2015). *The Early Wittgenstein on Metaphysics, Natural Science, Language and Value*. New York: Routledge.
- Wiggins, D. (2004). ‘Wittgenstein on Ethics and the Riddle of Life’. *Philosophy*, 79, 363–391.
- Williams, B. (1981). *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1961). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1965). ‘A Lecture on Ethics’. *The Philosophical Review*, 74 (1), 3-12.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1971). *Prototractatus*. London: Routledge.
- Wittgenstein, L. (2015). *Notebooks 1914-1916*. London: Forgotten Books.